

# Editorial

## What Is Media Education For?

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With the new funding regime as its backdrop, there is a debate now taking place about the very purpose of a university, encapsulated in Stefan Collini's new book, *What Are Universities For?* (Penguin, 2012). In this editorial for the first edition of the *Media Education Research Journal's* third volume, we pose an allied question: what is media education for? The reasons for us asking this particular question are exactly the same as Collini's:

Never before in human history have [universities] been so numerous, or so important, yet never before have they suffered from such a disabling lack of confidence and loss of identity. (2012a: 3)

The place and purpose of media education is a debate that is no less important, because it highlights a new fault-line which has opened up in UK higher education; in the 1990s, the 'elite' (Red Brick) university sector organised itself into the 'Russell Group' with the smaller, research-focused universities (Plate Glass) in the '1994 Group' and the old polytechnics split between 'University Alliance' and 'Millennium +' groups respectively; these groups are by no means fixed, and already there is a small drip of '1994 Group' institutions joining the 'Russell Group' – and this is only likely to increase.

At a conference in March 2012, celebrating 25 years of research conducted by the Discourse, Communication, Conversation group at Loughborough University (whose ranks have been recently bolstered by MERJ board member David Buckingham), Michael Billig talked of 'massification' as a self-fulfilling term within a broader language of reification. Peter Golding offered a depressing view of the future, framed by David Willetts' disingenuous celebration of the value of media education as a marginal endeavour and the fact that OFCOM spend twice as much on audience research in any given year as is provided in funding for academic media research. Between them, these keynote speakers offered a 'double-whammy' of our own mistakes – complicity in the proliferation of meaningless new terminology and endless paradigm shifts, encouraging our students

(apparently) to behave like readers of right-wing tabloid newspapers (the layers of 'othering' here need no deconstruction) combined with an amplified 'rewinding' to the discourses of derision, a kind of Pattern 2.0 (our words), even.

Loughborough is, of course, far from a 'typical' provider of media education, which has tended to thrive in the newer institutions, many of them former polytechnics, which had an inherited vocational outlook. One of the editors of this journal graduated from this context in the 1980s, and we both work in ex-polytechnics today. The 1992 Further and Higher Education Act had enabled these institutions to become universities and award their own degrees for the first time, and this saw a boom in creative and media related courses being offered. Despite the fact that many of the older research universities teach media subjects, and some even have research centres dedicated to looking at particular media – such as the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University – it is clear to us that Media Education has been used for two decades as a short-hand for describing bigger problems about further and higher education.

In the 1990s, the newly created Department for National Heritage – later the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) – came into direct conflict with the Department for Education and its Minister, John Patten. This was a period when successive ministers attempted to define the 'Creative Industries' and tried to articulate what exactly this nebulous collection of activities contributed to the UK economy, and then how education needed to be reconfigured to support it.

### **A disabling lack of confidence**

Many media courses, which prior to the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act were BTEC awards, became full degrees in the 'new' universities – sometimes referred to rather disparagingly as the 'post-92s'. Most BTEC qualifications were phased-out of the old polytechnics and transferred to colleges of further education. Almost overnight the distinction between 'Red Brick' and 'Plate Glass' universities – which had been in place since the Robbins report fuelled expansion in provision in the 1960s – was swept aside in favour of a perceived divide where these older institutions were marshalled on one side, with the newly created universities on the other. Despite many league tables today, which would suggest otherwise, this myopic distinction has persisted, as Kingsley Amis put it at the time:

What constitutes a university, and how that might differ from what constitutes a polytechnic or other establishment for vocational training, it is not my present business to expound. Nevertheless it cannot be said too often that education is one

thing and instruction, however worthy, necessary and incidentally or momentarily education, another. (1998: 236)

The key word here is ‘training’, for despite the fact that media courses have been in existence in further and higher education since the 1970s, it has always been thought of as something to ‘prepare’ students to work in a particular field; discourses of utility and employability have always surrounded the subject area; the employability (or not) of media graduates is the stick used to beat us, time-and-time again.

Successive DCMS ministers did *seem* initially supportive of the UK’s growing creative (and later digital) economy, and therefore media education generally. This jarred with the views of a series of education ministers, many of them in thrall to the then Chief Inspector of schools, Chris Woodhead. Woodhead’s negative comments for all aspects and types of media education at all levels are legion, and there is no need to rehearse them here. However, the central problem was that government saw only the financial benefits of the media and creative industries; so, any media education not geared towards the professions was seen as somehow a failure: a media education is only any good if it is training people for the creative economy.

The early-to-mid 1990s had seen a large growth in this sector. With the popularity of the web, and a maturing of mobile communications, the ‘new media’ industries flourished. No aspect of the media industry was immune as the Fourth Estate moved out of Fleet Street and away from ‘hot press’ to ‘cold type’ production. This period also saw a revived UK film industry competing with Hollywood on its own terms and a music industry which was the envy of the world. Satellite and cable technology had also radically altered the ‘two-party-state’ of British television. For David Buckingham and Ken Jones:

Outside the school, the principles of cultural organisation were different: new forms of communications technology proliferated; the regulated duopoly in television was brought to an end by deregulation and channel multiplication; the audience for mass media fragmented; and cultural hybridity became – at least in some cultural sectors – a norm. (2001)

The Docklands area of East London became the home for emerging new cable and telecommunications industries, all supported and often financed by John Major’s Conservative government.

Media programmes, of all flavours, reflected these changes and flourished in the ‘new’ university sector. Many of the older and more established universities would also start to

teach media and film related courses too – but they seemed immune from criticism; the then Education Secretary, John Patten, in a widely reported article for *The Spectator*, called media courses and related programmes, ‘cultural Disneyland’:

I have...ordered an enquiry within the Department for Education to try to find out why some young people are turned off by the laboratory, yet flock to the seminar room for a fix of one of those contemporary pseudo-religions like media studies.  
(1993)

The suspicion that many in education had about these new programmes now had shape and flight, and the following decade saw further interventions from Woodhead, and media commentators. As Christine Geraghty later noted:

‘The rest of Higher Education might be grateful to us for this; while art and design have the problem of being ‘cool’ and erstwhile problem subjects like sociology have achieved some form of respectability, media studies is still the object of scorn.  
(2002)

Media programmes also suffered from being framed as ‘vocational’ not just by public discourse, but by higher education more widely. There is the adjunct suggestion here too that this was a problem which did not exist before 1992. So, the teaching of media and creative subjects is now used as a device to attack the ‘post-92’ university sector as a whole; this logic can be perversely used to justify the axiom: you cannot be a good university if you have a good and successful Media Studies department.

An argument which began at this time, which still persists today, is that if all media graduates do not find employment directly in the creative industries, then there must be something wrong with media education. A report from the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) in 1999 found that eleven per cent of media graduates were still unemployed six months after graduation – this was compared with a national average at the time of seven per cent for all subjects studied at university. The same report found that of the 72 percent who found employment in the UK after graduation, just fifteen per cent were working in media related fields with more than ten per cent working in unskilled jobs. Only three per cent of media studies graduates went on to any further postgraduate study (see Tysome, 1999).

These sorts of statistics were used to illuminate Media Studies’ short-comings, and still are. We are still stuck in the 1990s. While it is perhaps true that our subject area is more

industry facing than many others taught in universities, the fact remains that English Literature programmes are not considered to be inadequate if their graduates do not become novelists, poets or dramatists. Similarly does a politics graduate who does not become a councillor, MP or lobbyist feel that they have been short-changed? Are most Geography graduates working in areas directly related to their undergraduate studies?

## Discourses of legitimation

Media Studies has 'failed' to change the world in some respects but it has had one significant victory – it is now possible to study popular culture like *This is England* within the formal education system. (Stafford, 2010: 10)

Such a victory / loss equation is indicative of Subject Media's (ideal) identity – we've analysed this at length elsewhere (Bennett, Kendall and McDougall, 2011). For our purpose here, we can draw out three key ideas in Stafford's assessment that offer different answers to the question we address in this article. Firstly, the idea that studying 'popular culture' is a recent possibility. This suggests a reactive understanding of what we do – media education responding to the growth of 'the media'; there are all sorts of implications and assumptions in this that we might want to question. Second, the claim that that this is a 'victory' that must, then, have been fought for and that textual / cultural education is thus political. The fact that we've fought for space in the curriculum situates us, then, as progressive, radical, on the margins. Third, the idea that Media Studies might want to 'change the world'. Would we expect Natural Scientists to talk in this way? Perhaps, in the sense that scientists are a good thing for the human race, but probably not in the same way that Stafford means – there is a notion, then, that media education is somehow a bigger project than other disciplines might be engaged in. There's an arrogance in this, perhaps?

These rationales – calls for legitimation – for 'Subject Media' tend to be framed by three discourses which sometimes combine and sometimes conflict with one another. The 'Powerful Media' discourse mobilises the view that Media Studies can take its place among similar areas of knowledge such as Politics, Environmental Studies, History, Astrophysics in building knowledge and critical analysis of ontological raw material – observing and critiquing what's 'there'. The Economic Discourse says that there are jobs for creative and technically gifted people in media sectors and there are jobs for media-savvy people in all areas of the economy, so within this way of thinking, media education exists to equip its students with skills that can help them in the jobs market on graduating.

The 'Media Literacy' discourse articulates the claim that media students are better

equipped to communicate in the modern world if they have the analytical skills to critically interpret media texts. This makes media education a kind of extension of English, but it also combines with the 'Powerful Media' discourse when it carries a protectionist weight – that is, when it is argued that people are better able to resist the power of 'the media' if they are media literate. Equally, we can put the 'Powerful Media' together with the Economic discourse – one of the reasons why media is powerful is because it is big business and because politicians are arguably as concerned with media 'spin' as they are with policies. And we can connect 'Media Literacy' to economics when we understand literacy as active and creative – communicating effectively in new media environments is, we are told, increasingly important for employers.

On the other hand, through, there are tensions between these ways of understanding what we do – some courses are far more critical and 'academic' whilst others are more skills-based and creative. And if students can choose options within our courses, then it's difficult to pin down which versions of media education are at work. The most common rift is between the economic discourse and the others – if students are to be critical of media influence, then this doesn't sit comfortably with the idea that they should be 'trained up' to be part of the process they are critiquing.

As media educators, we should be well versed in the analysis of ideology. The philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2011) includes the 'Gleichschaltung' of higher education, in the UK context in which he works, in his broad theory of the 'end times' of capitalism and the function of ideology. For Žižek, this is one among a range of connected examples of the economy itself increasingly functioning as the hegemonic ideology:

The reduction of higher education to the task of producing socially useful expert knowledge is the paradigmatic form of the 'private use of reason' in contemporary global capitalism... This is why those Leftists who claim that, today, the pursuit of 'pure' philosophical topics... is proving more and more useless, and that we should move on to concrete political actions, miss the point well-taken by those in power. Are these proposed reforms not clear proof that the latter are fully aware of the subversive potential of apparently 'useless' theoretical ratiocinations?' (Žižek, 2011: 412)

In relation to our competing discourses, the shift here has been to position the economic discourse of the value of media education as a form of 'training' to 'upskill' the economy as the language game through which the others are translated and subordinated, marginalised, excluded as 'useless'. This would appear to be a compelling analysis.

## Practical vs. vocational

In an address to St. Andrews University in 1825, John Stuart Mill said:

At least there is a tolerably general agreement about what an university is not. It is not a place of professional education. Universities are not intended to teach the knowledge required to fit men for some special mode of gaining their livelihood... What professional men should carry away with them from an university, is not professional knowledge, but that which should direct the use of their professional knowledge, and bring the light of general culture to illuminate the technicalities of a special pursuit. (1825)

At first glance, this looks no different to Amis' position over 100 years later, but it is markedly different because Mill was writing at a time when there were no polytechnics and pretty much all university education was vocational; subjects such as Classics were taught specifically to prepare students for the clergy. Around this time there were quite heated debates about the introduction of English Literature at Oxford University; Jane Austen had to defend the novel as something worth critical appreciation and examination in her own *Northanger Abbey*.

Just a few decades after Mills' address, many new 'civic' universities were created in the 1870s and 1880s in the now industrialised cities of Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester. These 'Russell Group' institutions were established for the purpose of producing graduates who could work in the new industrialised economy, and they taught subjects such as Commerce for the first time. The problem was that these universities shifted over time towards the models of the older institutions, such as Oxford and Cambridge.

One of the lessons to be drawn from the history of universities...is that subjects which were initially introduced for broadly practical purposes have outlived those purposes and gone on to establish themselves as scholarly disciplines in their own right. (Collini, 2012a: 53).

So, why hasn't this happened with media education? One reason could be that what we would now quickly recognise as media education – but called 'Film Appreciation' – has been around since at least the 1950s. However, as a subject it did not originate in the universities, but in *schools*. This is a crucial, but inescapable difference.

Motivated by the first British Film Institute (BFI) conference in 1946, a group of

largely London-based schoolteachers began using film in their classes (see Bolas, 2009). There was certainly a sense of paternalist inoculation here as it was felt that children and young people needed to be ‘protected’ from this potentially dangerous media. Whatever the reasons, there was no conceptualising here of ‘training’ young people for a particular purpose or industry; there was no real ‘practical’ value given to get school children to think critically about cinema, at all.

This Film Appreciation movement gained further traction in schools in the 1960s and 1970, and film clubs sprang up all across London – although this was generally extra-curricula. The domestic cinema market was very healthy indeed. The UK television industry was also in the ascendant, with seminal programmes such as *Armchair Theatre* (1956-1974), *Z-Cars* (1962-1978), and *Doctor Who* (1962-1989 and 2005-present) being created and the new channels of ITV and BBC2 broadcasting for the first time. It was a marked period of growth and opportunity, and as is often the case, education was quick to adjust and reconfigure.

The 1963 Newsom Report (which looked at average and below average children) suggested UK schools were divided along the lines of those teachers who saw a media education as an essential part of ‘good’ citizenship and a means to promote ‘critical thinking’ and who taught media in polytechnics and some universities to students who wanted to make their own films and who wanted to work in the then thriving British film and television industries.

However, the teachers who used film in their teaching in some way, were themselves coming from the later termed ‘facilitating’ subjects of Physics, Geography and Economics, and this is another crucial difference to note. Len Masterman (1985) and later David Buckingham (2003) would argue for a film education to be an integral part of Geography, Science, English and History subjects. Both Masterman and Buckingham conceived that the use of films in teaching was a way of scaffolding the learning of less able children, an intervention seen by some in the field as a serious misstep that we have paid for ever since:

[I have] used a great deal of film in my English teaching in the 1960s and early 1970s, particularly with low-stream kids to whom print was synonymous with failure. (Masterman, 1985, xiv)

So, those who practiced an early type of media education were not particularly enlightened, perhaps. But it is view that continues today.

Christine Geraghty rightly describes the almost debilitating effect these constant slights can have:

Many academics find themselves continually in a defensive position over the subject area and it can be difficult to debate problems honestly in the context of a political need to defend the whole field against unjustified attacks. (2002)

From the 1990s onwards, media education has become the scapegoat for a perception that higher education is ‘dumbing down’ (see Barker & Petley, 2001). The phrase ‘Mickey Mouse courses’ has become a catch-all term to frame aspects of provision in the newer universities which were vocational and more focused on the creative industries.

While in opposition, the Conservative MP Michael Gove was highly critical of media education. His attacks on what he sees as ‘soft’ subjects shows no sign of abating now he is Secretary of State for Education (at the time of writing). Right-wing commentators such as Toby Young and Janet Street Porter have both stated publicly that they would never employ a Media Studies graduate, the latter claiming:

The government promised more young people in higher education, but they are leaving school with qualifications that are pretty lightweight, often in subjects that are a joke, such as media studies. (2009)

As has previously been noted in an earlier MERJ editorial (see Berger & McDougall, 2010), Simon Pegg (who wrote a Marxist critique of *Star Wars* [1977] for his undergraduate dissertation) played Young in the film *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People* (Weide, 2008) – based on Young’s autobiography – and Street Porter herself has employed one of the editors of this journal. Media education often has cause to criticise the mass media, so we should not be surprised, perhaps, when they bite back. In some ways this mirrors the uneasy relationship which exists between novelists and literary criticism.

However, Russell Group universities are now reported to be encouraging prospective applicants to study ‘facilitating subjects’ (see Berger & McDougall, 2011). The new fees regime in higher education has also mobilised discourses around economies of scale:

Under a sixth-form funding formula known as ‘weighting’, lessons in less traditional subjects such as media studies receive 12 per cent more funding. (Clark, 2012)

The older university sector is one more focused on research than the newer universities created in the 1990s, but that playing field is hardly a level one either, as Collini points out:

[T]he combined budgets of the seven research councils in the UK amount to some £3 billion, but only around 3% of this goes to the AHRC [Arts & Humanities Research Council]. (2012a: 32)

The AHRC funds pretty much all research in our subject area.

### **Newman revisited**

As the author of *The Idea of a University* (1996 [1858]) John Henry Newman is of interest to Collini. And, whilst Newman's relevance for media education might be less than immediately clear, he was the subject of an imagined conversation with Lave and Wenger in the recent *After the Media* (Bennett, Kendall and McDougall, 2011: 163). For our interest here, an edited summary of that hypothetical exchange follows:

Newman is often cited as an intellectual to whom we can return as a foundation for the kind of personalised, student-centred experience the contemporary educational institution is generally unable to provide, hence Collini's recourse. However, Collini is critical of Newman, viewing both his monolithic view of a University and his theological agenda (the teaching of the bible as historical 'fact') with suspicion. Furthermore, liberal educators seeking an unlikely 'poster boy' in the form of the recently beatified Cardinal might be guilty of forging a profoundly awkward alliance between 'critical' academics on the left and his mandate *ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem!* (from shadows and symbols into the truth!).

At the same time, in his discussion of the distinction between the vocational modality and this more spiritual, liberating ideal – currently delimited within the economic discourse – Newman articulates a view of the learning process which resonates with the more recent and fashionable work of Lave and Wenger (1991) on 'communities of practice'. What the many recent considerations of contemporary higher education and particularly 'widening participation' in the 'light' of Newman's rhetoric and vision of expansion observe is that the spirit of the enterprise has been undermined by the institutional discourses – of the student as customer, of 'quality control' and of input–output measurement of learning against targets.

Hence it is that education is called 'Liberal'. A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or what in a former Discourse I have ventured to call a philosophical habit. This then I would assign as the special fruit of the education furnished at a University, as contrasted with other places of teaching or modes of

teaching. This is the main purpose of a University in its treatment of its students. (Newman, 1996 [1858]: 77)

Notwithstanding the problematic belief in ‘truth’ – whether theological or ‘just’ ontological – media educators might well look again at what we think we mean by ‘critical’ when we feel ourselves tempted by the guilty pleasures of the employability discourse – where economic determinism becomes common sense. Do we still want to nurture this ‘philosophical habit’ in the face of renewed attacks from the latest reformers?

### **Transforming Media Education**

While the criticisms of media education have not changed a great deal in the last two decades, the subject – and the way it is taught in schools, colleges and universities – certainly has. Indeed, some of the emerging media studies programmes in the latter-half of the 20th century had an ultimate purpose to foster a sense of media literacy in students. Some of these early teachers of media wanted nothing more than to make their students think critically about media texts, and the institutional contexts which surrounded their creation, in the same way they already did for novels, plays and poems.

These teachers were attempting to redefine the very term ‘literacy’, but not necessarily in ways to produce the media practitioners of the future. It has been a challenge as some have observed:

Such an emphasis on critical thinking would be commended at the traditional universities. But media studies as a former poly subject faces an extra battle to gain credibility among the very media it seeks to understand. (Rowan, 2001)

Media education’s own lack of confidence has seen it try almost anything to gain academic credibility, but it moved too far away from the media and creative industries (and practice) towards ‘high theory’, just at a time when students were becoming more involved in creating their own media texts. As Buckingham notes:

Media teaching has historically been dominated by ‘critical analysis’ – and indeed, by a relatively narrow form of *textual* analysis [original italics]. (2003, 49)

This has been a core problem for media education. As the ‘high-theory’ of Media Studies was integrated into the wider arts, humanities and social science subjects, many History programmes started to ‘look’ very much like Media Studies – but escaped the

critical discourses surrounding it, because of the way they were packaged. This has caused further disintegration as the rest of the Arts, Humanities and Social Science subjects have coalesced around our area, and taken the ‘best bits’ for their own.

For whenever ‘media and communications’ is mentioned in official dispatches, there will gather those who go unrecognised in this designation – those who teach cultural studies, film studies, journalism, radio, television studies, critical theory – and those for whom ‘communications’ or indeed ‘media studies’ may mean something distinct and separate as a discipline, not apparent when they are casually yoked together in their usual alliance. (Geraghty, 2002)

Similarly, Buckingham and Jones called for some new thinking on this over a decade ago:

Media Studies – historically concerned not only with film and television but with the press and radio, with advertising, with comics and so on – [has become] ‘moving image studies’. (2001)

The slow move towards medium specificity has also resulted in a fetishism of technology, as our media schools and departments engage in type of ‘arms race’ in the rush to acquire the latest production equipment:

Some students (and some employers) are obsessive about access to the right equipment and endless time to use it...And yet one of the functions of academic work is to be skeptical about the notion that rapidly changing technology will transform the future, determining in itself what can be done and how it can be used. (Geraghty, 2002)

This obsession with technology has been to the detriment of media education. We need now to turn away from the knots of ‘high theory’ we find ourselves tangled up in and return to our modern, completely mediated, lives and the core principles of professional conduct.

### **How soon is now?**

There is plenty to be proud of though, even if we judge ourselves on the same terms we are judged by others. In 2002 the then *Times Higher Education Supplement* (now *Times*

*Higher Education*) reported that:

Critics of media studies and other non-traditional courses will have to eat their words this week after the release of figures that show media graduates to be the most employable university leavers. (Utley, 2002)

In addition, The Institute for Employment's *Creative Graduates, Creative Futures* report found that:

The vast majority of graduates engage in work and employment that is creative and closely related to their field of expertise or course of study...Over the past 20 years, employment in the creative sector has grown at an average of 4.2 per cent, per annum, which is four and a half times the rate of employment growth experienced across all industries during the same period. (Ball, et al, 2010: xxi-6)

Media education is at its best when it is studying and critiquing practice and policy. A media education should not just be for those who want a career in the creative and media industries in the same way not all literature graduates will write novels or plays.

In an article for *The Guardian*, to publicise *What Are Universities For?* Collini went further and stated that:

It is worth emphasising, in the face of routine dismissals by snobbish commentators, that many of these courses may be intellectually fruitful as well as practical: media studies are often singled out as being the most egregiously valueless, yet, there can be few forces in modern societies so obviously in need of more systematic and disinterested understanding than the media themselves. (2012b)

And we would agree. We would also strongly agree with Mill, that a university education should not be solely about gaining 'professional knowledge' – even if it is, then we still do pretty well; a media education should direct students' use of their professional knowledge. But who are they being directed by?

Even today, we would suggest that a significant minority of practicing media academics have studied the subject at undergraduate level themselves, often coming from the related (but more credible) disciplines of English, History, Politics and Sociology. It is this which has to change, and soon. Finally, what is a university if it is not a medium itself? So, to

suggest that a subject which studies mediums at close quarters has no place in one, is ridiculous:

[Universities] have become an important medium – perhaps the single most national medium – for conserving, understanding, extending, and handing on to subsequent generations the intellectual, scientific and artistic heritage of mankind. (Collini, 2012a: 198)

In this issue of MERJ we further explore the *medium* of media education by publishing work from practitioner-researchers who all, in different ways, articulate their own versions of these discourses of purpose and value. Although this issue has no stated theme, our authors are all sharing research relating to change and transformation – of media, text, context and audience – and what such shifts mean for pedagogy and for learning. Marcus Leaning assesses the genealogy of games studies in higher education and its range and scope in 2012. Auli Harju, Val Pippis and Conceicao Costa all share their research into social media education and various issues of access and effectiveness, with Costa using Social Network Analysis to elicit empirical data demonstrating social media activity among school students in Lisbon. We make no apology for publishing more research into ‘Media 2.0’ activity and indeed the volume of submissions we receive in this area is evidence of the need for educator-researchers to extend this field of enquiry. Joanna MacDonnell applies a specific model – from Belbin – to group work in media production with the objective of moving practice forward through new strategies for role allocation. Elizabeth Marsh and Maria Elena Villar tackle head on the most ‘thorny’ of issues for media education and equality – the ‘digital divide’ and the lack of ‘uniform proficiency’ among and between socioeconomic groups. This is a problem we’ve talked about in media education for many years, but Marsh and Villar provide new research data to better inform the debate.

In September, we will host another round of discussion seminars at the Media Education Summit, this time called ‘MERJ Conversations’. We expect to publish developed versions of some of those in our next edition and, like the articles here, one way or another they will be working through, challenging and improving, what we’re for and what we’re about.

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