

# Chapter 9 – Media Production Skills

## From the Media Study Design

### Outcome 2

On completion of this Unit the student should be able use a range of technical equipment, applications and media processes to present ideas, achieve effects and explore aesthetic qualities in production design plan specification areas appropriate to a media form.

#### Key knowledge

This knowledge includes:

- production design plan specifications appropriate to a media product and/or form;
- the possibilities and limitations of a range of technical equipment, applications and media processes;
- aesthetic and/or structural qualities and characteristics of media products for example, conventions and styles of specific media texts, layout and composition of print and electronic pages, framing of photographs, structure or organisation of information and sequences, and the relationship between production elements appropriate to media forms.

#### Key skills

These skills include the ability to:

- document the intention(s) of production exercises, the production design plan specifications to be explored and/or investigated and how the completed exercises realise the stated intention(s);
- explore how production design plan specifications appropriate to media product(s) present ideas and achieve particular effects;
- investigate capacities of technical equipment, applications and media processes appropriate to a media product to present ideas and achieve particular effects;
- operate technical equipment, use applications and apply media processes to develop skills in areas identified in the production design plan specifications;
- explore aesthetic and/or structural qualities and characteristics of a media product.

The outcome, key knowledge and skills above are an extract from the VCE Media Study Design.

- Students should consult the Study Design for more information
- It is important that students read the VCE Bulletins for updates.

### *What will you do?*

For this outcome you will investigate, use and develop skills in the use of a range of technical equipment, applications and media processes. You will learn about the possibilities, limitations and the aesthetic qualities of media equipment, applications and processes and how these may be used to present ideas and achieve effects in media productions. You will consider how different media forms convey ideas in particular ways. This area of study may help you decide on the medium in which you will work this year. You will learn and use media documentation processes.

### *How is this outcome assessed?*

You will undertake and document two or more production exercises. Your teacher will choose the format of your assessment tasks using guidelines set out in the Media Assessment Handbook which is published annually by the VCAA and is available online. <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/>

### *What is it worth?*

This outcome is part of the School-assessed task. Unit 3 outcome 2 is assessed as S or N in Unit 3 and is submitted and marked as part of the SAT in Unit 4. The work undertaken for this outcome is subject to external review, it should be retained and stored in a safe place. The external review process occurs in October.

All media students enjoy the production process, for many it is the reason they choose this subject. If you studied Unit 1 and 2 Media last year you will already have a good understanding of the media production process. For you this area of study is a place to consolidate your knowledge and skills and to develop new ones. If you are new to media this area of study will give you the grounding you need to plan and undertake media productions. Have a look at chapter 5, it will give you an overview of the media production process.

Whether or not you have completed Units 1 and 2 Media you already know a great deal how media products are planned and constructed. Whilst you are undertaking the activities set out in this chapter think about how industry professionals work and try to mirror industry practice as much as possible. Use your existing knowledge and skills to help you learn more.

The media production skills area of study is assessed as part of the School-assessed task but the work you undertake over the next few weeks will not be part of your major production. Rather it is designed to give you the space to explore ideas and forms in which ideas may be constructed and communicated whilst at the same time developing production skills.

Some students will approach this area of study with a clear vision of their proposed product in mind. If you are one of these students you may have already begun scripting or planning your production. Use this area of study to help you learn about the production possibilities and limitations of the equipment, applications and processes available to you and spend time too reflecting on your personal strengths so that you have the confidence you need to achieve your vision.

Some media students may at this stage in the course have an idea or concept but not yet decided on the medium that will best convey this idea. If you are one of these students your work for this outcome will help you determine the media form that will best convey your idea.

Some media students will approach this area of study with little idea about the form or content of their media production. If you are one of these students this area of study will help you learn where your talent lies and use the skills you develop to help you decide on the media form in which you will work. Your production proposal is likely to spring from this.

### **Activity 9.1**

#### **Just the beginning**

Now is the time to think about possibilities for your media production. Begin a notebook where you record your ideas. If you know what it is you want to produce this notebook can record your production as it develops detailing plot, character, colours, costume, fonts, and so on.

If you don't have any ideas yet use your notebook to record possibilities as they come to you.

### DIY Media education

For this area of study you will be called upon to use all of your independent learning skills. Your teacher will guide you in activities to help you learn techniques and develop ideas but will not be able to provide all the information you need to help you progress towards your design plan and project. Indeed some of you will have greater skills in some production areas than your teacher as it is impossible to stay current in every production area. Be prepared to teach him or her and also your classmates. This area of study is an opportunity to share your learning and to learn from others.

For every lesson you should set personal learning goals. These will include the activities your teacher sets but also those you set for yourself. Record your goals in your workbook at the beginning of every class and at the end of class note your progress and set some homework goals. Your records could look like this:

Date	Goals	Activities	What I learned today	Homework and follow up

Over the next few weeks you will find the list of knowledge and skills you acquire is very impressive. How far you take these skills will depend on your drive and commitment. Good luck.

### Media equipment

All media students, teachers and professionals love their equipment, and, as you know, every one of them thinks they don't have enough of it. The truth is no one working in the media ever thinks they have enough gear. Success in VCE Media is not about how much equipment you have, but what you do with it. If your school offers media then you will have enough equipment to achieve at the highest level. It is not the gear you have but what you do with it that is important. This outcome is all about discovering what the equipment will do and pushing it to the max.

Over the next few weeks plan to learn everything you can about the equipment you will use at each stage of the production process, play with it, learn from it, live it. Aim to make the equipment an extension of yourself, every button and switch and knob should be under your control. If you can borrow equipment from school, use it at lunchtime and take it home overnight and for the weekend. Read the instruction manuals, make a copy of them or download them from the internet, tick off each page as you master it.

#### Activity 9.2

##### Production skills checklist

In section 2 there are production checklists for all media forms in which you may work this year. Select the medium in which you plan to produce your project and begin to work your way through the appropriate checklist. Ask your teacher for additional checklist points that are specific to your school and note these down.

Use the checklist as one way of recording the development of your knowledge and skills and for setting personal goals for further learning for this area of study.

**Activity 9.3**

**Equipment audit**

For each of the media forms in which you might work this year conduct an audit of the equipment available to you and your class. Make a table listing all the equipment, its availability and how many students will be using it. This will help you in your planning.

Item	Number available	Number of students sharing	Times equipment is available	Manual read	Tutorial completed
E.g. Panasonic digital video camera	3	18	During class time, overnight, weekends	5 <sup>th</sup> April	7 <sup>th</sup> April
Digital edit suite	1	18	Class time, lunchtime, after school	20 <sup>th</sup> April	1 <sup>st</sup> June
Sony Cybershot 5 megapixel camera	1	3	During class time, overnight, weekends	8 <sup>th</sup> April	11 <sup>th</sup> April
128mg memory stick	1	3	As above	As above	As above

**Media Applications**

A media application is the glue between the equipment and the production process. Media applications include production techniques and software that allow the equipment to be used to convey an idea, for example, using an enlarger to create a print or a mixing desk to mix sound. When we think of media applications these days we usually think of software. It is a rare media production that does not use some form of software in its completion. Even silver gelatin photography will involve the use of the internet to research techniques and examples.

**Activity 9.4**

**Software audit**

For each stage of the production process list the software you will use in the planning and completion of your production. Keep a record of your developing skills in the use of this software.

Software	Availability	Manual read	Tutorial completed	Skill learned	Location of resources and online tutorials
Adobe Premiere	Class time, lunch, after school	21 <sup>st</sup> April	1 <sup>st</sup> June	Creating project, managing project settings	www.adobe.com  Adobe Premiere Visual Guide (library)  <a href="http://bmrc.berkeley.edu/frame/resources/how_to/premedit/">http://bmrc.berkeley.edu/frame/resources/how_to/premedit/</a>

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## Media Processes

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There are many media processes involved at each stage of production. These processes vary according to the medium in which you will work. When it comes to the media production process everyone has their favourite stage. Think about yours, what is it you like to do most of all? It is important to plan your media productions taking into account the jobs you enjoy, those you feel confident in and, especially, those you don't. We all tend to overlook or underestimate the jobs we don't enjoy but this can have a disastrous effect on your production. At this stage of the year you have time to develop your skills in all aspects of your media production, make it a priority to develop skills for all stages of your production.

### Preproduction

All media productions involve a planning process in which you will decide on the medium in which you will work, your audience, intention, style and/or genre. The preproduction process also involves creating visual representations of your proposed product and a written treatment. If you are working in video production or photography, for example, this stage involves designing costumes and makeup.

### Production

Media processes in the production phase will depend on the medium in which you are working. These could involve shooting a roll of film, processing the negatives and making enlargements, setting up studio lighting, undertaking a video shoot or constructing a web page.

### Post-production

The importance of the processes involved in post-production are often underestimated, yet it is at this important stage that the whole production comes together. In video post-production processes include editing footage and creating titles. Photographers will clean up and mount their images, multimedia artists will publish and test their work.

### Possibilities and limitations

Most of our media experiences involve the consumption of professional media productions. Over the years we normalise the production values of these texts to such a degree that it can come as quite a shock when we begin creating media ourselves to find that our productions do not look and sound like those we consume in our daily lives. This difference is largely due to two factors, the available equipment and your experience using this equipment.

By the time you come to your media production design your understanding of what is possible and what is not given the equipment, applications and processes available to you will be extensive. What is more important is your understanding of the possibilities and limitations of what you personally can create and manage.

### Step outside your comfort zone

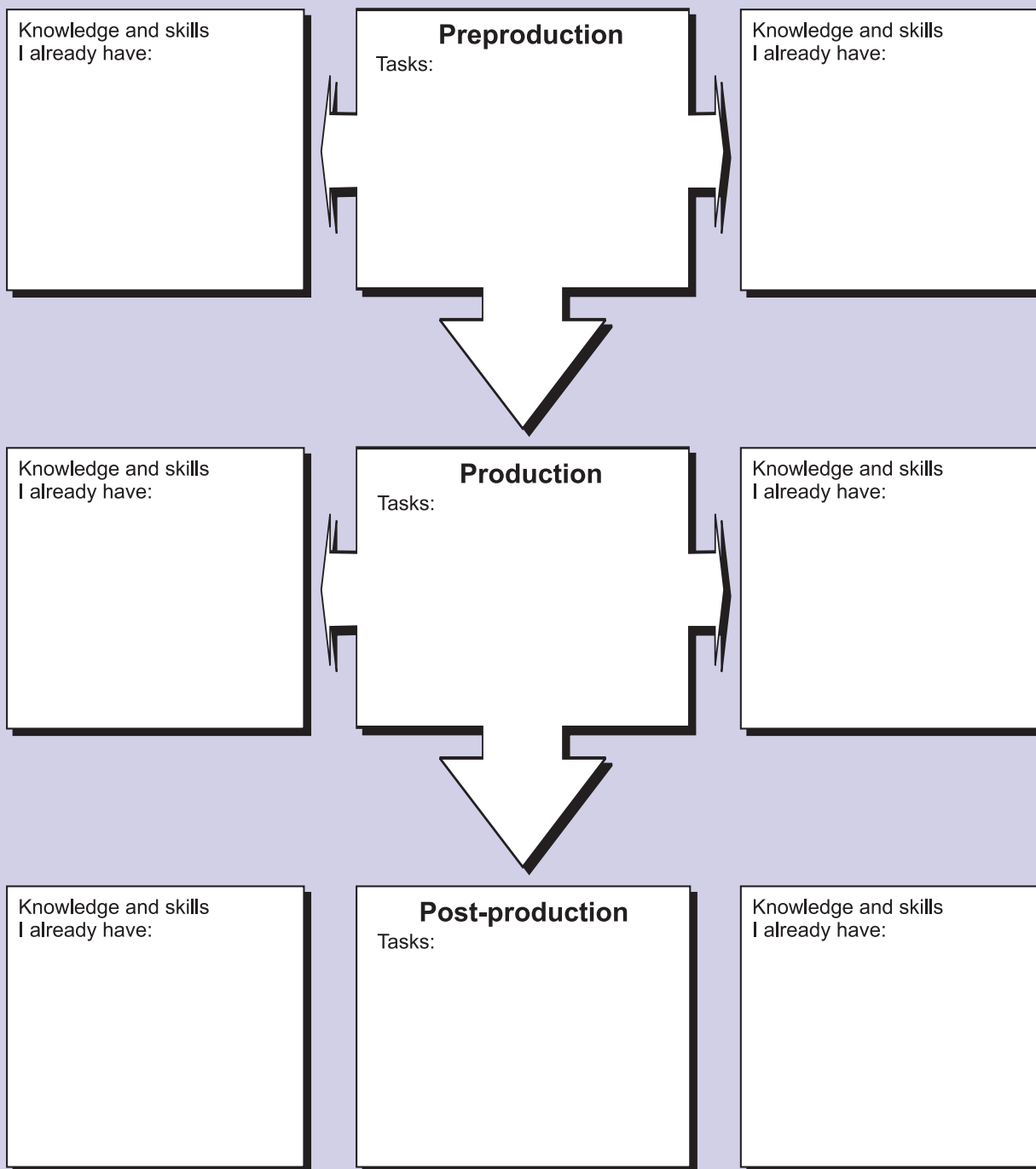
Once you are familiar with the operation of each piece of equipment it is time to push the boundaries of the equipment and of yourself. Remember that although media gear is expensive if you use commonsense and don't force it beyond its physical limitations you are unlikely to break it.

To see just what the equipment available to you can do, and to push yourself to find new ways of using this equipment to convey meaning and achieve effects try to think outside the square and push yourself out of your comfort zone. Interestingly, one way to do this is to begin with the mundane. It is relatively easy to plan and create products that are about spectacular and unusual subjects but you are more likely to learn about the possibilities and limitations of the equipment and develop your imagination if you try to communicate everyday ideas and events in different and exciting ways.

**Activity 9.5**

**The media production process**

Create a flow chart that details the jobs involved in each stage of the media production process for the medium in which you are likely to work this year. If you are unsure about which medium to choose this activity can help you decide by giving you the opportunity to assess your skills in different forms. On the flow chart note all the stages and jobs involved in preproduction, production and post-production. Mark those stages in which you need to develop more skills.



## Activity 9.6

### It won't happen overnight ... but it will happen

This activity challenges you to try to capture the same ordinary event every day for seven days using seven different approaches. Work in the same media form throughout the week but vary your approach including genre, style, story elements and, most importantly, production elements such as camera angles and lighting. The aim is to make seven different productions of the same subject in the same medium.

The first few days will be easy, days four and five will be difficult as you struggle to find new ways to communicate. By days six and seven you will find your creativity flowing. Good luck.

Here are some topics that make excellent subjects for this activity:

- Doing the dishes;
- Feeding the dog;
- Checking your email;
- Brushing your teeth;
- Saying goodnight;
- Reading the newspaper.

### Even George Lucas has to compromise!

If your media teacher had a dollar for every student who blamed a dodgy product on faulty or inadequate equipment then he or she would be able to buy the media gear of their dreams! Get over it! Work around it, make the most of it and move on. The energy you expend blaming bad gear could be better spent making the gear you have work better for you.

## Collect and annotate

For each of the media forms in which you may work this year begin collecting examples of productions and techniques that you like. Paste these into your workbook and make notes about what it is about these works that appeals to you. Just as importantly collect ideas and techniques that you don't like and create a section in your workbook for these. The bigger, more detailed and annotated your collection the better the conversation you will be able to have with your teacher. It is one thing to begin a discussion with 'Well I like it when the character speeds up and slows down in the cooking show,' it is quite another to be able to show an excerpt from a Jamie Oliver program where the technique is used and to be able to discuss with your teacher exactly how the Jamie Oliver effect is achieved. The more specific you can be, the better your teacher will be able to help you.

If you are working in video or animation record examples of the types of things you might like to emulate. Capture and print screenshots, take and print digital images off the screen or simply sketch ideas that appeal to you in your workbook. The internet abounds with video and animation production websites which make for great homework fun.

Photographers will find examples everywhere. If you have a digital camera make sure it is always with you. When you are in waiting rooms cruise magazines looking for inspiration. There are thousands of photographic books and magazines published annually. Check out your library and photocopy images and techniques you like. The internet is a very rich resource. Keep your mind open, don't just look for ideas in the styles you might like to work in, try to learn something from every image you see.

Web designers will find it easy to source examples of work that they find particularly effective or weak. Copy and print pages and sites from which you can learn. If you can read html make copies of the code to study. Look for different genres, styles, looks, design elements, colourways and approaches.

For students working in sound the internet is a wonderful resource. Web radio and streamed programming allow you to explore what the medium has to offer from the comfort of your computer. Every time you hear something that works copy the URL and make notes about what you have listened to so that you can return there and know what you will find when you do.

All students should annotate the examples they collect noting exactly why the material was selected. Ask yourself and your teacher questions about how the techniques that interested you were achieved. Conduct research and find the answers to the questions you set yourself in your annotations. Think about how to adapt techniques that were obviously created using state of the art technology to the technology you have available to you. By the time it comes to designing your own production you will have created a solid bank of ideas and will have clarified both for yourself and for your teacher exactly what it is you enjoy about the medium in which you will work.

### Knowledge and Skills

This outcome is about skill building. Section 2 and the Nelson Media website, [www.nelsonmedia.com.au](http://www.nelsonmedia.com.au) contain information about the practical skills and techniques you will need to use the equipment and processes required for your media production in Unit 4. To learn and develop these skills use these resources in conjunction with the activities below which are designed to serve as the content for your skill building. At the same you will learn about the possibilities and limitations of the equipment and processes available to you.

For some of the activities below you might find it useful to complete the entire task. For others only sections of the design or production activity will be relevant. Ask your teacher about the scope of each activity and about the detail he or she requires of you.

## Getting the 'look', aesthetic qualities of media forms

Each medium has aesthetic strengths and weaknesses. If you are not sure which media form you would like to work in for your media production now is the time to experiment with the aesthetic possibilities of the media forms you are considering.

### Audiovisual productions

*'... and God help you if you use a voice over!'*

Robert McKee in *Adaptation* (2002)  
directed by Spike Jonze.

The most important thing about video production and animation is that they are visual storytelling media. Whether you are making a narrative, documentary, music clip, flash or cell animation the medium is primarily visual. Sure there can be dialogue, sound effects, music and even text, all of which are important to the final product but what videographers do is ask an audience to look at a screen and the audience expects to be rewarded for looking.

Some subjects are made for film and video, especially those where the subject matter is primarily based on places and objects. What would films like *The Man From Snowy River* (1982) directed by George Miller be without the scenery? How can *Mission Impossible* (1996) directed by Brian De Palma convey the mission if not visually? Indeed in some films the location can become a character in its own right as was the case for Tokyo in *Lost in Translation* (2003).

The same is true for many television texts. Imagine a David Attenborough documentary without footage of animals or amazing natural phenomena. Reality television relies on the audience recognising the familiar nuanced behaviour of characters to convey meaning.

Some subjects, however, do not lend themselves easily to communication in the visual media. These subjects are conceptual or involve material where footage is not available. How many science documentaries have you watched that seek to convey ideas that are impossible to film? What

about films and television programs where events occur over many years or those where there are too many protagonists for an audience to comprehend? For texts like these sound and text must both carry the communication load.

### Activity 9.7

#### Show don't tell

This activity is designed to make you think about how to tell your stories visually. Choose one of the subjects below, storyboard and shoot it. Try to construct your production so that anyone watching it with the sound muted could understand what is going on.

##### *The gift*

Someone receives a present from someone they barely know. The recipient is suspicious of the motives of the person giving the present and tries to disguise their emotions.

##### *History*

A former student of your school publishes a history of his or her time there in which a secret is revealed.

##### *Diabetes*

The incidence of diabetes is rising in Australia. Both type 1 and type 2 diabetes are more prevalent than we think and the effects of this disease can be debilitating.

### Sound

What does red sound like? Does denim have its own sound? Do emotions such as joy or pensiveness transfer to the world of hearing? How do sound productions convey what something tastes or feels like? What techniques can be used other than description to convey subjects that have no sound?

### Activity 9.8

#### I know what it looks like but what does it sound like?

Choose one of the subjects below, design and create a sound production that illustrates the subject:

- Chocolate
- Movement
- Green
- Regret.

### Photography

The still image is a powerful communication tool. It can convey subjects, ideas, emotions and even suggest movement. Yet there are some subjects that photographers find difficult to convey. How does one demonstrate a golden sunset in black and white? What about the salty tang of the sea air or the effect of a hot curry on the lips?

### **Activity 9.9**

#### **Flavour it with images**

Choose a subject from the list below and design a photograph or photographic sequence that seeks to convey this idea. If you are working in black and white photography choose one of the subjects that involve colour:

- The scent of eucalyptus
- The flavour of milk
- Bach
- The sound of hip hop beats
- Green
- Rainbows
- Thinking.

### **Multimedia**

Multimedia productions are usually considered logical. They lend themselves to topics which can be developed sequentially or hierarchically. Audiences proceed through a series of ordered steps each of which can be seen as an extension of what has come before rather like the levels on a computer game. But what about subjects that are not so ordered? How can multimedia products convey the complexity and subtlety of shifting emotions? What of subjects about which audiences are ambivalent?

### **Activity 9.10**

#### **Multimedia's emotional side**

Plan and create a website that explores a non traditional subject. Try some of these:

- New love
- A narrative
- Jealousy
- Indecision
- The joy of catching a wave.

### **Activity 9.11**

#### **Opposites attract**

In the activities above you have explored the possibilities of some subjects that are difficult to convey in the selected medium. This activity asks you to think about how the same subject and ideas can be conveyed in different media forms. It will be especially valuable for students who have not yet selected a media form in which to work this year.

The subject is *movement*.

Design a small media product in two or more media forms that explores the idea of movement. Make notes about the strengths and weaknesses of each medium for conveying this subject. How will the technical limitations of the equipment and processes available to you affect your designs?

**Activity 9.12****Recording the possibilities and limitations of media forms, equipment and processes**

For each of the media forms in which you might work this year begin a table that outlines its strengths and weaknesses. Add to your table as your understanding develops. Your table should cover technical, structural and aesthetic considerations under the following headings:

<b>Medium:</b>	
<b>Possibilities and/or Strengths</b>	<b>Limitations and/or Weaknesses</b>
<b>Equipment:</b>	
<b>Application:</b>	
<b>Process:</b>	

### **Activity 9.13**

#### **Breaking clichés**

Clichés are perhaps the biggest problem of all for every media producer whether they are professionals, amateurs or students. Clichés can be fun and make us laugh, think of **Kath and Kim**, but they can also sound the death knell for serious media productions. The problem is that it is all too easy to slip into cliché territory as an easy way to tell a story.

Clichés are based on stereotypes, a topic that was covered in chapter 3. Have a quick look at this chapter again, it will remind you of some important concepts that will help you to avoid the cliché trap in your productions, unless you want to pay homage to Kath and Kim that is.

Try some exercises in both making and avoiding clichéd media products. Use your knowledge of the codes and conventions of media representation to help you. Break away from convention, deliberately avoid the familiar, challenge yourself to convey ideas in entirely new ways.

One technique to avoid the cliché trap is to push the aesthetic and technical possibilities of the equipment you use. Try to work on the edge of what is technically possible.

Some subjects to test your cliché radar are:

- Horror
- Love
- Fear
- Envy
- Boredom.

## **Modelling**

A valuable way to develop your skills in media production is to model your work on that of a media professional. Not only will you learn about the possibilities and limitations of your equipment but you will learn some new techniques that you might adapt for your own production.

### **Activity 9.14**

#### **Learning by copying**

Choose an example of a media technique that you think is valuable or aesthetically pleasing. Try to reproduce this example using the equipment you have available to you. Make notes about what you learned about your equipment and about the feasibility of the technique for your own production.

Some techniques you might like to try are below, don't be afraid to add more of your own, you should take control of the development of your skills for this outcome.

#### **Video**

Continuity editing in camera

Continuity of moving characters such as climbing stairs or walking towards and away from the camera

Difficult lighting situations including backlighting, poor natural lighting or a strong light source

Recording sound on a busy street

Shoot reverse shot conversations

A two camera setup

A single camera interview with noddy shots

Pull focus

Hand held camera work or other camera movement techniques such as simulating steadicam  
Colour correction.

### **Sound**

Recording sound in difficult situations including open spaces, halls, bathrooms, noisy locations  
Equalising sound in the editing process  
Removing or disguising sounds  
Adding effects in the editing process to simulate locations

### **Animation**

Three dimensional camera movement  
Directional and naturalistic lighting  
Combining different animation techniques in one piece

### **Photography**

Manipulating contrast  
Combining image and text  
Sandwiched negatives or their digital equivalent using layers  
Suggestive lighting  
Toning  
Hand colouring  
Sabatier effect

### **Print**

The effect of different paper stocks on printing  
Distorting or manipulating images  
Creating original fonts and text effects  
Original borders and backgrounds  
Text over image

### **Multimedia**

Cascading Style Sheets CSS  
Flash animated and controlled sites  
Any number of new fashions or techniques developed over the past few months or years

## Anticipating and avoiding common faults



Many students eagerly plan and produce the media productions giving little thought to problems that they may encounter in the process. When problems do occur these students may not be able to resolve them with the final production suffering as a result. Whilst there are many solutions that can be applied in post-production it is always better not to strike the problem in the first place.

Most production problems can be anticipated and therefore avoided. The solution can be as simple as thinking through the process to avoid the problem in the first place. For example, most students will be

planning their media productions in autumn, a season that has inspired artists for generations. The light is special in autumn, diffused, golden and soft. Autumn is characterised by falling leaves, dew drenched spider webs and wild mushrooms. These subjects would all make wonderful topics or props for a media production, the only problem is that whilst your production is designed in autumn, it is shot in winter when such props have disappeared. In a similar vein it is a brave student who plans a video production set on a summer holiday. The difficulties of simulating summer sunlight pale into insignificance when a young director is faced with a howling gale, a wild surf and a group of very cold actors none of whom have a suntan!

### Activity 9.15

#### Learning from your mistakes

Look back over your media production activities for the year thus far. What problems did you encounter? How many of these could have been anticipated had you been better prepared or more widely researched?

Compile a class list of mistakes never to be made again.

### Teach yourself

How many times have you opened or installed software only to see a dialogue box like this one?



What about this question?

Would you like to complete the online tutorial (recommended)?

- Yes
- Later
- Don't ask again

Whenever we install software or use it for the first time we are always too excited to work our way through the tutorial. We always push the 'later' button. Today we just want to play. We plan to do the tutorial someday, we know that it will be useful but somehow we never get around to it. Well, today is the day. Today *is* later!

Every software package comes with a tutorial attached. Even if you are really familiar with the software you will find something of use in this tutorial. Some software companies such as Adobe and Macromedia provide extensive sites where advanced tutorials and professional tips and tricks sections contain a wealth of information to aid your skills and creativity. Most books and many design magazines come with a CD with additional advanced tutorials.

You don't have to be tied to software to benefit from online tutorials. There are tutorials for all media forms and most of them are free, you just have to know where to look. Here are a range of tutorials, some of them professional and some amateur, all are worth a look. Try them.

### **Photography**

Agfa <http://www.agfa.com/>

Kodak online photographic tutorials <http://www.kodak.com/US/en/nav/takingPics.shtml>

Kodak online guide to better pictures <http://www.kodak.com/global/en/consumer/pictureTaking/index.shtml>

Iford [http://www.iford.com/html/us\\_english/homeng.html](http://www.iford.com/html/us_english/homeng.html)

Photo-Seminars.com <http://www.photo-seminars.com/pscampus.htm>

Curtin's Short Courses in Digital Photography <http://www.shortcourses.com/>

C T Low's Photography Basics <http://www.ctlow.ca/Photo/Photo.html>

### **Video production**

Cybercollege [http://www.cybercollege.com/tvp\\_ind.htm](http://www.cybercollege.com/tvp_ind.htm)

Exposure <http://www.exposure.co.uk/index.html>

Focus Editing Guide <http://www.focusinfo.com/articles/>

Media College <http://www.mediacollege.com/index.html>

Desktopvideo <http://desktopvideo.about.com/library/weekly/aa062502a.htm>

iMovie <http://www.apple.com/ilife/imovie/>

Ulead <http://www.ulead.com/learning/videoinfo.htm>

Adobe <http://www.adobe.com/products/tips/premiere.html>

### **Animation**

Flash Kit <http://www.flashkit.com/index.shtml>

Training Tools <http://www.trainingtools.com/online/flash5/>

Echo Echo <http://www.echoecho.com/flashbasics.htm>

How to animate <http://aimee.wyvernweb.com/anim/beganim.html>

The Animation Learners Site <http://come.to/animate>

### **Sound**

Media College <http://www.mediacollege.com/audio/>

Audacity <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

Radio College <http://www.radiocollege.org/>

Transform <http://www.transom.org/>

### Multimedia and Print

Adobe Studio <http://studio.adobe.com/>

Macromedia <http://www.macromedia.com/devnet/mx/dreamweaver/>

Frontpage <http://office.microsoft.com/home/>

Web Monkey <http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/>

Training Tools <http://www.trainingtools.com/>

Education online <http://www.educationonlineforcomputers.com/>

Publisher <http://office.microsoft.com/home/>

Sketchpad <http://www.sketchpad.net/>

### The Media Production design process

Media production designs contain both written and visual representations of the proposed product. These representations should be in one of the many formats media professionals use. Like every aspect of media production there are conventions in media design planning. These conventions are a form of media shorthand, they allow designers to convey intention and meaning to those media professionals reading the plan who can visualise the proposed product.

### Learning to represent your ideas visually

Many media students believe that they can't draw and therefore find storyboarding and photographic mockups challenging. If this is you, don't worry, you don't have to be able to draw to be able to represent your ideas visually.

The trick to storyboarding or photographic mockups is to fill the frame in exactly the way that your proposed image will. So if you are not making a video production about anorexia then your storyboard will not contain stick figures. Here are some techniques to help you learn to represent your ideas visually.

#### *Creating a storyboard or photographic mockup*

- Create a frame that is the same orientation as the proposed image. If you are working in video this will be a 4 x 3 or 16 x 9 (widescreen) frame. There are examples of storyboard frames in Section 2 for you to photocopy. If you are working in print or photography decide on the orientation of your image, portrait or landscape.
- Make your frames large enough to see detail. Certainly a large frame can seem intimidating but it will give you the space you need, if you do find it is too big you can always reframe later.
- Use a pencil, you can create shading and subtle effects with a pencil and you can erase mistakes.
- Think of landscape and sets as lines – parallel, converging, horizontal or vertical.
- Think of people and objects as a series of shapes – circles, ovals, triangles, squares, rectangles, cones, barrels, and so on. Think of facial features as another series of shapes or lines.
- Sketch rather than draw, let your hand run lightly over the page, you are not going for accuracy but impression.
- Think about depth of field, what is in focus, what is slightly out of focus and what is a blur?
- Once the frame is filled think of light sources and shade in shadows on features and objects as appropriate.
- Use liner notes (explanations of your drawings and intention) to fill in the details.

**Activity 9.16****Opening a present**

Create a storyboard or series of photographic mockups that illustrate opening a present. Remember to vary camera angles. Use as many or as few shots as you need.

Pass your representations around the class for constructive comment. Look at the ideas your classmates used for the same material, what can you learn from them?

**Activity 9.17****Nursery Rhyme fun**

Choose your favourite nursery rhyme and storyboard it.

Pass your storyboard around your class for constructive comment. Look at the ideas your classmates used for the same material, what can you learn from them?

## Some more ways to learn visual representation

*Use a frame to help you see what the camera sees.* In section 2 there is a 35mm negative blank. Photocopy it and cut out the negative. If you hold the frame in front of your eyes you will see the world framed as if by a camera lens, hold it closer and you will see long shots, further away and you will have close ups. Hold it up to the person, scene or object you want to represent and sketch what you see in the frame.

For more on the conventions of storyboarding and photographic mockups see Section 2 and the Nelson Media website, [www.nelsonmedia.com.au](http://www.nelsonmedia.com.au)

*Copy the real thing.* Find shots similar to the ones you want to use on video or DVD. Still the image and sketch what you see on the screen. Still having trouble? Use a whiteboard marker to sketch the outline of the image. When you stop the video you will see the outline clearly on the blue screen. If you are not allowed to draw on the television stick a sheet of tracing paper over it and sketch on that. Not only is this technique fun, you will very quickly learn how to fill the frame in the same way audio visual productions do.

*Use jointed wooden artists' models* to help you learn how to draw people.

*Take digital photos* of shots you want to storyboard or mockup, print these images and use them as models or trace the outlines.

*Try simple software solutions.* It is possible to use shapes in PowerPoint to create simple representations of people or scenes. You can even animate them if you would find that useful.

*Use cutouts* from magazines, newspapers or images from the internet. You can stick these into a frame and/or sketch them. Do be careful though or all your characters will begin to look like Jennifer Anniston and Brad Pitt.

*Ask the art teachers at your school for help.* Everyone has to start somewhere.

For more on the conventions of storyboarding and photographic mockups see Section 2.

## Written design plan specifications

The written design plan specifications you will use will depend to some extent on the medium in which you work. Details of media specific written documentation such as the conventions of writing scripts are covered in Section 2.

There are, in addition, some written specifications common to all media products.

**Audience**

Every media production is made for an audience or audiences. Without ideas about an audience in mind the media maker would flounder at both planning and production stages because it is the audience that informs the structure of the production through their interpretation of the codes and conventions used to convey meaning. Every aspect of a media production from titles to credits is designed and created to appeal to an audience.

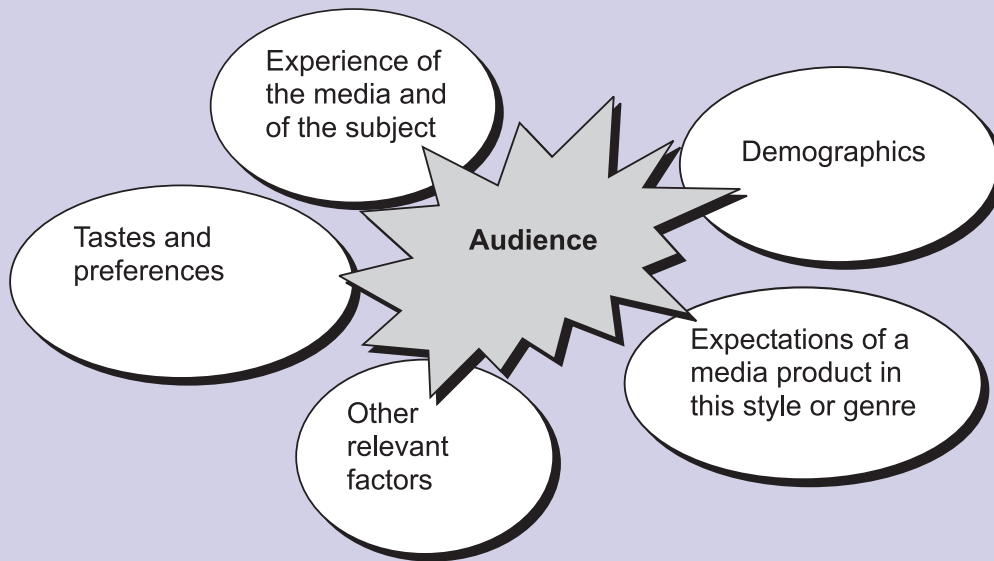
Ironically whilst everyone working in the media has the notion of audience driving their work, defining an audience can be the hardest job of all. Most students begin by describing audience in terms of age or gender yet many ways other than these by which audience may be defined. Indeed,

whilst age and gender are often important, they may not even be relevant. Use the headings below to help you define the characteristics of your proposed audience or audiences.

The best media productions usually speak to more than one audience. A video narrative about the loneliness of a teenage isolate, for example, may be designed with a teenage audience in mind but, if it is sufficiently well made, may resonate with adults as well, particularly those who live or work with young people. When you are designing your production think about how it will appeal to your particular audience and also about the universality of your idea. Can you construct your production so that wider themes are apparent and thereby broaden your audience? Whilst such ideas are not relevant to every media production they are certainly worth thinking about.

**Activity 9.18**

**Defining audience**



Choose a topic for a media production in the medium in which you are working this year. Create a concept map that explores the characteristic of a particular audience for the production.

**The youth market**

Many students make media products for an audience of their peers, young people, teenagers, people like them or like their friends. But to say that a production is aimed at ‘young people’ does not really say much at all. There are so many different youth subcultures that anyone making a media product must be careful to use the codes and conventions appropriate for a specific group or groups but remain aware that in order to successfully market a product it must have a wider appeal.

**Activity 9.19****An audience of your peers, whatever that means**

Just who are your peers and what do they like? This activity seeks to unpack those subcultural groups so often lumped together as 'youth'.

In your classroom you will have a number of youth subcultures represented in your classmates. Everyone will belong to more than one group. Here are some that might be familiar to you:

- Male
- Female
- Over 18
- Under 18
- Sporting types (jocks)
- Popular girls
- Nerds
- Goths
- Stoners
- Metal heads
- Punks
- Country music fans
- Girls who live to shop
- Students with part time work
- Students living independently
- Science students
- Arts students
- Christians
- Members of political parties
- Rich
- Poor
- Those born overseas
- Those who have lived all their lives in Australia.

Try to think of several more youth subcultures that might apply to your classmates.

Create a mind map or concept map where you draw links between every person in your class. Try to determine common links between different people and groups.

Which are the dominant groups in your classroom? What are the tastes in media of these groups? What subjects, styles, genres, and codes and conventions would appeal to the majority of your class?

**Activity 9.20****There are many ways to describe the same market**

Imagine you are designing a media production for an audience of your classmates. Define the characteristics of this market in a document of between 100 and 200 words. Use the knowledge and skills you have learned in activities 9.18 and 9.19 above.

Read your work to your classmates and listen to theirs. Discuss ways to successfully delineate a target audience and make notes about your discussion.

### Intention

What is it media producers want from their audience? What do you want? Do you want your audience to laugh, cry, learn something, be afraid or march in outrage on parliament house? Media design plans always outline the maker's intention in terms of the proposed product's purpose, impact and outcome. Sometimes the intention is a clearly worded section on its own, perhaps something like this excerpt:

*My intention in this series of images is to reveal the degradation of the sand dunes around Waratah Bay and by doing so educate my audience about the situation. I will provide some solutions to the problem and show what is likely to happen if nothing is done.*

Another approach is to incorporate intention with some aspects of other specifications such as how the product might engage an audience.

*Audiences have long enjoyed the incongruity of ideas possible in the medium of animation. Creating a physically implausible world where animals talk and humans come in strange colours combined with a whimsical soundtrack will entertain my chosen audience, jaded teenagers who try to be cool but remember the wonder of childhood cartoons.*

For some products intention is integral to the structure of the proposed product.

*This website is designed to simplify what is essentially a very complex corporate structure. Customers are only interested in the products they intend to buy and when logging on to a website should not be overwhelmed by the huge range of products available from the company. Therefore it is important to lead prospective customers through a range of choices in a way that allows them to access their particular needs whilst at the same time remaining aware of where they are in the site and of the existence of other products and services should they need them in the future.*

To determine your intention ask yourself the following question:

What do I want my audience to think, feel, do, say or understand as a result of my work? It might help to think how you want your audience to interact with your production before, during and after consuming it. How do you want them to approach it? Anticipation can be an important part of the media experience that can be built through advertising, word of mouth, or, in the case of video and print publications through the video slick or cover. How do you want your audience to respond whilst experiencing your work and what lasting effects, if any, do you want your audience to retain?

### Activity 9.21

#### Planning your impact: intention

Design several different intentions for the production idea and audience you devised for Activity 9.18 above.

Write notes about how different intentions impact on your audience and how you would craft your production for that audience.

## Style and/or genre

How do you describe style and genre? Try this exercise:

### Activity 9.22

#### Style unlimited

Go to your local video store and cast your eye around. At the newsagent cruise the magazine section. Type 'multimedia style' into your favourite search engine. Flick through **The Photography Book** or another collection of photographic images. Turn the dial on your radio until you have listened to a few minutes of every station.

What you have been doing is searching for examples of media style and genre. For the medium in which you plan to work this year repeat the exercise, this time making notes about the categories under which texts may be organised. Note the similarities and/or differences between the products you are studying under the following headings, as appropriate:

- Content
- Aesthetics including look and sound
- Themes
- Approaches to content
- Emotional appeal
- Intended audience
- Audience impact.

Now you have a list of descriptors for style and genre. Research how the media industry defines and describes style and genre for the medium in which you are working.

As the activity above reveals, style and genre are categorised both in terms of labels and descriptions. A horror film may be described in terms of its style, content and themes as one or more of the following – supernatural, gothic, psychological, mystery, zombie, vampire, comedy, sexy, violent, film noir, science fiction, funky, serious, exploitative, metaphorical and so on. As you can see one film may cross genres and styles. If your production employs aspects of a range of styles and genres note these.

### Activity 9.23

#### Genre bending

Start thinking about your media production. Take one of the ideas from your notebook and think about the possibilities and limitations of designing it in two or more styles or genres. Even if you know what your media production will be this activity will help you clarify your intention.

## Production exercises

This outcome requires you to document and complete two or more production exercises. Your teacher will give you details of the production exercises you will undertake. These will not be complete mini productions but self contained demonstrations of the knowledge and skills you have acquired during this area of study. Read your teacher's instructions carefully so that you are very clear about:

- The exact requirements of the task;
- The time allowed for each exercise;
- The resources you are allowed to use;
- The particular aspects of the task on which you will be assessed;

- The criteria by which you will be assessed;
- The weighting of the criteria for each section of the task.

The production exercises you complete for assessment for this area of study will be undertaken during semester one but because they are part of the School-assessed task will not be graded until your School-assessed task is submitted in semester two. Your school will decide on how your production exercises will be assessed in order to satisfy the requirements of Unit 3 Media.

It will be easy to forget this assessment task as you plunge into the media production process yet not only are the exercises you complete now worth 5% of your study score for media, they are also subject to external review. That means that they may be marked by both your teacher and again by VCAA reviewers in October. Keep your production exercises and all associated documentation together in one safe location, your teacher may decide to store it for you.

### **The link between production exercises, the media production design plan and the media production**

In completing your production exercises you will demonstrate knowledge and skills that you will later use in your media design plan and production, but the work you undertake for these exercises is not intended to be part of your production.

VCE students may not submit the same piece of work for more than one assessment task. This means that work you complete for outcome 2 cannot be submitted as part of any other outcome so your production exercises cannot be part of your design plan or media production.

This area of study is a place to learn and experiment. By all means use the learning activities for outcome 2 to explore ideas and techniques you might like to use in your media design plan and production. Just remember that you can't use anything you complete as part of the assessment task for this outcome in your design plan or production.

## **Documentation**

An important part of your production exercises is their accurate documentation. For this area of study you must document the focus of each exercise as well as provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of the exercise.

Production exercises should include:

- Documentation of the intention of each exercise, the design plan specifications to be explored and/or investigated and how the completed exercises realise the stated intention(s). The relevant specifications are listed on page 263.
- An exploration of how production design plan specifications appropriate to a media product present ideas and achieve particular effects.
- An investigation of the capacities of technical equipment, applications and media processes appropriate to a media product to present ideas and achieve particular effects.
- Evidence of the operation of technical equipment, use of applications and application of media processes to develop skills in areas identified in the production design plan specifications.
- An exploration of the aesthetic and/or structural qualities and characteristics of media products.

One way of ensuring that you satisfy all requirements for this task is to use a series of dot point headings based on the key knowledge and skills for the outcome. Here are suggested formats for documenting your intention and your evaluation:

## Media production exercise record of intention

Exercise number: .....

Media form in which this exercise will be undertaken:

.....  
.....  
.....

In this exercise I am going to explore and/or investigate the following design plan specification:

.....  
.....  
.....

I will explore how this design plan specification works in the following ways:

.....  
.....  
.....

In this exercise I will be using the following (list as appropriate):

- technical equipment: .....
- applications: .....
- media processes: .....

I will be investigating the following capacities of this equipment, application and/or processes:

.....  
.....  
.....

Evidence of my work for this exercise will be submitted in the following form:

.....  
.....  
.....

## Media production exercise evaluation

Exercise number: .....

Media form in which this exercise was undertaken:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Evidence of my work for this production exercise accompanies this document in the following form:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

From this exercise I have learned (as appropriate to the task):

- how production design plan specifications present ideas and achieve particular effects
- how technical equipment, applications and media processes present ideas and achieve particular effects
- the operation of the following technical equipment, applications and media processes:
- the aesthetic and/or structural qualities and characteristics of media products
- the production possibilities and limitations of technical equipment, applications and/or media processes.

Details of the above are provided as:

- Technical equipment:
- A written report
- A commentary accompanying the task
- Annotations on the task
- Other form (please specify)