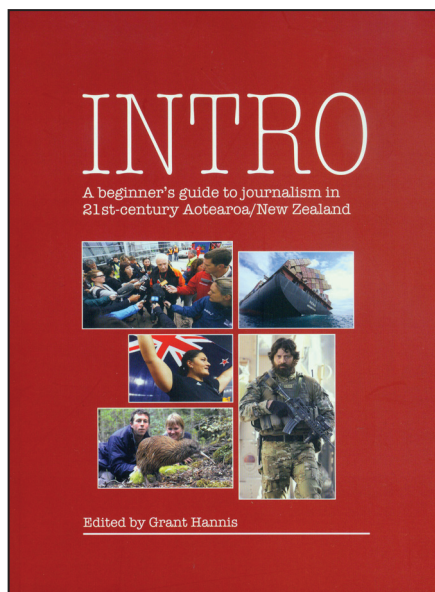

Reviews

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Enthusiasm for journalism evident throughout

INTRO: A Beginner's Guide to Journalism in 21st-century Aotearoa/New Zealand, edited by Grant Hannis (3rd ed) Wellington: New Zealand Journalists Training Organisation, 2013, 371pp. ISBN 9780473266424

GOOD journalism courses have long been accustomed to the challenge of squeezing in more and more elements, as new skills jostle for a place alongside still-essential basics. These courses not only reflect the spectrum of industry practice—and it's an increasingly spreading one—but are trying to future-proof their students even as industry itself really can't say how it will all turn out. So a single handbook to cover everything for the trainee faces the same challenges when it comes to trying to cram it all in.



It's a big ask for the latest edition of *Intro*—a lot has happened in the last six years—yet overall it does an impressive job and manages to be inspirational at the same time. Indeed, many of its chapters will be more than just an introduction or 'a beginner's guide' but an ongoing reference for practising journalists (the social media chapter alone should be required reading for any current practitioners who aren't yet using it to the full). For trainees especially, though, it gives a demystified 'how to do it', as well as access to the experience, thoughts and tips of leading journalists. With this edition also comes extra online content in the form of useful exercises to accompany the chapters.

Intro, commissioned and published by the New Zealand Journalists Training Organisation, is also the only guide specifically for those working in Aotearoa/New Zealand, while still giving a solid grounding to take with them wherever they roam in their career. Practical examples from New Zealand journalism's rich history dominate throughout the book, occasionally alongside useful overseas ones. So *The New Zealand Herald's* award-winning use of different social media during the Christchurch earthquake (p. 53) is as excellent a practical example as the BBC's use of it to seek amputee athletes around the world and thus obtaining such an interviewee from Mongolia (p.55).

And so too is the *Wainuiomata News's* use to obtain their 'heroes of the storm' stories (p.55). And of course, only such a guide would have thorough chapters on Māori affairs reporting (by Carol Archie, covering this since the 1970s) and Inclusive journalism (by Tara Ross, award-winning reporter and researcher into Pasifika news media in Aotearoa/New Zealand), pertaining to 'New Zealand's diverse society'. Likewise, the essential Media Law and Ethics chapters are specific to Kiwi journalists.

The beginner gets the benefit of experience of both journalism educators and that of journalists currently

in the field. Most chapters are by academics who previously worked as journalists (and probably still keep their hand in). For a range of their industry experience, see the short biographies at the front of the book. They bring not only their own 'field experience' but, from teaching, the honed skill of conveying how to do it, the handy warnings of where numerous students slip up, and, though this is sometimes overlooked, they bring an overview of the broader industry practice, whether it be consensus or differences. Where relevant, they include the reflection and context offered by research.

A few chapters are by current practitioners, such as the lively Sports Journalism chapter by Jim Kayes, who is an award-winning TV3 reporter. But he is also, concurrently, a radio broadcaster and magazine writer, and formerly a newspaper deputy sports editor. And notably, all relevant chapters, even the above-mentioned sports one, also include breakout boxes with current and/or notable New Zealand journalists' advice and experience.

So the Interviewing chapter by Catherine Strong, of Massey University (ex-newspaper, radio, TV and online journalist in five countries) also contains the invaluable tips on preparing question lines from Radio New Zealand's Kathryn Ryan. It

also has boxes on tips for live radio interviews from National Radio's Kim Hill and tips for television interviews from TV3's Mike McRoberts. These add to the chapter's already detailed 'how-to', including seven steps through the interview itself, six problem questions, and so forth. Even within Kayes' chapter, the breakout boxes alone contain advice from APN newspapers' head of sport Dylan Cleaver, *Rugby World* editor Gregor Paul, TVNZ's Marl Crysell, TV3's Michelle Pickles and Andrew Gourdie, *The New Zealand Herald's* Dana Johannsen and top freelancer Richard Boock.

This 2014 *Intro*, edited by Grant Hannis of Massey University, is light years away from the first in 1998 (in which, to declare an interest, I hastily co-authored a chapter). Before this there was the popular *Kiwi Journalist*, edited by Jim Tucker, with contributions from some leading names. The last edition of *Intro*, edited by Jim Tully, was in 2008 so, though some basics of good journalism are perennial, a new version is to be welcomed.

The challenges of structuring such a book are well met given the potential for overlap. Part A: Finding the News has 13 chapters, from essentials such as Newsgathering to those which might be considered specialisms, such as Science, Environment and Disaster

Reporting (Alan Samson) or Reporting Business and Economics (Allan Lee), but which really are something any news reporter should be able to tackle. These examples, like all the chapters, are accessible to not only trainees but journalists who want to brush up those skills. Part B: Telling the News then has six further chapters including News Writing (Grant Hannis), packed with useful examples. Understandably, aspects of this also crop up in some of the earlier chapters eg in science (p. 133). Part B chapters also account for different areas such as Radio Journalism (Jo Scott) and Television journalism (Jo Malcolm and Vicki Wilkinson-Baker). In this section too is where you'll also find Feature Writing per se, while back in Sport Journalism there is advice on writing sports features. One overlap area which could be tweaked is that of social media. The Social Media chapter (Helen Sissons) and Writing for News Websites (Helen Sissons and Danielle Mulrennan) are a credit to the authors for their concise coverage of a wide range of important developments, as well as their persuasive, straightforward explanations of why journalists should engage and how to go about it. Twitter basics are mentioned (pp. 56-7) in the Social Media chapter in Part A but while these are repeated in Part B's Writing

for News *websites*, it is also in this later chapter that really useful Twitter best practice details—relevant to all journalists—are to be found (pp. 285-6). Such advice would be useful in the earlier chapter, or at least with a mention of where it could be found, perhaps by way of a useful margin note such as that referring readers to a later chapter for copyright information (p. 56).

The design of the book (Allan Lee and Greg Treadwell) is another of its advantages: use of shaded box outs, especially for the journalists' advice, handy margin notes and so forth all draw the reader in, while also making it a great browse with ease of navigation. Colour photos are used where relevant in the News Photography chapter. As well as the numerous leading New Zealand journalists featured, the journalism academics' authorship is well spread, from AUT as well as Massey and Canterbury Universities, Wintec and the New Zealand Broadcasting School. And evident throughout the book is the enthusiasm from all for the pursuit of journalism as a career, and caring about doing it right.

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