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This slim volume is a welcome addition to the small number of textbooks dealing with the Canadian media. It is divided into six chapters and includes a historical overview of Canadian politics and media development as well as a discussion of theories of communication. Two subsequent chapters present data on the ways in which the 1979 - 1980 federal campaigns were reported by the electronic and print media. The final sections describe government regulation of the media and issues relating to media and politics in Canada. The text is well written, the layout is clear and the arguments are presented in a straightforward manner, suitable for introductory level courses. The book is also useful as supplementary material in advanced courses.

The introductory chapter deals with the growth of the media in four periods: pre-confederation, confederation developments, the era of mass circulation daily 1900 - 1930, and the multi-media society of the present. These twenty pages achieve the difficult task of setting media developments in historical perspective and show that the number and kinds of media a country has depend on its cultural heritage. English Canadians have a longer tradition in print-media than French Canadians, who have preferred broadcasting from the beginning. This imbalance continues to be visible today in media distribution and use patterns. Culture has also had an effect on the different ways in which Anglo- and Francophone journalists define their social role and the style of reporting they adopt.

In the chapter entitled, "Thinking About Communication," the authors introduce us to Lasswell's linear communication model -- who says what to whom in what channel with what effect -- and argue that the gatekeeping has to do with describing the event selection component of the communication process, while agenda setting has to do with audience response. Citing U.S. data, a "limited effects" paradigm is advanced, and content analysis is used to demonstrate the relatively homogeneous media agenda in the 1979 - 1980 Canadian political campaigns. Their "thinking about communication" is thus in the U. S. behavioural tradition, leaving out alternative approaches offered by Marxists and "cultural theorists" in the seventies, who argue for a more inclusive conception of media-functioning in modern society, and utilize other methodologies in addition to content analysis.
Soderlund, Briggs, Romanow and Wagenberg distinguish three important "gates": cultural, organizational, and technological, which affect the selection process. These are translated into three variables: English/French, broadcast/print, and six different (public/private) organizational criteria, all of which are coded in the content analysis. Though this approach provides massive amounts of data, the conclusions one can draw from them are disappointing as evidenced by the authors' comment: "it appears that the six media organizations responded to party election strategies in a generally similar manner," and "the reasons for this homogeneity are not completely clear" (p. 71). Perhaps, one might venture, the type of net cast (content analysis) is not sufficient for "catching" the fish one is looking for.

The authors themselves, it seems to me, come to the conclusion that content analysis cannot supply sufficient information on the "why's" of election coverage. The book, therefore, utilizes other evidence (legal and historical) to demonstrate governmental and stylistic constraints on media election reporting. Chapter Five introduces such criteria as cultural identity, foreign ownership, content regulations and broadcast licensing procedures as the framework in which Canadian election coverage is anchored. The development and connection between these criteria are very well presented and provide a welcome overview of these complex issues. In Chapter Six, finally, "some reflections on the media handling of political information," (p. 127) which some of us have called the "presentational characteristics" of media programs are discussed (Robinson and Straw, 1983). Clearly, these characteristics have an influence on the intelligibility of messages. Among the characteristics mentioned are television's "U.S. production styles" which highlight leaders rather than teams; negativism; and the insertion of polls as a means of simplifying complex social issues. Not mentioned are the two-valued manichean tradition and various other stylistic measures which help journalists capture attention and find a "peg" for their stories. If one views mass communication as a circular process, as Stuart Hall (1980) suggests, then the repertoire of stylistic devices used by journalists as encoders and "read" by audiences as decoders become important as the common currency of the communicational interchange.

Although there could have been greater integration of recent theoretical writing in this textbook, its strength lies in three places: the book systematically analyzes and includes the Quebec media, their history and point of view. It is also strong in drawing attention to the historical and legal frameworks in which Canadian election coverage occurs. Beyond that the authors have lived up to their promise that "unless a professor's scrawl is translated into something readable, manuscripts die on the foolscap" (Introduction). Since this effort is by no means a "still birth," may it find its way into many classrooms.
REFERENCES
