

ABU MEDIA ACADEMY MAGAZINE

2nd edition | March 2021



Forward



Welcome to the second edition of the ABU Media Academy Magazine.

This is a feature edition, where we are highlighting two significant events.

The first is the partnership between AFTRS and the ABU that will give an opportunity for three staff from ABU member organisations to study in the AFTRS Master of Screen Arts: Business course and the Radio Program Directors course. The free places will be available for senior staff and will be selected by competitive entry. ABU will facilitate applications and AFTRS will make the final selection. The successful applicants should be ready to start their courses by remote learning in the second half of this year. If you are interested in applying for one of the free places, please request the selection criteria by emailing ruchi@abu.org.my.

The other feature celebrates the first birthday of RT's online journalism training school. In two stories about how the school operates, we will examine how the RT Online School began its operations during covid, and look into how the Newsroom training course is run. Course information is available at <https://rt-school.online>.

Amidst the four feature stories, you will also find a thoughtful piece from Baber Ali, who argues that media courses must change their content quickly enough to keep pace with current developments in content creation and changing audience consumption habits. He also advocates micro-credentials as a means of delivering just-in-time, point-of-need training when it is needed most.

As the ABU Media Academy heads towards its own first birthday, we continue to design and deliver new courses for members, to push the boundaries of traditional delivery through online learning, and respond to member requests for targeted courses. Please check our course page regularly at www.abu.org.my/academy/courses to see the latest courses available and also our recently completed courses.

I hope the articles from our contributors in this edition stimulate discussion and give you some new tricks and approaches to use in your own training courses.

Steve Ahern

One of the wonderful things about Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) is that it is built on a simple yet profound idea: that the stories of a nation matter, and that the people of that nation should be able to see themselves onscreen and hear and experience the stories most important to them.

To this end, The Master of Arts Screen: Business (MASB) has an exciting new initiative. In cooperation with ABU, we will be offering two free places in the MASB to senior staff in ABU Member organisations. This is a chance for both organisations to learn about the media industry in our region.

Selection of the two free places will be administered by the ABU, who will be calling for nominations from qualified staff at member organisations, and communicating selection criteria and guidelines on prerequisites. ABU and AFTRS will make the final selections and it is anticipated that successful applicants will join the course mid-2021.

This is a great initiative for us both and we are very much looking forward to working more closely with ABU this year and beyond. More initiatives will follow.

In Australia, it took some time to convince the government of the need to see ourselves and our culture onscreen. In the 1960s and 70s, American content dominated prime time television and Australian feature films were rare. Eventually, after much lobbying, the arguments for celebrating our own culture won through. Significantly, the government acknowledged the nation needed to train new generations in order to stake a claim in the storytelling culture of the nation. In establishing AFTRS as the national film school in 1976, it was understood that key craft and creative skills needed to be



Masters Course Modules offered to ABU Members

Australia's elite media university collaborates with the ABU to offer two free places in the Masters of Screen Business degree, explains Con Apostolopoulos.



taught; more critically, that the culture could not grow without well-trained practitioners. And grow it has. Drawing students from all regions and all backgrounds, AFTRS has, for almost 50 years ago, consistently turned out world-class graduates. Many Australian winners of Academy Awards got their start here at AFTRS. Moreover, we as a society have benefited greatly; certainly, in many cases, content created by AFTRS graduates has transformed our culture. AFTRS is now recognised as the nation's preeminent Film School and we are consistently named by The Hollywood Reporter as one of the top twenty international film schools in the world.

Over the past five decades, AFTRS has seen all manner of changes. Issues of representation, changes in formats, and advances in technology have all influenced our teaching. In this rapidly evolving space, the department of Screen Business is responsible for staying on top of the latest innovations in screen content creation. A particular focus is how technology influences screen production. In the MASB, students study process, technology, and skills training methodology. A good example is the massive earthquake Kodak caused in the film industry in 2009 when it announced overnight it was no longer going to make Kodachrome film. This 35mm gold standard suddenly gone, and, with it, 100 years of moviemaking practices. Just a few years before, it would have been unfathomable that film stock would be unavailable within a decade.

The demise of film stock ushered in a new era of digital storytelling and with it, new creative technologies were invented. This changed the way we taught and more importantly, what we taught. Over the next decade, steady increases in digital computing power – Moore's Law – and new game engine technology, meant that movies were able to abandon much that was thought sacred to filmmaking. Physically realistic sets and location shoots were used less and less and virtual sets and locations stepped into to create an entirely new film 'look'. The idea of 'real' and the concept of 'realism' took on new meanings. Virtual Production was now seriously changing the way movies were made and viewed. This in turn changed the way producers and creatives perceived the boundaries of what is possible. This is most certainly an incredibly exciting time to be a screen creative.

Unpacking all of that, and what it means for our content creation industry, and our nation's stories, has been an exhilarating experience. The MASB now has several subjects devoted to studying the impact of changes in technology and process. Right now, thanks to Elon Musk, we are taking a second look at Bitcoin, the star player in the story of Blockchain. What Bitcoin means to content creation is not clear yet – to me at least – but the metrics of an immutable ledger are certainly worthy of our attention. And this is something we know already know about. Who knows what else is cooking in someone's garage? The next great advance in screen production could be announced tomorrow.

This year, in the MASB, we have taken the course in new directions. Responding to demand, we have created online versions of the course – also something that did not exist a decade ago – and in the next 12 months will be offering the course internationally in both full-time and part-time modes. We are also increasing our international focus. Our focus is increasingly on our near neighbours in the Asian region. Already, we travel overseas for one of our subjects, which gives our students the opportunity to study a significant overseas company. There they can learn about business practice in another culture. This year, we will be working closely with the Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), and, through them, will be extending our reach into the region.

Learning from the international market is of key importance to us. Not only in recognising and evaluating the international trends, but also in reflecting back on our own practices and our own stories, which, of course, are the most important parts of our culture.

In addition to the two free places in in the Screen Business course, AFTRS has also just agreed to include Radio in its partnership with the ABU and is now also able to offer one free place in the Radio Program Directors course: Radio Content, Management and Leadership Industry Certificate. For more details on this course, see the Academy website www.abu.org.my/academy

Con Apostolopoulos is the Director of Partnerships and Development at the Australian Film Television and Radio School.



The Challenges of Modern Media Education

Anna Kovtunova and Olga Prodan share insights as the RT Online School of Journalism turns one year old

The incredible pace of technological change and constant new trends in the world of media has put pressure on education systems to keep up with the progress.

RT met this challenge by setting up an Online School for journalism students and working professionals, where the latest experiences in creation and delivery of media content are taught by practicing journalists who follow and implement new trends on a daily basis.

RT Online School was launched in January 2020 – before the pandemic made online education one of the most high-potential spheres of activity. In just one year of operations it has proved itself a priceless tool that has already helped hundreds of working and future journalists upgrade their skillset.

CORE PRINCIPLES

When thinking which master-classes to include in our online program, we decided to focus on the following principles.

First, our instructors had to come from all media spheres – not only TV news correspondents or anchors, but also producers, website authors, content creators, authors of successful digital projects, camera operators and graphic designers. We wanted our talks to be useful for traditional journalists as well as for bloggers and multimedia storytellers. We have succeeded in this aim, with some of our alumni improving their work at their current jobs or joining the RT team, while many others have launched their own digital projects.

“During my studies, I thought about creating my own media project; RT correspondents who opened their own accounts became an example for me. I have started a blog about life in Germany, where I currently study”
Nikita Shikhatov (Germany)

Second, we thought it essential to share the multicultural experience that RT is known for. Our program boasts master-classes and webinars from the Russian, Arabic, Spanish, and English-language branches of RT’s global news family, which is unique and unprecedented for online education here in Russia.

Finally, we wanted our master-classes to be as practical as possible, so a significant part of our education process is devoted to homework that is followed by detailed feedback from the instructors. Our courses are also designed in such a way that each participant can try different media roles throughout the program: from pitching a story to filming and editing, to social media promotion.

“A very good course that covers almost all the details of journalistic work, which will definitely help me a lot in the future.”
Chang Le (China)

WAYS TO SHARE EXPERIENCE

In pre-pandemic times RT hosted many events that enabled students, journalists from Russia’s regions and media professionals from abroad to see how the outlet operates and talk to our top journalists in person.

The creation of the Online School has resulted in the filming of more than 50 master classes, so when in-person activities were curtailed, the networking and sharing experience was able to continue.

Besides giving access to pre-recorded master classes for course participants, we also regularly conduct webinars

and streams to reach wider audiences. For instance, while most of our lessons so far have been conducted in Russian, we have hosted a series of webinars in English with our colleagues from RT.COM and had an enthusiastic response from digital journalists all over the world.

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED

During the year that the RT Online School has been up and running we were learning too and have drawn some important conclusions.

Despite the high quality of video lessons, practical assignments remain the best learning tool. We try to recreate the newsroom atmosphere on our online



“You can go to your personal account at any time and watch the videos. They seem short, but they contain more information than in some 1.5-hour lectures at the university. And, of course, I really like how these lessons are filmed - beautiful, modern, bright, dynamic, with graphics, etc., the same quality as a program that is broadcast on the main channel. Very pleasant to watch.”
Nadar Mezhgikh (Moscow)

“I learned a lot from journalists that are truly masters of their art. I learned the most by listening and reading instructors’ reviews to students’ assignments. That allowed learning from ‘other’s’ mistakes, which I enjoyed very much!”
 Carlos Coral (Waltham, USA)

“The lessons contain exclusively practical and undiluted information, with specific examples. Everything that is taught there can be applied immediately”
 Nina Gliznitsa (Vladimir, Russia)



platform and make our audience actively engage in the practicalities of creating audio, visual and written content. An essential – and widely praised – part of the project is the option to see not only one’s own but also your colleagues’ work, and receive feedback from the instructors.

Another aspect that needs to be highlighted is the importance of minimizing the “dry” theory approach in instruction and prioritizing case studies within the lessons and webinars. It may be occasionally tricky because some speakers may be hesitant to engage with practices they believe might soon become outdated in the rapidly-changing media ecosystem. Therefore a lot of effort has been put into finding relatively timeless and perennially applicable examples, and the reward in the form of audience appreciation and redoubled interest in the master-classes was immediately apparent.

Finally, we have noticed that the School has been highly beneficial for the instructors themselves. They have been able to perfect their presentation skills, widen and deepen their connection with the mentees. And it has been a highly enriching experience for our team as a whole as a source for new ideas to develop original content for future projects.

Anna Kovtunova is Department Head and Olga Prodan is a Producer at RT Educational Projects Department. RT Online School is a leading online media school in Russia providing free journalism training via digital platforms (<https://rt-school.online/>).



Media Studies – The New Strains

by Baber Ali



Media studies have always posed unique challenges for media practitioners and academicians alike. The new, tech-intensive, media ecosystem has made the situation even trickier with regards to developing course contents. The intervention of disruptive technologies in mainstream media has transfigured the conventional methods with which media was produced, distributed, and marketed. To cope with this, “disruptive media education” is needed.

COVID-19 has accelerated the need for establishing online and Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) based learning setups that rely heavily on digital media. Furthermore, adaptive multimedia platforms, increased access to the internet, and mobile technologies have exponentially increased media consumption globally. This has created tremendous opportunities, not only for aspiring media professionals, but also for media students.

It has become inevitable that the course content and curriculum for Media Studies must be designed in accordance with the newest market requirements. Unfortunately, many educational institutions, especially in developing countries, are still teaching courses that hold no, or very limited, significance for the professional job market. Media students are not being taught or being sensitized about emerging technologies and how these are impacting media. For instance, AI for automation in video productions and recordings, and Blockchain technology for online content security and revenue generation, are deemed to be among the most important subjects for the times to come. In addition to technological aspects, programming and contents have also taken new shapes. Concepts like diversity, pluralism, and inclusivity are now being opted by leading media professionals in their work. These also need to be taught to media students. Lack of resources, like studios and equipment, and a dearth of qualified faculty are some other issues faced by Media Studies departments.



Conventional media education, like other academic disciplines, goes through a complex and slow-paced process of structuring and approvals from various administrative and academic bodies. By the time a course curriculum becomes mainstream, many of its components have already become outdated. Keeping in view the rapid technological advancements influencing market and business requirements, concepts like Just-in-time education and micro/nano credentials should be incorporated in imparting media education. The media fraternity should also explore the possibility of establishing Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) that can provide uniform, quality educational and learning resources. Media labs and incubation centers may also be established, in coordination with professional Media Houses and Television Networks, that can help by providing externship and internship opportunities to both faculty members as well as students.

User-generated-content (UGC), Vlogging, and web series have revolutionized the media landscape and have altered viewing habits and media consumption patterns.

Exceptional resources are being invested in media content production, particularly due to the fierce competition between OTT media platforms. The most successful companies, like Netflix, have negative cash flows, as they try to maintain their leadership in the market. This tremendous market potential can make media professionals the most valuable commodity in the near future if they can acquire the requisite knowledge and can maintain professional and ethical standards.

It is here that the ABU's Media Academy can play a very important and pertinent role, by bridging the gap between the industry and the academia and by establishing platforms that can be the catalyst for synthesizing new knowledge and accumulating resources pertaining to media studies. Established media organizations and professionals, having sufficient technological and experiential resources, may assist in crafting courses that address industry requirements.

Baber Ali is a Media Professional, Educational Technologist, Digital Media Enthusiast, Teacher and Trainer from VUTV, Pakistan.

Teaching about TV Newsrooms in 2021

Exploring the key elements of the RT Online School's newsroom course



‘How to tell and show a news story’ is one of the first topics that students of the RT Online School get acquainted with in RT’s ‘Intro to the Newsroom’ course. The idea behind this lesson is to give a glimpse of what working in the newsroom is all about, what it includes and what it demands from a journalist.

Maria Zeleranskaya, the RT International’s Head of Newsroom and an instructor at RT Online School explains:

“In the lesson we define the rules of a successful live broadcast, and the goals that we in the newsroom set before us, as well as the tools needed to achieve those goals. We discuss the necessary skills and why those particular skills are needed.”

Two major things that are talked about in the course are delivering news to your audience and keeping the viewers’ attention.

“The rules of live broadcast require that you do it right and you do it fast,” says Zeleranskaya.

Doing it right requires getting information across to the audience while being limited by the short duration of a news story. Doing it fast also means you have a deadline to be first with the news and in time for your broadcast.

“You have a lot to say and very little air time to say it.”

To achieve that aim, a journalist in the newsroom has two fundamental instruments - script and video.



Talking about scripts, the course points out the essential dos and don'ts of a news script, as well as explaining how they work. For example, how to keep your text uncluttered and why it matters, what to start your news story with and how to put the most important information first. There are tips on how to check that the script follows those rules.

Another major instrument discussed in the course is video. How and why the use of video can give you an edge in getting and keeping the audience's attention. For example, how to use natural sound from a video feed to better illustrate a story.

"We also talk about why video is so important for live broadcast and whether a news story necessarily needs to be scripted or if sometimes just video can be enough. Or even which visual formats can help you out if there's no video available for a new story," says Zeleranskaya.

Part of the lesson deals with modern sources of news and video content as well as how to use social media and user generated content for broadcast. The training also touched upon copyright issues and how to avoid some hidden pitfalls when using content from social media.

The course also gives students an idea of how the RT newsroom operates, who is in charge of what and which skills are needed to work there. The course teaches about the role of a presenter in delivering a written script and the importance of good cooperation between a reporter in the field and an editor in the newsroom to produce a live broadcast.

"All that is of course only part of what working in live broadcast entails, but by giving our students this sneak peek, we hope to spark their interest and provide useful information for those who are beginning their journey in the world of news."

**RT has been an
Associate Member of
the ABU since 2012.**

Disney and Dreamworks producer Jeffrey Katzenberg talks business and creative



Photo courtesy of Dreamworks

Australia's internationally acclaimed media university, Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS), attracts A-list guest speakers and lecturers.

There are a few reasons for that. One is the fact *The Hollywood Reporter* consistently rates AFTRS in its annual top international film schools list. Another is that it is a national film school, drawing on the country's best and most passionate creatives. The campus is located on the Fox Studios lot in Sydney and there are always lots of actors, writers, producers and directors coming through the studios.

Jeffrey Katzenberg, the legendary producer at Disney and later at DreamWorks Animation, was one of those guest lecturers recently. He attracted a packed house of students and staff, all eager to hear about his journey in the screen business. The talk was engrossing, full of anecdotes and frank admissions on how to, and how not to, build a career.

Katzenberg has been involved with huge projects and franchises that are now part of Hollywood folklore: *Shrek*, *The Lion King*, *Madagascar*, and *The Road to Eldorado* to name a few.

Throughout his talk, Katzenberg took the perspective of business. He talked money; he talked budgets; he talked the bottom line. And yet the narrative constantly referred to the 'creative decisions we made.'

When the Q&A opened up, a somewhat mystified student asked a question. "Creative? What's that got to do with all this money talk?" He continued, "surely, the creative decisions are made separate to the business side,

by the creatives. It's the job of the director and writer and actors, to deal with the creative side, isn't it?"

Katzenberg smiled and paused. He said he sees no distinction between the business of what they were doing and the creative side. That is how it works.

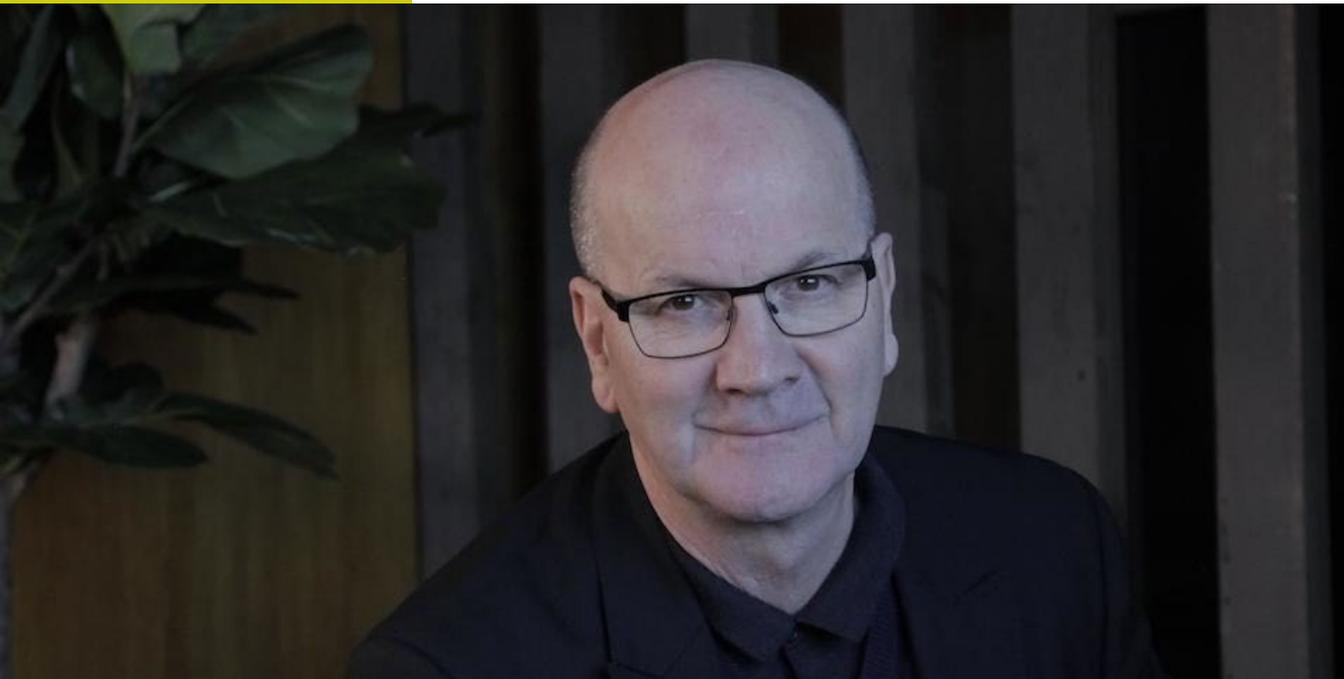
Some more back and forth followed, but Katzenberg made his point: there is no dividing wall between the business and the creative.

In the Master of Screen Arts: Business (MASB) at AFTRS we are constantly discussing the blend of business and creative. In the screen business, one cannot exist without the other. Business is the spine needed to support the creative.

In any production, you can't avoid discussing the money. Nor should you. The best writers, directors, cinematographers and actors understand that is the reason they are working.

The MASB will take you through all the elements you need create a screen business career which combines the management, creative and business aspects of the industry. As Katzenberg suggested, the sum of the parts makes a whole production, and every creative choice is woven with the needle and thread of financing.

Business and creative do not ever stand alone.



Peter Herbert is Head of Screen Business at AFTRS.

The ABU and AFTRS have announced a partnership that will facilitate two free places for senior staff from two of the ABU's members to study remotely in the Master of Screen Arts: Business course and for one free place in the Radio Program Directors course. Senior staff will need to submit a detailed application to be selected for the free place. See www.abu.org.my/academy for details, or email Ruchi@abu.org.au to request the selection criteria.

تجارب و اندیشه‌های نوین در ساخت مستند و گزارش‌های خبری

امور بین‌الملل سازمان صداوسیما

IRIB (ABU)



ABU Academy course shares latest experiences and ideas for news documentaries with IRIB

In order to benefit from the achievements and specialized experiences at the international level for the scientific and professional development of the IRIB producers and directors, the Virtual Course “Latest Experiences and ideas in making Documentaries and News Reports” was planned and held in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) Media Academy for managers, producers, directors and related reporters at the IRIB International Affairs.

The purpose of holding this virtual event was to show how to make a documentary based on new criteria for attracting audiences and achieving success in international festivals. Dr. Rahimian, a professor at the University of IRIB and expert on television production, chaired this online meeting and began his discussion by emphasizing innovation and creativity, combined with courage as the key points of making successful news documentaries.

Steve Ahern, Head of ABU Media Academy, spoke about the new documentary trends and combining the techniques of reality TV with the traditional craft of documentary making. Mark Llewellyn, an executive producer of News & Current Affairs for Australian Channel 7, discussed the elements of great modern documentaries, including honesty in journalism, truth-seeking efforts, the importance of final editing in the production process, attracting the audience, being entertaining and using the right imaging equipment to present the story.

Wendy Everett, Head of News at ABU, also added some points on news angles for documentaries, the importance of engaging the audience with a news documentary and paying attention to the elements that make it stand out and receive appropriate feedback. Afruh Rasheed, Senior Editor of AsiaVision, finished the webinar with a brief lecture about visual techniques, such as rewriting the outline, separate editing of footages, adherence to truth and reality in documentary production and new camera usage styles.

In the end, Dr. Rahimian summarised the topics and added criteria for making successful documentaries and attracting the audience. He also emphasized the importance of developing the views of documentarians by watching and studying the world's successful documentaries.

The course will soon be available to other ABU Members via the ABU Academy learning platform.

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