

Schultz, B. (2005). *Broadcast news producing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Reviewed by [Catherine Strong](#)

Broadcasting producers have a thankless job.

They might have the power and skill to make or break the on-air personality, but get none of the public recognition. Brad Schultz calls producing the unglamorous behind-the-scenes work.

In his book *Broadcast News Producing*, Schultz argues that producers are in high demand because people going into the industry want the fame of being in front of the camera rather than the clout of being at the back of the studio.

If a show's popularity starts to dip, however, it is the producer who is blamed. This was painfully obvious recently in New Zealand when the news media ran front-page articles on Television New Zealand dumping the producer of its flagship 6 o'clock news after ratings plummeted.

Despite the skills and responsibilities required for this pivotal position in television and radio newsrooms, producers often simply fall into the position. There is little specific training, nor training manuals.

This is why Schultz's new book fills a void as a nuts and bolts text of all the skills and characteristics needed in the job.

But the book doesn't sit comfortably in the marketplace it aspires to. Schultz says it is for those producers who have been thrown right into the fire with a minimum of training. It is for those who are already in the job and need to quickly come to grips with it.

However it is too rudimentary for anyone who has worked at all in a broadcast newsroom before. It devotes, for example, a dozen pages to a basic once-over of the various positions in the newsroom. Another 20 pages goes over simple broadcast writing rules. This section is good, including student exercises at the end, but it doesn't differ much from a dozen other good broadcast writing books available.

Educators will find the student exercises at the end of many chapters very useful for classroom work, but this approach could frustrate someone already in the job wanting a solid self-training manual.

A seasoned journalist may similarly find the advice on rapport building a bit simplistic. Schultz warns new producers not to be too authoritative with other newsroom personnel and devotes large segments on how to create relationships with other key players. Many of us have worked with producers who were effective because they were very authoritative.

For those students still preparing for a broadcast job, the book is a treasure of useful information. It gives examples of rundowns, explains all the common anachronisms, and includes useful lists of news values, story idea sources and story formats.

A student digesting this book would have an excellent start as a producer, with many examples of foolproof techniques to ensure smooth production.

For example, a scripting tip is hidden on page 64 to avoid terminating transmission after a false outcue. Many producers learn to avoid this common problem only after they have publicly embarrassed themselves with an on-air gaff.

The growing emphasis on entertainment news receives a thorough and non-judgmental analysis. After reading this book new and seasoned journalists will be well armed with statistics and facts to back up opinion on this current industry debate. Schultz acknowledges entertainment news as a response to an increasing decline in viewership of news programmes, especially among the under-50-year-olds, but puts it within a context of historic and commercial imperatives.

The book can be praised for an impressive list of 81 references including a sizeable number of websites useful to dive into for additional issues.

This review wouldn't be complete without a barb at what appears to be Schultz's bias against live-reporting which he sprinkles throughout the book. Live reporting is the staple technique of local stations competing against big network news programmes and their heavy reliance on prepared reports. It is an under-rated skill that is the distinguishing feature of many television stations, encouraged by their own marketing division. Potential producers shouldn't be nurtured to avoid it.

Overall this book is extremely comprehensive and has a high readability factor for classroom use. In the USA, where Schultz is based, the book would be useful for those involved in student television and radio stations at high school and university level. In areas where student stations aren't as common, the book is a must-read for all students thinking of becoming a broadcast producer.

Purchase information: This book is available from all good booksellers, or can be purchased direct at www.footprint.com.au RRP: \$73(Aust) or \$78.22(NZ)

About the reviewer: *Catherine Strong lectures in journalism at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand. She has had more than 30 years' experience in broadcast and print journalism. This spans several countries in Australasia and North America. In addition to being a hands-on practitioner in many newsrooms, she has also held various positions training broadcast reporters, both within the industry and at the tertiary level.*