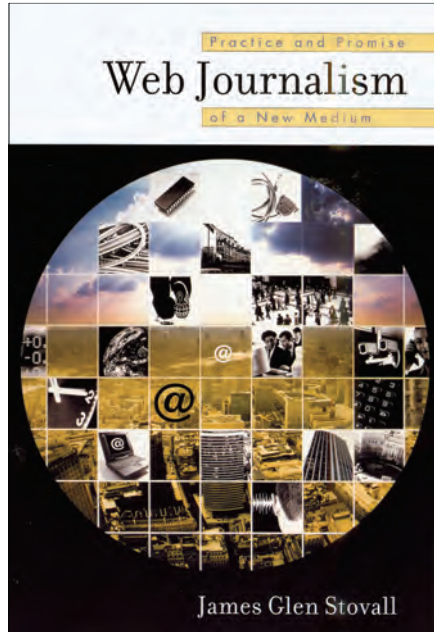Nelson Mandela casts at least some of the leader's glowing legacy in a whole new light. The chapters on Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine are similarly filled with fascinating reading that's nevertheless pervaded with a flat sense of pessimism.

Still, reality seldom makes comfortable material, and with its enduring focus on the disposed people of these countries, Pilger's work actually does become the 'beacon of light in dark times', as Noam Chomsky has labeled it.—*PETER GRIFFIN, journalist and documentary maker*

Thoughtful web challenges

Web Journalism: Practice and Promise of a New Medium, by James Glen Stovall. New York: Pearson, 2004. 239pp. ISBN 0205353983

O NE of the ironies of the digital media revolution in New Zealand is the limited use of web media and web casting at journalism schools compared with across the Tasman. While many Australian media and communication schools have developed major and varied online publishing such as Queensland University of Technology's East Timor project (Tickle, 2003) and the Papua New Guinea corruption reporting model (Tanner, 2004), only one NZ journalism course has a fully fledged 'new media' paper. Few journalism schools operate their own innovative online news services, preferring to encourage students to file for traditional media, mostly community newspapers.

Although there is a growing range of online media texts on the market, journalism educators are always on the alert for a new good one. *Web Journalism* is more of a thoughtful critique of online publishing than a 'how to' training text. While it tackles the challenges posed by the Daily.Me syndrome, it also questions the ability of journalists to think afresh. Stovall argues that journalists are trained to think lineally and they

mostly comfortable with the inverted pyramid and other structures: 'It will take some time to reformulate their thinking' (p. 196).

The book has useful chapters on the infographics revolution; photojournalism, sound and the web; visual logic; engaging the audience and media law online. Web Journalism explores the so-called five web media characteristics—*immediacy* (the speed of the web provides an incentive to treat information with less care); *capacity* (unlimited but better navigation schemes needed); *flexibility* (the web can handle most forms of storytelling but is sometimes hampered by the state of the technology); *permanence* (while the web need never lose any information, many news sites have not done a good job of archiving); and *interactivity* (the biggest question of all).

The web changes the media-audience-environment relationship. If the audience isn't satisfied, anybody can start their own news site at relatively little cost. While *Web Journalism* has some challenging insights with useful web resources, its muted design and lack of visual appeal undermine its potential for a course text.—*DAVID ROBIE, associate professor in journalism at AUT University*

References

Tanner, S. (2004). Skills for investigative reporting. Asia Pacific Journalism Centre

www.apjc.org.au/program5.html

Tickle, S. (2003). Integrating student-centred learning in Asia-Pacific. *Pacific Journalism Review*, 9: pp. 149-155.