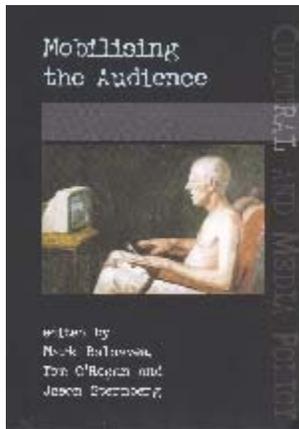


**Mobilising the audience** edited by Mark Balnaves, Tom O'Regan and Jason Sternberg. St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 2002, pp. XII + 363, A\$34.00, paperback, ISBN 0 7022 3205 X.



The story of the development and publication of *Mobilising the audience* (sketched in the acknowledgments pages) is a fascinating one in the context of Australian cultural and media studies. The volume was published in association with the Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy (CMP) based at Griffith University from 1999 until its closure in 2002. The editors write that *Mobilising the audience* emerged out of the 'intellectual milieu of and supportive environment provided by the CMP as a national research centre' (p. xi). Six of the volume's fourteen chapters came out of an 'Audiences Research Workshop' organised by O'Regan and Sternberg in September 1999. Other chapters 'were drawn from the CMP's national research network' (p. xi). The chapters – or 'case studies' of audience research projects – cover an impressive range of Australian cultural and media audiences. The editors' stated aim is:

...to showcase the uses of audience research by various actors, identify the different kinds of audience research practice currently being undertaken, and draw out the implications of audience research processes (p. 2).

Certainly, *Mobilising the audience* illustrates the value of bringing together the work of university-based researchers with 'industry' or 'structural' (p. 2) research undertaken in the government or private sector. Much of the research presented is genuinely interdisciplinary in its practice and reach, a promise often made by researchers in media and cultural studies but one that frequently seems difficult to meet.

The introduction states that the book's:

...central concern is how diverse communicators – TV stations, museums, gaming companies and arts agencies – "mobilise their audiences" through their use of audience research' (p. 1).

How, that is, do various actors 'govern' their audiences? The first chapter, by Balnaves and O'Regan, presents an analysis of the Quit Smoking campaign. This chapter teases out the implications of the book's focus on audience 'governance'. The case studies presented in the remaining chapters focus on: the politics of ratings, the child audience, generational profiling, arts audiences and cultural attendance, gaming fans, newspaper readerships, and Indigenous audience research in the context of a rapidly changing national and global environment. Ironically, the rapid pace of change in Australian media cultures and practices over the last few years means that a number of chapters already feel dated. At the same time though, a corollary of the book's aim to 'showcase' innovative research is an insistence on the need for more work in the field; many of the contributors anticipate future studies by themselves or others which could usefully build

on their examples. Gillard's chapter on online museum visitors, for instance, points out that:

...the individual studies will date, but the argument about what is needed for the task of understanding visitor experiences might prove a useful test for research to come (p. 171).

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