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Media Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Book Review
JMC 455 Honors Contract

Over the last 25 years, journalism and the world of digital media have evolved at an unprecedented rate—opening countless nooks and crannies for entrepreneurial writers, broadcasters, videographers, and storytellers of all kinds to find an audience and build a brand. Now, more than ever, it is essential for young adults in this field to be prepared to navigate the era of new media, layoffs, and persistent innovation as they search for ways to support themselves and their aspirations. Today, countless universities and even some secondary educators have begun to offer courses that seek to inform students of this turbulent yet exciting landscape they are about to enter. However, it is foolish to consider using supplementary material that is not as molded by the changing world as digital media entrepreneurship is today. *Media Innovation and Entrepreneurship* and its editors Michelle Ferrier, an associate professor in the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University and the founder of Troll-Busters.com, and Elizabeth Mays, the operations and marketing manager for the Rebus Foundation and associate professor at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University, effectively created just that.

Currently in its first edition, this comprehensive textbook is comprised of ten chapters that combine curated storytelling and traditional textbook style writing to build an elaborate tool that is “structured to move students from ideation to securing funding.” What is easily the most unique feature of this work is its “open textbook” design. Through the Rebus Community, a Canada-based publishing company, Ferrier and Mays were able to build a product that was “created collaboratively and live[s] as a dynamic document for others to share, remix, and reuse”, as is stated in the preface. This brilliant format, which sets the new benchmark for digital media and entrepreneurship texts, is a breath of fresh air for journalism and mass communication students and a world away from the hardcover “Principles of Journalism 101”. The style is highlighted by the contributions of 18 authors, ranging from practicing journalists, to serial entrepreneurs, and the individual expertise they display in the chapters in which they appear. Perhaps the lone issue that is created with this format is the lack of a continuous voice. At times, the text makes an awkward shift within a chapter as the book moves from one narrative voice to another. Occasionally there appears a lack of flow that leaves the reader to only assume the author of one subchapter didn’t know where their piece was going in the sequencing of the chapter. All factors considered, especially given that change will be constant moving forward, this is an expected hurdle in the process that will likely lower as the book matures beyond its first version.

Although it is tough to capture exactly what it means to live the life of an entrepreneur, the open textbook style allows for more of a growing database of knowledge and a structured career-advising tool as opposed to an instruction manual. Content wise, *Media*

Innovation and Entrepreneurship offers much more than simply a step-by-step guide through the business of being an entrepreneur. Alluding to the aforementioned storytelling aspect, the text carefully weaves its way between the two central themes and brings into play a plethora of examples and firsthand accounts that offer exclusive insight from those who are currently exploring the new frontier of digital media innovation and entrepreneurship. In the book's chapter on freelancing, the reader is treated to three "From the Field" sidebars written by Mays, freelance writer Georgann Yara, and content marketer Lori Benjamin. Mays recalls her own freelancing story and explains how "one of the many misconceptions [she] had about freelancing was the amount of control [she] would have over [her] time." Yara makes numerous reality checks and explains how "figuring out a monthly budget seems like a no-brainer, but having one that's specific that you will stick to is crucial when you're not guaranteed a paycheck." Offering a new perspective from a business lens, Benjamin advises that when it comes to unpaid work, "go ahead and build expertise in an area with high income potential—but make sure you also feed your personal passions. That well of sincere interest and curiosity is where the best insights and writing come from." It is this element of the textbook that is as important to students as the numbers and logistics—they help make the work relatable and the endeavor of starting their own path a practical one.

The open textbook, *Media Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, is truly a unique and exciting concept even in its early stages. In an industry that has evolved so harshly through thousands of jobs lost, merged companies, and eliminated mediums, it is imperative that new generations of storytellers and entrepreneurs are being educated and prepared with material that is as dynamic as they must be. Through a cutting edge format and insightful yet familiar expert participation, this textbook goes beyond a traditional "course required reading" by not only investigating entrepreneurship, but doing so in a way that is relevant to the times and to the students in today's world of journalism. Its ability to be read in its entirety throughout the duration of a class or in hand chosen segments for specific supplementation makes this new-age book an essential for digital media entrepreneurship instructors and for those students entering the journalism or mass communication industry.