

3

Institutions and moving-image media



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ABOUT MEDIA INSTITUTIONS

'Though a highly consumer-oriented good, [the media] is very different from most other such goods, like cars, toasters, washing machines. Whereas the latter provide the means, the former trades in the meanings of life.'

J. G. Blumler, media theorist



Figure 3.1 The Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) is located in Federation Square, Melbourne. ACMI has set itself the goal of becoming the world's leading moving image collection and exhibition centre. Australia has a unique range of media organisations. They extend from public sector organisations through private enterprise organisations to local community organisations built around volunteers.



3.1.1
ACMI



Figure 3.2 The media are consciousness industries. They help shape our individual thoughts from an early age. The media are a key factor among those who are influencing our society and culture.

The media have been called the consciousness industries, selling ways of thinking and ways of seeing or talking about the world. They are engaged in the production and distribution of states of mind. There can't really be a neutral position on the media; this is because its social function is so profound and so central.

Media institutions are different from other knowledge institutions (such as schools, churches or art galleries) in several ways:

- they carry all types of knowledge, including on behalf of other institutions
- they are open to all members of society
- the relationship between sender and receiver is often more complex
- the media reach more people, for longer (over a lifetime) than any other institution.

Convergence, divergence and remediation

Three terms used to describe the impact of the new communications media are convergence, divergence and remediation.

Convergence

The blurring of the boundaries between different telecommunications media is termed **convergence**. The boundary between television and the computer is already blurring. So too are the boundaries between newspapers, radio, computers, mobile phones, video game systems, and surveillance, identity and global positioning systems.

Media convergence can occur in two main ways:

- **Textual convergence.** This occurs when the genres and programs become hybrids and merge their textual characteristics together. This can also happen when the media products from one platform become influential in another. For example, movies and video games have experienced a convergence in recent times. Media companies such as Sony Entertainment

have products and franchises that span multiple platforms, such as both films and digital games.

- **Platform convergence.** Many news organisations have experienced platform convergence. This occurs when a new digital platform, such as online newspapers, takes on elements of other platforms. For example, news websites now contain print stories from newspapers, video footage from television and sound-only stories from radio. Platform convergence sometimes produces new media forms. For example, it could be argued that converging digital photography, the internet and mobile phones produced Snapchat and Instagram.

More and more, computers and smartphones are becoming the basis of all communication and entertainment. Convergence has also affected the major media and internet companies, with many forming alliances or merging to attempt to capitalise on, or survive in, new media industries.

Multimedia represents the convergence of text, pictures, video and sound into a single form. In the same way, the internet represents the convergence of television, radio, newspapers, literature, movies, video telephony, video games, telephone services, surveillance and tracking systems into a single form.

Media culture expert Henry Jenkins believes that convergence is not only technical, but also social and cultural. He speculates that new media will not simply replace old media but also interact

with it. He defines a ‘convergence culture’ where ‘old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways’.

Divergence

Technological developments are increasingly allowing many forms of media to be delivered through the one device. The mobile phone is the most successful. However, the smart TV also represents the same process of technological diversity.

Multiplying the forms of delivery of a media product is called **divergence**. For example, television is delivered in many ways: free-to-air, cable, satellite, the internet, handheld devices and ordinary household appliances. All of these are connected to the same global information networks. Divergence has also affected media owners, allowing a wide range of media content to be delivered by more than just the few media players in traditional media spaces.

Remediation

When new media became a significant force, it was thought that old media would die out. Instead, both new and traditional media have survived and borrowed from each other.

Nowadays both new and traditional media are constantly making references to each other and showing each other on screen. New media is especially good at this – re-distributing and re-making older forms of media such as movies and television shows.

New media has also borrowed most of the codes and conventions developed in traditional media. It has also added its own conventions (such as hypertext).

Remediation occurs when the codes, conventions or texts of one media platform are re-presented in another. The media is constantly borrowing from, and refashioning itself, say Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, the media academics who came up with the term.

Remediation can be either invisible or visible.

- **Invisible remediation.** When a comic is made into a movie, or when a movie becomes a television series, this is invisible remediation. Usually no reference is made to the original product – it just appears in another form on another media platform. The original media

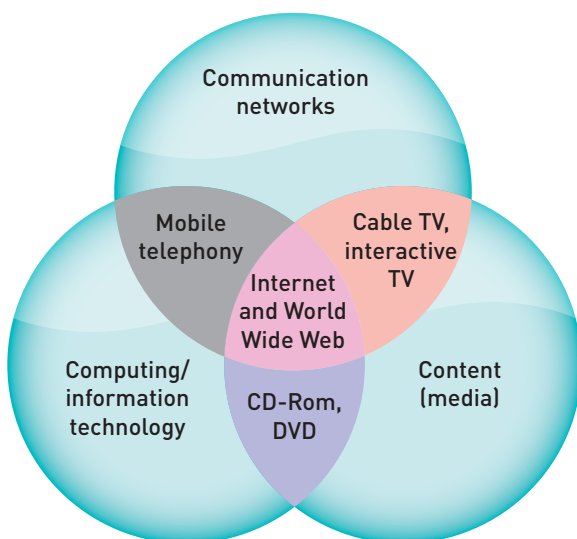


Figure 3.3 Trevor Barr, an Australian media theorist, illustrates what he terms ‘the Three Cs of Convergence’, where the merging of communication networks, computer technology and content create overlapping and convergent new media forms.



text is absorbed completely into the new. Movie adaptations of books are another example.

- **Visible remediation.** This occurs when the original media product is shown or referred to on the new platform. The audience is aware of the original text but sees it in a new context with new meanings. For example, when a music video clip includes news footage of the 9/11 attacks and shots of President Bush or Osama bin Laden, this is visible remediation. Sometimes codes, conventions or even technical features of other mediums can be incorporated into the new. For example, old-style television signals of 'snow', 'static' or test patterns are often incorporated into editing transitions, or new media graphics and title designs.

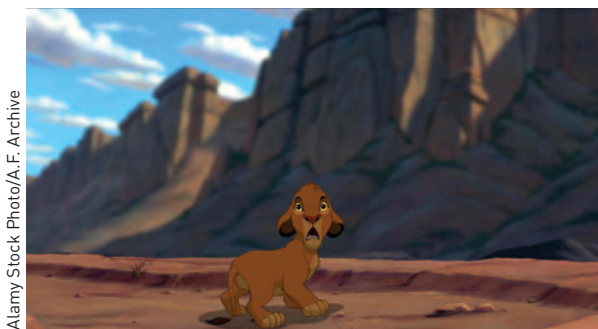


Figure 3.4 When Simba roars and reacts in shock and awe to the stampede in *The Lion King* (1994, 2019) the animators chose to show this with a contra zoom (see chapter 2, page 30). The contra zoom is a camera technique. There is no need for it in computer-generated animation – there isn't even a camera lens. However, the film camera techniques are 'remediated' into the new medium of CGI.

Globalisation

Globalisation has its recent history in the development of multinational corporations. These huge business empires, such as Disney and Google, have capital resources larger than the economic output of many small- and medium-sized nations. Movements to encourage freer world trade have also encouraged trade in media products and the spread of multinational media corporations. Technology has contributed to the process by making it possible to access media content from anywhere in the world over the internet.

Global McCulture

The US imports about 5 per cent of its media products, while the worldwide average for imports

is upwards of 30 per cent of the total schedule. Australia imports around 45 per cent. Many small developing countries import more than 90 per cent. Most imports are sourced in the US, leading to accusations of cultural imperialism. However, some audience researchers believe there is little cause for alarm in these figures and argue that audiences interpret American media texts in ways unique to the local culture. Others believe this is swinging the pendulum too far. Audiences have *some* power to make interpretation, but the producers still set the agenda in subtle ways.

Producer power depends to some extent on the genre. News is less open to audience interpretation, and therefore the producer has more power. Global news networks such as Cable News Network (CNN) undoubtedly are successful in relaying an American, first-world point of view. Entertainment genres could be regarded in a different light. Soap operas may be somewhat more open to local definitions. When people watch an entertainment program, they enter an imaginary world. In contrast, information genres may be saying, 'This is how it is!' Australia has been described as a dumping ground for overseas media products. Cable and satellite technology, the internet and the continuing international growth of news networks, such as CNN, all contribute to the 'Coca-Colonisation' of local culture.



Figure 3.5 Globalisation means more television programs are aimed at a world audience. The BBC news has had a global reach for decades. *The Simpsons* is another example of an effective global program. One reason for its success is that a cartoon can be dubbed into any language. The show is devised in America and animated at cartoon studios in South Korea.

Localisation

Many analysts believe globalisation is being accompanied by the opposite trend – **localisation**.

They use the word ‘local’ to indicate a region, as well as to cover a range of narrow groupings of people across individual societies or even across the world. For example, local could mean the people of a particular place, but it could also be used to mean everyone around the world interested in the music of a certain band. Digital media are capable of targeting like-minded, subcultural audiences who may find the mainstream channels irrelevant. Communities of interest might be another term for the concept of localisation.

Localisation may occur as the ‘social glue’ provided by the old national media gradually loses its strength. Some analysts see the trend as positive because it allows more media rights for subcultural or local groups. Others believe it is a double-edged sword, with as many potential negatives as positives.

Loss of nation

Between the extremes of global and local, the importance of the nation may be under threat. In the past, commentators worried about a society that might become dominated by a handful of media. Now, however, we are faced with a society where no one is on the same page. Governments find it difficult to reach voters because there are so many different media sources. Everyone is watching something different.

Other commentators have wondered whether the forces of globalisation and the forces of localism will need the surviving nation more than ever – to mediate between the two extremes! Only the nation can make laws to regulate how multinational ‘big tech’ corporations such as Google or Facebook must treat citizens.

3.1 ACTIVITIES

- 1 Survey the class on the extent to which their media consumption is based on a convergence approach.

Consider the responses to the following questions:

- How many have the computer set up either in conjunction with the television or to function as the main television?
- How many use a mobile phone in a similar way?

Explain the survey information, giving some idea of the nature of the respondents and the conditions of the survey.

Analyse the quantitative (numerical) results, considering the percentages for each constituent part of the survey. **Make judgements** about the extent of convergence and its effect on your respondents.

- 2 Is your media diet global or local? Or perhaps it is ‘glocal’ – a combination of global media and involvement in specialised communities of interest.

Explain how you see your media consumption. **Identify** the main sources of your media consumption and **locate** each of them in terms of whether they are global, Australian or Queensland-based. **Illustrate** your response with some **examples** of the kinds of media products that are typical of what you use or view.

- 3 Compare your media consumption with that of your parents or guardians when they were your age, or even your grandparents.

Explain how it has changed in reference to globalisation and localisation.

GLOBAL MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

New technologies have led to new patterns of distribution. Digitising screen content and then distributing it via the internet has become the dominant form of content delivery.

Online distribution

The online distribution business went through three stages of development:

- **Pioneering stage.** In the late 1990s, a number of small start-up firms began trialling online

distribution. They found that the technology did not allow for easy distribution of content because bandwidth was limited. Many of these early firms went broke and disappeared.

- **Hollywood majors enter.** After seeing what had happened to the old music companies once online distribution of music took place, the big Hollywood studios attempted to enter the market in the early 2000s. At that time, the market still did not have a strong enough basis. People were not willing to pay for shaky distribution across limited bandwidth. By 2005, most of these companies had failed as well.

- **Market leaders arrive.** In the late-2000s, the current market leaders first appeared. YouTube, iTunes, Netflix, Amazon and Hulu had arrived. Smaller independent distribution sites have battled to make headway against these giants.

Traditional media companies that have dominated until now may struggle to maintain dominance. Companies that run the platforms delivering content to huge audiences now have a competitive advantage, and may be the first global online television networks.

'If content is king, then distribution is King Kong. The power and profitability in screen industries have always resided in distribution'.

Stuart Cunningham, Professor of Media and Communications Queensland University of Technology;
Jon Silver, Senior Lecturer Creative Industries Faculty Queensland University of Technology

YouTube

It may be that YouTube is shaping up as the world's first global television station, with 1.5 billion users in 2018. YouTube is a media company that is primarily an 'aggregator'. It is not a significant content producer, but rather it is a collector of content produced and developed by others. YouTube is not actually in the video business to any great extent – its real business is the provision of a platform to supply content.

YouTube's business model is to provide an easy-to-use platform that allows online video sharing. This content then brings in audiences and other new participants. They supply more content, and the business continues to grow. YouTube offers participants the chance of wide exposure and even fame. The business makes its money out of advertising based on its high volume of visitors.

Context

YouTube is based just outside San Francisco. It was established in 2005 by three former employees of PayPal, an online commerce website. It was very much a part of the Silicon Valley 'tech start-up' culture. YouTube's innovation was to use technology to allow widespread sharing of video online. A simple interface allowed users to upload streaming videos without requiring a lot of technical knowledge.

Ownership

YouTube started with humble beginnings and was soon purchased by Google for \$US1.6 billion. YouTube fitted Google's aim of being able to organise the world's information and make it accessible.

Copyright issues

Existing media companies and the major Hollywood studios have argued that YouTube has been encouraging online video piracy. YouTube was profiting from copyright infringement, they argued. Many of them have restricted or blocked content. Some of them have signed revenue-sharing agreements with YouTube and Google.

YouTube allows copyright holders to submit a copyright infringement notice if they spot unauthorised content that has been uploaded. The site also uses an **algorithm** called Content ID to scan uploaded videos for high-quality video files and potentially copyrighted music. It checks these against a database of copyrighted material. The copyright owners can then choose to either take the video down or to monetise it through paid advertising.

'Not only has YouTube created the largest online video community in the world, it's shaping the way video is produced, distributed and monetised.'

Hunter Walk, Head of Product at YouTube

Areas of operation

YouTube operates in the following areas:

- **User-generated content (UGC).** YouTube is a video sharing site that allows users to upload videos and share them with other users. Users can also rate videos and add them to their favourites lists. Users can also subscribe to the channels of other users.
- **Professionally generated content (PGC).** Although YouTube started primarily as a UGC site, many of the videos now uploaded are professionally generated. This occurs through negotiations with major production studios. However, much of the PGC content is restricted to the US. The aim is to distribute video in an ad-friendly environment.

Audience and social impact

The YouTube website is the most popular entertainment platform in Australia, the UK and the US – easily gaining more visits than traditional broadcast websites, such as that of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). It is always in the top 10 of the most visited websites globally, and in 2018 was the second-most popular site in the world.

YouTube has had a profound effect on what most people think video on the internet looks like. The videos are short, often humorous, and accessible with very little effort – usually just one

click. The videos often have some kind of visual sensationalism, such as a skateboarding accident, or they are instantly recognisable pieces of mainstream media.

YouTube has a team of moderators to review content with the aim to protect advertisers and creators from inappropriate content. In 2018 there were approximately 10 000 moderators. Moderating is an extremely stressful and potentially disturbing job with a high turnover rate. Many moderators are hired from temporary employment agencies. However, YouTube overwhelmingly relies on algorithms to police its content that might violate its guidelines. Violent extremist videos are often targeted by algorithms. YouTube claims that 98 per cent of the videos removed for extremism are removed automatically by the algorithms.

The videos that YouTube algorithms recommend have the power to influence people around the world. Every day, people watch more than a billion hours of YouTube content worldwide. The algorithm creates personalised playlists and recommendations based on previous views. According to YouTube, these drive up to 70 per cent of the viewing time that people put in. On some social media sites, such as Facebook, people choose to follow certain newsfeeds. On YouTube, the algorithm pushes content to people. Critics say these sometimes get more and more extreme as the recommendations progress.

Netflix

‘I think there will be 20 years of evolution from linear broadcast to internet television.’

Reed Hastings, CEO Netflix

More and more viewers are consuming film in the comfort of their home rather than in the theatres. This is not an expression of some kind of dislike of public arenas. It is a by-product of the combined technologies of convenient online streaming and comfortable home theatre rooms. Netflix has influenced the way in which media is consumed – to the point that older forms of receivership are under threat of extinction.

Netflix’s dominance is not just a matter of internet convenience. Netflix has shifted the value of television content in new directions. Through

non-traditional finance models, Netflix is capable of producing big-budget films and television shows for exclusive release on its network. These texts, called ‘Netflix Originals’, often boast A-list actors and directors and are capable of rivalling big studio productions. Brad Pitt appeared in the Netflix Original *War Machine* (2017), and Baz Luhrmann directed production of Netflix Original *The Get Down* (2016).

The fact that Netflix is capable of attracting A-list talent to produce high-quality cinematic content means the medium of television has

undergone radical shifts in value. This is new. Previously if a big-screen actor made the switch to small-screen television, it was always considered a demotion; for the most part, it was always due to the lack of quality that television produced. But the recent shifts in the quality of television have led to a new kind of exchange. Actors are able to cohabit television studios and major film studios without concern over the direction of their career.

Areas of operation

Netflix rose to dominance because of the ease in which quality viewing could be accessed over the internet. Since it is made available on portable devices, viewers simply view their favourite programs whenever they like. But while viewer choice seems empowered by Netflix, Netflix also restricts choice. When viewers sign in to Netflix, they are confronted with rows of thumbnails of various movies and television shows. Each of these thumbnails are guided by a particular algorithm that determines content choice. The content choice is an expression of two key inputs – viewing habits and a small questionnaire when first signing up. This data is then used to personalise the viewing experience by predicting what the viewer may watch next.

An essential characteristic of Netflix is binge-watching. Netflix often launches its programs as events in themselves. This turns them into something that people feel compelled to watch – in other words, making them binge-worthy. One means of achieving this is to release all of a season's episodes simultaneously.

Context

Netflix began as a DVD sales and rental business in 1997 in the town of Santa Cruz, California. It was founded by Reed Hastings, who is now the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Netflix entered streaming video in 2007 and now operates in 190 countries, with millions of subscribers. In 2013, Netflix began producing its own content. The first production was the political thriller *House of Cards* (2013–17). The organisation has now moved its headquarters to Silicon Valley, California.

Netflix is a company with shares owned by a large number of private individuals and investment firms. One of the largest shareholders is its founder, Reed Hastings.

Audience and social impact

The cinema once held the monopoly on quality viewing. Netflix has altered the landscape of media, and the viewer's personal lifestyle has shifted as well. The theatre offered viewers a social experience because they are part of a crowd. Over time, home theatres have encroached on the quality of the cinema. Viewers can attain a cinematic experience without paying the cost of a cinema ticket. This has empowered the viewer, who now controls where quality content can be viewed. Viewer choice is underpinned by the convenience offered by streaming media.

For audience members, there can be an issue with algorithmic culture. In some ways, the data does not account for eclectic taste, and might not be a true reflection of viewer choice. Algorithmic culture and the taste communities they produce are coming under increasing scrutiny. In particular, attention is being directed to the way in which cultural viewing habits are being shaped by computers rather than humans.

Mixed distribution

The development of new digital platforms for the delivery of media, the rise of mobile devices and the rise of multi-platform distribution has put traditional media under pressure. As media companies respond to the digital challenge, takeovers and mergers are creating bigger and bigger companies, and fewer large-scale players in the field.

Disney

Disney started off as a small American animation studio in 1923. Today, it is a vast global media giant. The company's annual revenue exceeds the total GDP of more than 100 countries. The Walt Disney Company owns a global network of theme parks, television channels and toy stores. Walt Disney Studios is also one of the world's largest production companies. It owns Pixar, Marvel Entertainment, Lucasfilm (*Star Wars* franchise) and Disney Digital Network, and part-owns American online content distributor Hulu. In 2017, it also acquired most of 21st Century Fox from Rupert Murdoch. This deal gave it a dominant position in movies and also in sportscasting.

Context

Disney is one of the largest Hollywood studios. Hollywood studios employ a factory-like approach to movie production. They use specialised labour, operate assembly lines of production and have their own studio lots (areas of land) where films are produced. These studios have been one of the main forms of film production since the era of silent movies, but they are increasingly under threat from the digital revolution.

At the same time, Hollywood has become the centre of a global entertainment industry. Movies are not the only activity – all kinds of entertainment is distributed, and movies are just one of many forms.

Disney has assured its survival by becoming a diversified entertainment company. Television is a part of it, accounting for almost 40 per cent of Disney business. The Disney Channel has

107 channels in 163 countries. However, when Disney opened its first theme park back in 1955, it was already beginning to be an entertainment company, not just a movie studio. In later times, Disney has moved beyond the narrow limits of its early 20th-century image. It is now involved in a whole range of entertainment productions that do not have an animation focus.

Audience and social impact

Disney has long-lasting appeal to generations of audience members. Almost everyone in the developed world has had some experience of Disney, and this contributes to its survival. Disney narratives and images have become part of western culture. Disney audiences are drawn from cinema, television and theme park audiences, as well as the readers of children's books. They also include the buyers of Disney merchandise.

3.2 ACTIVITIES

- 1 Read over YouTube's guidelines for users wanting to upload videos.
Explain what the site says is considered to be an appropriate and inappropriate video, **clarifying** what is likely to be excluded and included in these categories.
- 2 **Construct** a list of new video genres that have developed over time on YouTube.
Explain some of the features of each of the genres, giving **examples** of video titles that **demonstrate** each feature.
- 3 **Construct** a list of competing on-demand streaming platforms that offer high-quality content in the domestic home.
Explain how each example is considered to be high quality. **Illustrate** each platform by providing **examples** of their high-quality content.
- 4 **Construct** a web graphic that simulates how algorithmic viewing works. Start with one movie, and then think of another movie that relates to the first and draw a line to connect them. Then add a third movie, fourth, fifth and so on. Try and make connections between as many movies as you can.
Explain the graphic you have created, **providing additional information** about each of the movies and how it relates to the others.
Appraise whether this map of viewing has **worth** as a reflection of potential viewing habits. **Interpret** your own viewing habits to **make a judgement** about the **significance** of the Netflix algorithm in shaping people's viewing habits.
- 5 **Construct** a list of all of the entertainment forms that the Walt Disney Company is involved in.
Appraise the **significance** of 'house style' in a company owned by Disney, such as the Disney Studio, Pixar or Lucasfilm. **Interpret** features of the company's output to **make a judgement** about what defines the style of its productions.

REGULATION OF THE MEDIA

Regulation is a process of control by government authorities aimed at ensuring that media organisations operate within set boundaries.

In western democracies, media regulation is usually aimed at protecting the rights of citizens or the community. Media regulations deal with a range of issues, including ownership, types of content and local production.

In oppressive regimes or dictatorships, media regulation can be used to squash any opposition to the government or controlling parties. Media regulation in authoritarian countries usually deals with issues of free speech and political restrictions.

Reporters Without Borders named 13 countries, including China, Cuba, Iran, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and North Korea, as the worst culprits for online **censorship**. These countries censor and block online content that criticises them. Foreign companies operating in these countries are expected to comply with their censorship regimes. Multinational companies such as Microsoft and Google have cooperated with the Chinese government in filtering the internet, and have even helped track down cyber-dissidents.

Classification versus censorship

Different countries use different systems to provide varying degrees of control over what the population is able to view. Some use systems of classification, while some use censorship.

- **Classification** is a system of allocating media content to particular categories.
- **Censorship** is a system of removing scenes or shots that could offend some interest group or political party. Censorship can also mean banning the media altogether.

Australia does not have a system of censorship for games, films, television programs or literature. Instead, there is a classification system. This system **classifies** content based on descriptions and depictions, which determine the appropriate classification category. The category contains the limitations as to who is able to access the content.

Motion Picture Production Code

The Motion Picture Production Code was a set of censorship rules that regulated the film industry in the United States from 1934 until its repeal in 1967. From 1930 to 1934 the code was voluntary, and after that it became mandatory. It is often referred to as the Hays Code after Hollywood's chief censor William Hays. In 1968, the Motion Picture Association of America adopted a classification system of rating films. The film *Hitchcock* (2012) shows Alfred Hitchcock visiting the Hays Office with the film *Psycho* (1960).

Some of the guidelines used in the Motion Picture Production Code are as follows:

- No details of crime techniques should be shown.
- Crime must not pay.
- No sympathy for criminals should be shown.
- No man and woman should be shown in bed together – the man must have his feet on the floor if lying down.
- No sex should be shown.
- No excessive or lustful kissing should be shown – a three-second limit was imposed.

Australian Classification Board

The Australian Classification Board is the organisation that classifies films (theatrical release, DVD and Blu-ray), certain so-called 'submittable' publications (such as adult magazines) and computer games. Depending on the medium, the following regulations apply:

- **Films and games** – Every film or game that is legally available must be classified by the Australian Classification Board. Some films and games are exempt, including, for example, current affairs, educational, musical presentation, religious and hobby films. Since 2015, the Classification Board has classified digital games using the International Age Rating Coalition (IARC) system. This internationally agreed-upon system allows game makers to have their games quickly matched in with the classification systems of many different countries.
- **Publications** – Only those magazines or other publications that are likely to require restriction to adults need to be first submitted to the Classification Board.
- **Music videos** – Any video clip that accompanies a music release is said to be a film and must first be classified by the Classification Board (unless an exemption applies).
- **Music** – Songs with lyrics that might be considered offensive must be classified according to the *Code of Practice for Labelling Product with Explicit and Potentially Offensive Lyrics*. Under the Code of Practice, classification of recorded music is the responsibility of members of the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA). Generally, acceptable song lyrics do not require classification.



3.3.1
Australian
Classification
Board

Table 3.1 The matrix used by the Australian Classification Board when a film or computer game is classified. Board members make individual notes and then use the matrix to arrive at the final rating. A tick is placed for each of the classifiable elements on the vertical axis, depending on its impact on the horizontal axis.

	VERY MILD IMPACT	MILD IMPACT	MODERATE IMPACT	STRONG IMPACT	HIGH IMPACT
THEMES					
VIOLENCE			✓		
SEX					
LANGUAGE		✓			
DRUG USE					
NUDITY		✓			



Courtesy Department of Communications and the Arts

Figure 3.6 The Australian Classification Board in Sydney. Board members view the film or play the computer game and make notes every couple or so minutes, even if it is just to note that the action has not changed. Media may be viewed by board members either individually (for example, a film being released on Blu-ray for home entertainment) or as part of a wider panel of members (for example, a complex computer game or theatrical release film). They use the matrix shown in Table 3.1 to reach an overall decision about the rating to be awarded.

- the person or class or persons to or among whom the publication, film or game is published or intended or likely to be published.

Film and game categories

The classification categories for films and computer games are based on an increasing scale of impact and increasing potential for either offence or harm. The first three categories are advisory only. The final three are legally enforceable restrictions. Cinemas and home entertainment retail and hire stores can be fined if they do not comply with the restrictions.



3.3.2
Commonwealth
Classification
(Publications,
Films and
Computer
Games) Act
(1995)

The Australian Classification Board operates under the *Commonwealth Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995*. According to the Act (section 11), the matters to be taken into account in making a decision on the classification of a publication, film or computer game include:

- the standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults
- the literary, artistic or educational merit (if any) of the publication, film or computer game
- the general character of the publication, film or computer game, including whether it is of a medical, legal or scientific character



Courtesy Department of Communications and the Arts

Figure 3.7 Australian regulation categories for films and computer games.

The classification challenge posed by the internet

The internet is now a major distribution platform. It crosses national borders, and the only way to control its content is to stop it coming into the country altogether by cutting off international cables. The internet is international and does not recognise the laws and regulations of different countries.

The internet also offers real-time access to worldwide content. Many Australians are keen downloaders of US programming and use the internet to access shows long before Australian media organisations release the shows.

One way that the Australian Government has responded to the challenge posed by the internet as a distribution platform has been to introduce automated tools such as online questionnaires to classify content under certain conditions. Two such tools are currently in use. It has also established a number of trials and initiatives to make the classification process less time-consuming. These include the following:

- **IARC classification tool for mobile and online games.** Game developers are able to fast-track their classification for the Australian market and other world markets by completing an online questionnaire about their game. An algorithm then generates an assigned rating for the six participating rating authorities that collectively represent regions serving approximately 1.5 billion people. The algorithm applies Australian classification rules to the answers on the questionnaire. If a game receives a classification under this system, it is subject to an audit by the Australian Classification Board at any time.
- **Netflix classification tool.** Netflix, in consultation with the Australian Government, has developed a tool to produce Australian classifications for the content available via Netflix in Australia. The tool relies on the identification and tagging of classifiable content and an algorithm that converts this information into an Australian classification.

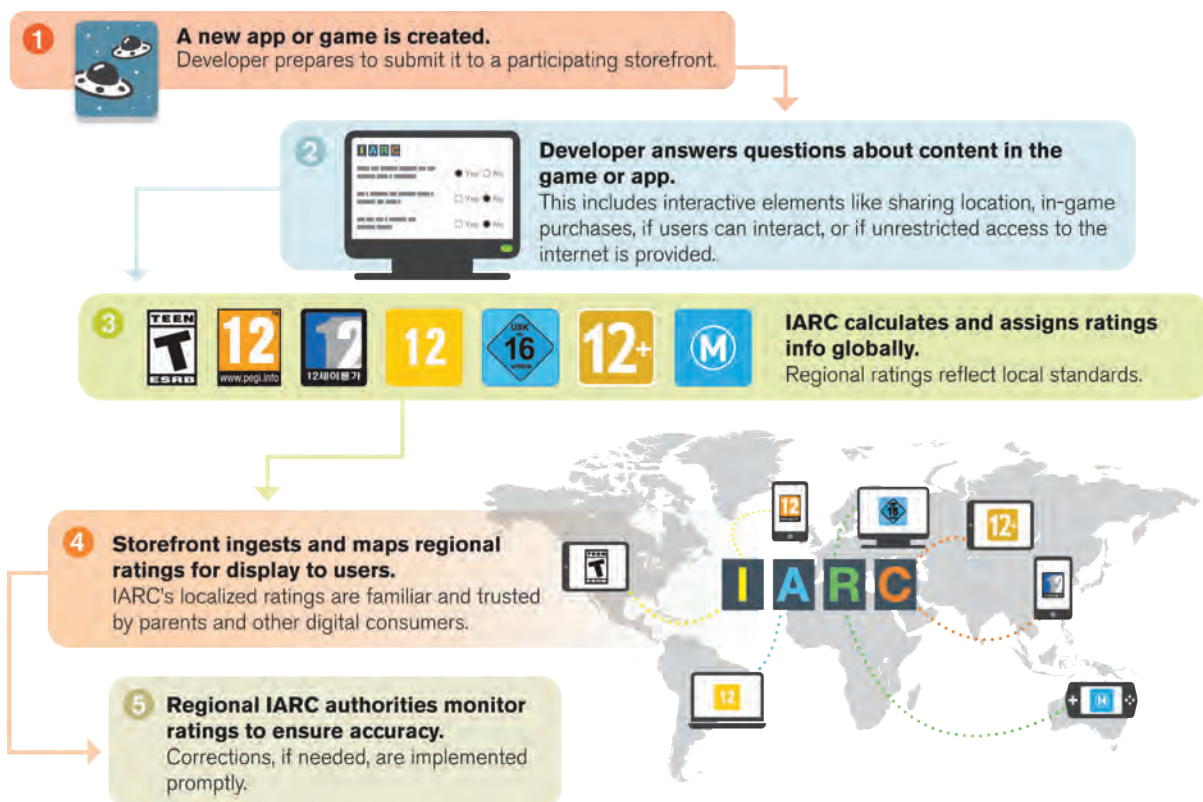


Figure 3.8 A graphic showing how the International Age Rating Coalition (IARC) classification tool works.

The 'How IARC Works' graphic is the property of the International Age Rating Coalition, Inc., and the rating icons it includes are trademarks of the respective rating authorities.

Australian content rules

Australian content regulations are set by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). The regulations separately cover commercial free-to-air television and subscription (pay) television. The ABC and SBS networks are exempt from these rules because they operate under separate charters. The Australian content rules aim to develop and encourage an Australian cultural identity and diversity. The ACMA states that the Australian community should have access to television programs produced under Australian creative control.

Free trade agreements can affect local content regulations. New Zealand programs are counted as Australian under the Australia–New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement. However, the Australia–United States Free Trade Agreement allows Australian local content regulations to remain in place. Under this agreement, Australia is also able to introduce new local content laws for digital multichannel television and subscription television if necessary.



Goal Post Pictures, Australia

Figure 3.9 *Cleverman* (2016) re-imagines several Aboriginal Dreamtime stories and sets them in a sci-fi future. A cleverman in Aboriginal societies was like a shaman who had direct links to the Dreamtime and was a master of magic. One of the aims of ACMA is to promote a sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity through Australian productions. The ABC and SBS have a similar set of aims embedded in their charters.

Free-to-air television

The Australian content levels to be broadcast by free-to-air commercial television licensees are set by the ACMA in a document called the *Broadcasting Services (Australian Content) Standard 2005*.

Overall quotas

The transmission quota for Australian content is a minimum of 55 per cent between 6.00 a.m. and midnight. Television stations must also broadcast at least 25 hours of children's drama and at least eight hours of repeat children's drama each year.

Stations are expected to broadcast at least 130 hours of preschool material each year, some of which can be repeats. All preschool programs must be produced in Australia.

Drama

Minimum levels for local prime-time drama are set by a points system. The scores for first-release Australian drama must total at least 250 points in any one year, and at least 860 points over three years. Points are calculated using the following formula:

Drama score = format factor × duration (in hours)

The format factors vary according to the estimated quality of the programs and their costs of production, as outlined below.

For an Australian serial or series programmed more often than one hour per week, the format factor is 1. Most soap operas fall within this category.

For an Australian serial or series programmed for one hour or less per week, the format factor is 3 if it has been made by an independent producer and 2.5 if it has been made by the network. The aim of the factor difference is to encourage the networks to contract out to independent producers. However, some independents say this is not enough. In the European Union as a whole, at least 10 per cent of all television transmission time must be contracted from independent producers. In the UK, the minimum is 25 per cent.

For feature movies, miniseries or self-contained dramas, the format factor is 4. These programs have the highest costs of all.



3.3.3
Australian
Communications
and Media
Authority (ACMA)

Documentaries

At least 20 hours a year of first-release Australian documentaries of at least 30 minutes' duration must be shown between 6.00 a.m. and midnight. The ACMA defines a documentary as 'the creative treatment of actuality'. Reality television programs do not qualify as documentaries.

Advertising

At least 80 per cent of all television advertising on free-to-air stations between 6.00 a.m. and midnight must be Australian.

Subscription television

Subscription television, also known as pay television, is treated separately from free-to-air television in relation to Australian content rules. Since consumers pay a fee for the service, there is a greater sense that they are responsible for what they wish to view. Multiple channels also provide a wide variety of content that cannot be easily regulated.

Accordingly, just one simple rule applies: subscription television drama channels must spend 10 per cent of their total program expenditure on first-release Australian (or New Zealand) drama.

Defining Australian productions

The ACMA defines an Australian program as one that meets all the following conditions:

- **Creative control.** The program is seen to be Australian if the producer is Australian, and also if the director or the writer is Australian.

- **Cast.** At least 50 per cent of the leading actors or presenters in the program must be Australian.
- **Supporting cast.** At least 75 per cent of the supporting cast in a drama must be Australian.
- **Production.** The program must be produced and post-produced in Australia, although it may be filmed overseas.

Animations are required to have Australians in three of the following roles: production designer, character designer, supervising layout artist, supervising storyboarding artist or key background artist.



Alamy Stock Photo/A. F. Archive

Figure 3.10 The feature film *Happy Feet* (2006) is defined as an Australian animation because Australians had creative control. Pixar's *Finding Nemo* (2003) was set on the Great Barrier Reef and used some Australian voices, but it is not defined as an Australian animation.

3.3 ACTIVITIES

- 1 Visit the Australian Classification Board's website and read about the rating decision for a well-known film or video game.
Explain the board's decision, **providing information** about the reasons behind it and **clarifying** the main deciding factors determining the final outcome.
Construct a formal argument as to why that decision should be upheld or changed.
- 2 Investigate a commercial broadcaster's compliance with the *Broadcasting Services (Australian Content) Standard 2005* by following the steps in the following table.

EXPLAIN	ANALYSE	APPRAISE
Explain your selection of a chosen broadcaster, giving information about the station's output between 6:00 a.m. and midnight over a one-week period, using an online program guide.	Analyse the type and duration of first-release content, referring to the format definitions and scoring system used by the ACMA, considering results as points earned over the week. Multiply this by 52 to determine an estimate for the year.	Appraise results to interpret the degree to which the station is in compliance with the law. Appraise results by drawing conclusions around the worth of Australian content regulations for the Australian community.



3.3.4
The Australian
Classification
Board