

radical

1. arising from or going to a root or source, basic
2. departing markedly from the usual or customary; extreme
3. favouring or effecting fundamental or revolutionary changes in current practices, conditions, or institutions

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This 30th edition of *Rhodes Journalism Review* is timed and themed for the 2nd World Journalism Education Congress which the School of Journalism and Media Studies is hosting at Rhodes University in Grahamstown from 5 to 7 July.

"Journalism Education in an Age of Radical Change" as a theme forces us to deal with three time frames – the past, the present and the future. When pressed to admit that the future is uncertain, complex and demanding a change of thinking or direction, an exploration of the past at this juncture helps us figure out not only how we got here, but also what dominant ideas guided our choices which brought us to this point. That then gives the present a little clarity. But what will the future look like? What is it asking of us? Despite the confident predictions of the most technologically-savvy among us, I'm not sure that Marshall McLuhan wasn't right when he said: "When faced with a totally new situation, we tend always to attach ourselves to the objects, to the flavour of the most recent past. We look at the present through a rear view mirror. We march backwards into the future" (in the *Medium is the Message* 1967: 74, written with Quentin Fiore).

Predictions about the future are based on the upheavals we experience now in the present. Our technological and financial uncertainty is driving us to make certain attachments. Consequently these attachments will determine that future we're striving so hard to figure out. In other words, will the future demand ever-increasing facility with new media technologies and a jettisoning of old media because we've decided today that it will?

When we started commissioning articles for this *Review* I had in my mind a working definition of "radical" which assumed a drastic break with the past and a need for entirely new thinking. But as the articles poured in, and particularly those which came from working journalists and editors who we had asked how they would strengthen journalism education, we started to see two divergent positions emerging:

- Return to basics: lay down a strong liberal arts education, encourage curiosity, teach students language skills and story-crafting skills, don't worry too much about technology, they'll learn that on the job, wherever and however that might be.
- Forget old media, abandon the idea of working for a boss, pack their heads full of new media technological skills, teach them self-sufficiency, how to run their own businesses and work out the finances. (And this came from African journalists as much as those based in the countries facing deep financial crises and the closure of newspapers.)

How to make sense of this? Well of course, the conference which has attracted hundreds of educators from all over the world will delve deeply into these issues and no doubt the tea-time and lunch-time conversations will be fascinating and enlightening as we pool our knowledge and experiences. But for the purposes of this editorial I decided to take a closer look at the word "radical". And guess what? The same bifurcation appears in the meaning of the word. Feeling tectonic shifts under our feet we don't quite understand, we're tempted to get *radical* – "to go back to basics" OR "to get extreme, change everything".

It's a complicated conversation, but an absolutely necessary one.

Anthea Garman, Editor