

Welcome to television

A Cultural History of Australian Television



HALF-YEARLY REPORT, June 2004

The project commenced in November 2003 with work being undertaken by the principal researcher 'Nick Herd' and a research assistant engaged on a part time basis.

The goals to 30 June 2004 were:

1. To undertake bibliographical research and compile a bibliography.
2. To identify collections of archival material for future research.
3. To develop an outline of the work and a plan of the research.
4. To commence reading.
5. To commence writing.

Progress in relation to these goals, work plans and other achievements has been as follows:

1. *Bibliographical research:* This has begun, using some published sources and the catalogues of the National Library, the State Library of NSW and various university libraries, including UTS. The UTS librarians provided assistance with this. We have compiled a 27-page bibliography of secondary sources, divided into biography and memoirs of figures in Australian television, scholarly studies of Australian television, government and Parliamentary reports relating to television and theses on Australian television. Bibliographical research on journal articles is on-going.

A product of part of this work was the publication in March 2004 of an article by Professor Liz Jacka 'Doing the History of Television in Australia: Problems and Challenges' in the journal *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*.

2. *Identifying archival material:* This is the process of identifying where collections are held of both paper and audio-visual material relating to the history of commercial television. The material being sought includes official records, personal papers, oral history recordings and examples of programs. For example: the State Library of NSW was identified as the holder of the Australian Stock Exchange archive, which contains annual reports, company notices etc of the public companies involved in commercial television. The National Film and Sound Archive holds an oral history collection relating to film and television. These sources have been analysed to identify those interviews relevant to our research and the gaps that our researchers will need to fill.

3. *Developing an outline and work plan:* Our Principal Researcher has compiled a 7,000-word time-line of major events related to Australian television from the late 1930s to the mid 1990s. This includes such things as the introduction of services, major government decisions, the start and finish of significant programs and technological changes, such as the introduction of colour television and satellite

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broadcasting. From this we refined an historical outline and an action plan to guide the research and reading.

4. *Reading commenced:* Research and reading for this semester has concentrated on the period from 1941 to 1956, being the period in which television was under active consideration by the Australian Government, and then introduced. The reading has included not only primary and secondary source material, such as government reports, but also material on the development of television over this period in the UK and the USA. The latter reading is for the purpose of locating Australia's process of development in its international context in order to define its differences; and to become familiar with the ways the history of television has been approached elsewhere.

Reading was also extended to radio in Australia, to better understand the broadcasting system already established, and into which television was being introduced; and to question what alternatives there might have been to the system that did develop. Lastly, we sought material related to the technological development of television, in order to understand what Australia adopted of television technology developed elsewhere, and what was innovation.

Archival Research: Our research assistant has so far been principally involved in two areas of archival research. The first is to survey the contents of the Australian Stock Exchange archive and identify material relating to companies such as News Ltd, Consolidated Press, Herald and Weekly Times and John Fairfax. The second has been to commence the compilation of sample program schedules for each year of television as part of the process of constructing information about how television was delivered.

5. *Writing commenced:* During this semester our Principal Researcher has commenced writing the first chapters of this monograph.

Financial:

Expenses in this semester have not been high and we have kept within the allocation from the Australian Research Council. However, in the next financial year further staff must be introduced if we are to keep the work to be achieved within our time-line.

Principal researchers:

Professor Elizabeth
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Advisory Panel:

Bob Donoghue
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