

Children lead way in media change

by Ali Bell

Children under the age of 14 are watching less television for the first time in the 52-year history of American television, says Professor Jeffrey Cole, the founding director of the World Internet Project.

Young people like computers and the internet "as much, if not more than television", says Professor Cole, who was in New Zealand recently to give a series of public lectures at AUT University.

People are watching less television in all the countries participating in the global internet study.

As people spend more time on the net, they are spending less time on other things. "We now know that as people watched more television they spent less time talking together as a family," says Cole.

Radio, television, newspapers and magazines will be in decline as the internet's popularity continues to rise, he says.

There have been "huge drops in the circulations of newspapers" in the USA. In one year the San Francisco Chronicle had a 17 per cent drop in circulation.

If there was a newspaper strike most people under the age of 30 would barely notice it, but if the Internet was stopped for a day there would be feelings of painful withdrawal, Cole says.



PHOTO: ALI BELL

INTERNET: Kids are spending more time in front of computers.

Research shows heavy internet users are watching more movies at the theatre and at home, play more computer and Playstation-type games, and listen to recorded music more than people who are not often online.

Young people are generators of information for the net as well as receivers, spending as much of their downtime online as possible.

The internet is our most important source of information, and for some it's the only source. The growth area is in informa-

tion, not entertainment. "Although this may change," says Cole.

He expects 98 per cent of the public will soon be fully using the internet, and predicts huge shifts in the traditional media such as newspapers and television.

One of the reasons we don't have full internet usage yet is because, even in developed countries, not everyone who wants a personal computer has one, he says. He notes there are still a few remaining older people who

are resistant to new technology, but says, "the digital divide is closing".

And if you think that broadband changes everything because of faster connection speeds and much quicker downloads - you are wrong, says Cole.

It's actually the "always-on" nature of broadband that makes it so distinctive compared to the "dial-up culture", says Cole.

People who use modems are on the internet on average 20 to 30 minutes at a time, two or

three times a day. Time on the internet is for those users "disruptive time", says Cole.

But for broadband users the time is "integrative time" - using the net for two or three minutes at a time about 30 or 40 times a day, and is what makes the change so major.

New Zealand has just joined the World Internet Project and will soon contribute to cross-country comparisons on internet usage, along with more than 20 other countries such as the USA, Australia, Japan, and Korea.

World Internet Project

The World Internet Project (WIP) is an international, collaborative project looking at the social, political and economic impact of new technologies.

"Conceived as the study of the internet that should have been conducted on television in its early days, the WIP believes that the internet's influence will ultimately be far greater than television," says its website.

Professor Jeffrey Cole was an honorary visiting fellow at AUT's Centre for Communication Research, which has been invited to become a project partner and New Zealand representative in the WIP.

'All worth it' say AUT's top journo students

by Rachael Sutton

It is not unusual to hear AUT students complaining about the pressure they are under. However last year's top journalism students have sung the praises of the university and say the challenges were all worth it in the end.

Miles Erwin, who completed the university's graduate diploma in journalism, says he wouldn't have his current job at the *Herald on Sunday* if it wasn't for AUT.

"The woman who hired me said it was my references from the tutors at AUT that sealed the deal," he says. "She told me she thought I paid them."

At AUT's recent awards evening Erwin won the ACP Media NZ award for excellence in magazine journalism and the APN National Publishing award for the outstanding graduate in the graduate diploma of journalism.

"Winning the awards capped off a year of damn hard work and was very fulfilling," he says.

"I loved my year at AUT. We all worked really hard in the newsroom and played even harder down at the pub."

Shelley Scarlett finished the Bachelor of Communications last year and was the winner of the John Foy Memorial award for excellence in broadcast jour-

nalism. She says the support and technology available to students at AUT is amazing.

Now doing a graduate diploma in secondary teaching at the University of Auckland, Scarlett says the facilities over there don't even compare.

While she has put journalism to one side for now, Scarlett says if she had wanted to pursue a career in the media the Bachelor of Communication Studies was the perfect way to break into the industry.

"I loved my year at AUT. We all worked really hard in the newsroom and played even harder down at the pub."

"At the end of the year the tutors sent almost daily emails so we had a foot in the door for heaps of jobs," she says. "The BCS degree is also really recognised in the media industry, so I don't imagine it would have been a problem getting a job if I had wanted to."

Sarah McDonald, graduate journalist of the year, says even after the nightmare of learning shorthand she was pleased she majored in journalism.

"Journalism is a hard world to break into, but the course at AUT is well respected and provides an essential foot in the door," McDonald says.

She is now writing for *Remix* magazine and Travel Inc.

While recalling how stressed out they felt in their final year at AUT, all three graduates emphasise they don't regret a minute of it.

Qantas rewards writers

by Amy Kelly

The performance of newcomer journalists at this month's Qantas Media Awards suggests a wave of promising talent has hit the journalism scene.

AUT journalism graduate Miles Erwin won the Don Milne award for student journalism with what judges deemed "a first-rate portfolio" of "orderly, intelligent and reader-friendly" text.

Erwin says writing is his number one passion and is the reason he chose to go into journalism, despite having "a natural antipathy for the media" in his early life.

The 27-year-old had already written and published a book before beginning the graduate diploma. *Guardian of the Valley* celebrates the 150-year history of a Hutt Valley church built by Erwin's ancestors, who were among New Zealand's first pioneer settlers.

Erwin now reports for *The Herald on Sunday*, in a position the paper offered him at the end of a summer internship.

"It's a great paper to experience working on," he says. "You learn huge amounts but you need a lot more tenacity with it than with daily papers. You have to dig deeper to get a story that isn't going to be covered each day."

After covering the initial round of "death knocks" ("They're not that bad actually," he says. "A well-crafted one is a good thing"), Erwin reported on stories such as the murder of



PHOTO: AMY KELLY

MILES ERWIN: Winner of the Don Milne award for student journalism.

Jack Nicholas in Hawke's Bay and the Whangamata marina debate.

"It's a lot of fun, doing an issues story like that," he says.

"The photographer and I went down and had drinks with the locals. We talked to those who were 'for' and those who were 'against', getting people's feel for the issue."

Erwin says AUT's journalism course helped him develop "tighter writing skills, time management abilities and a lot of confidence".

"I went into the workplace and knew I could do it," he says.

Another fresh face making the prizewinners' circle at the Qantas Media Awards was *The Sunday Star Times*' Tim Hume.

Hume scooped up both the junior and senior awards for the newspaper feature section writer as well as a sub-category prize for feature writing on government, diplomacy and foreign affairs, despite being only two

years out of journalism school.

The University of Canterbury graduate says he loves "tapping into interesting people and situations, talking to someone with a story to tell".

The judges called Hume "a significant writing talent" producing "confident, cleverly crafted stories in an extraordinarily fluent style".

He is also the recent winner of a Fulbright scholarship to Columbia University in New York, where he will study for a Master of Science in journalism over the next year.

Hume says he found the idea of journalism exciting since he was a child but that his "romantic" notion of the job changed once he began working.

"The reality of it is that there are lots of difficult sides to being a journalist," he says. "You're getting in people's faces and making their lives a misery, sometimes. But I believe it's important what we do."