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## Editorial

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## EDITORIAL

We know little about the ‘behind the scenes’ of television. While the booming field of production studies has been shining a light on the work processes and the personnel in production spaces, there is still a lot to be learnt about the ‘hidden’ professions of television. This issue of *VIEW* provides a rich but fairly eclectic series of contributions based on the theme. The articles presented here bring under scrutiny the ‘behind the scenes’ activities of television and their hidden, often unrecognised and uncelebrated personnel and processes. They engage across a wide range of organisational, administrative and technical activities that have played their understated, often ‘invisible’ part in the historical formation and development of television.

The theme of ‘hidden professions of television’ raises several thought-provoking questions. To start with: how do we access, study and capture the professions of television’s past, primarily those that have remained ‘invisible’ to television history so far? Vanessa Jackson’s article ‘Revealing Television’s Analogue Heroes’ opens up the discussion on ‘archiving’ hidden professions by creating audio-visual records of television technicians operating the equipment, remembering and demonstrating how a particular analogue technology worked and what it was capable of. Such a bottom-up approach to the declining or superseded practices of (analogue) television production helps to safeguard valuable primary source material for the study of television later.

Writing about the ‘hidden’ professions in television also raises the issue of researcher’s access to backstage activities and to work documents that have remained undisclosed to outsiders. A member of the production team of *The Bill* herself, Joanna MacDonnell provides in her article ‘Doing it Live! Planning and Preparing for a Live Drama Episode: a Case Study of *The Bill* (ITV 2005),’ a revealing insight into the complex preparations and the ‘behind the scenes’ dynamics involved in this live, multi-camera, popular TV drama production. Live drama productions for TV are now relatively rare and require intense collaborative efforts, this case study documents many of the key challenges involved.

Considering the gathering momentum of production studies in the UK, it is no wonder that several articles in this issue address the ‘behind the scenes’ of production spaces in British television. Besides Joanna MacDonnell’s article on *The Bill*, we have Gamze Toylan’s contribution on ‘Behind the Scenes: Costume Design for Television. There Are Many Things You Don’t Know About *The League of Gentlemen*,’ which explores the role of the television costume designer. With original interviews with one of the writer/performers and the executive producer we get an insight into the creative processes and shed light on the costume design workflow; and particularly adapting costume design from a successful stage show to a television production environment. Daniel Ashton’s and Nic Jeune’s article ‘Hid(ing) Media Professionals: Constructing and Contesting the 1st AD,’ illuminates the role of the ‘First Assistant Director’ who often find themselves as uncomfortable intermediaries between the main Director, production staff and actors. This profession is often vital in the film and television production process but is usually overlooked (hidden) in status and credit.

What remains ‘hidden’ to television history are also unsuccessful technological inventions, such as the Vision Electronic Recording Apparatus (VERA), a technology developed by the BBC Design Unit which had the potential to change the production and working practices of British television. In her article ‘Whatever Happened to VERA,’ Jo Henderson tells about the destiny of this technology, which was declared obsolete soon after the BBC designers demonstrated it on *Panorama* – the only time this new technology was actually used in television production.

The theme of ‘hidden professions of television’ remains a fertile ground for historical research that can give us insights into the shared television cultures in Europe. Sonja de Leeuw’s and Dana Mustata’s article ‘In-Vision Continuity Announcers: Performing an Identity for Early Television in Europe’ draws on original archive research, especially from the Netherlands and from Romania and discusses some of the principal functions of female continuity-announcers and their on-screen and off-screen careers, arguing that there are striking similarities in their performances across European national and cultural boundaries. As television became domesticated across Europe in the 1950s and

1960s, women in-vision continuity announcers played a vital role in establishing and mediating an identity for the new medium. The article demonstrates that even television professions that have been presented on screen have played their understated, often 'invisible' parts in the historical formation and development of television.

On the other hand, Luca Barra's article 'Invisible Mediations. The Role of Adaptation and Dubbing Professionals in Shaping US TV for Italian Audiences' and Massimo Scaglioni and Axel Fiacco's article 'Writing Games. Continuity and Change in the Design and Development of Quiz Shows in Italy' show us the national specificities of making television. Barra's article looks into the transfer of foreign programmes – notably from the US TV industry – to Italy and the various kinds of TV translation, sub-titling and dubbing that were developed for these imports. The article presents a fascinating analysis of the processes involved in dubbing American programming for Italian television, demonstrating that there is a great deal more involved than simple translation. Scaglioni's and Fiacco's article examines in detail the history of the Quiz Show in the Italian context, highlighting significant 'autori', production processes and the ways in which formats have shifted and become transformed from the earliest days to the present.

Beyond production spaces, there are many more 'hidden' professions of television. While television professions are inevitably embedded into local cultures, research into the national contexts of television professions is valuable if we are to understand how local professional cultures of television are transferable to wider European contexts. Jérôme Bourdon's and Cécile Méadel's article 'Rational Wizards. Interpreters of the Audience in French Television' looks into the complexities behind the measurements and collection of television audience data, shedding a light on how this profession emerged and changed over the years in the French context. Isabelle Gaillard's article 'An Unknown but Key Player in the Television Market: the Television Retailer (1950-1984)' provides an original insight into the organisation of TV retailing in France, demonstrating how relatively little we know about the industrial and commercial aspects of the manufacturing and distribution of TV sets.

Just like in the previous issues, articles in this issue are divided across two separate sections: 'Discoveries' that zoom into the 'behind the scenes' of specific programmes and broadcasters and use innovative and original sources; and 'Explorations' that shine a light on different professions of television: from the continuity announcers, to the 1<sup>st</sup> AD, to the TV retailer or audience interpreters.

We hope you enjoy this collection of articles!

## Biography

Andy O'Dwyer is a Technologist/Project Manager at the BBC, working on a number of EU collaborative projects to bring archives online for public and academic use. He is Chair of the Television Studies Commission of [FIAT/IFTA](#), promoting academic use of audio-visual material, and a member of the [European Television History Network](#). He is also a contributing author of the book 'A European Television History' (Bignell & Fickers eds., Wiley-Blackwell, 2008) and co-editor of the book 'User Studies in Digital Library Development' (Facet Publishing, 2012).

Tim O'Sullivan is [Emeritus Professor of Media & Cultural History](#) at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK. He has written extensively on aspects of film and television history and is currently completing a study of TV Sport and Popular Memory.