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Book review: Presenting The News On Air

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DAY, Anna & MOYA, Pattie (1998)

Presenting The News On Air.

Department of Journalism, University of Queensland.

ISBN: 186499035X. \$22.00 from UQ Department of Journalism, includes a cassette and self-paced exercises.

Reviewed by Antonio Castillo

Freelance Journalist, Author and Tutor

A welcome partnership coming from the University of Queensland. Anna Day from the Department of Journalism and Moya Pattie from the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology have produced a step-by-step text and audio voice broadcasting training. While primarily designed to coach radio journalism students, this self-paced program, can also be used by those whose voice is their main tool of trade. The likes of teachers, politicians, public speakers - among others- can also benefit by this training program.

The first part of the book is a series of short chapters providing practical "hands on" tips for young journalists for use in the newsroom or at the moment of going on air. The advice covers a wide range of aspects including how to set microphone levels, marking up scripts (or news bulletins) for a successful reading, and some handy hints on radio writing. The latter was prepared in conjunction with Martin Hirst, a former ABC and SBS journalist and now a Lecturer in Journalism at the University of Western Sydney Nepean.

The second part of the text and audio training (where the speech expertise comes on board) takes students through the complexities of the human voice box and provides easy to follow steps on how to improve radio presentation. Posture for news presenters, breathing techniques, how to learn to reduce the nasal sound in your voice (a common problem for many Australians, as pointed out by the authors), how to maintain a healthy voice and relaxation methods while presenting on air, are some of the extremely valuable aspects covered in this part of the text and tape.

The inclusion of a synopsis of the findings of the 1995 research on voice, speech and vocal hygiene differences between novices and professional radio presenters, carried out by Elizabeth Neil from the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology, is an interesting piece of information included in the text. Elizabeth Neil's research provides scientific evidence and answers to basic issues such as what does a good radio presenter sound like. She

makes an important comment - relevant to educators and media students alike - when she mentions the case of a student news presenter having a voice disorder. She correctly points out that problems like this severely diminish the chances of employment for the student. The message for journalism educators (and a warning) is clear: the need to implement screening procedures and possibly provision of treatment at the beginning of a journalism course.

The main value of this publication resides in its success in providing basic radio writing training, while at the same time giving a simple but very professional, easy -to- follow voice training for prospective or current radio presenters. A welcome partnership of academic expertise and know how. ■