



GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2013 Media examination provided students with an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the key knowledge and key skills from the *VCE Media Study Design 2012–2016*. On the whole, the questions were accessible for students of all abilities.

Questions requiring extended responses were less well-managed by students in comparison to the short-answer questions. Many students struggled with addressing multiple elements within the extended-response questions (for example, Section A, Question 4).

Students should be reminded about assessment criteria regarding the use of appropriate media language and terminology. The use of appropriate media language provides a clear differential between strong and medium responses.

Many students overwrote in short-answer questions (particularly Section A, Questions 1 and 2 and Section C, Question 1) and this appeared to leave them short of time, resulting in a brief response for the final question on the paper.

Illegible handwriting is becoming an issue in student responses. Students should ensure their handwriting can be easily read in order to be properly rewarded for their knowledge.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what the answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding errors resulting in a total less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Narrative

The questions in this section required students to demonstrate their understanding of how production and story elements work together to structure meaning in narratives to engage audiences (p. 20, *VCE Media Study Design*). Questions in this section had a greater focus on audience engagement, reception, consumption and meaning expressed in texts. Some students struggled to integrate discussion of elements with audience (for example, Question 4). The story element, the structuring of time and its impact on narrative progression, as well as key knowledge dot point 4 – the relationship between texts and the genre(s), styles and techniques they may reference – were poorly managed by some students.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	20	36	40	2.1

This question was generally well done, with many students able to describe how one production element functioned to communicate ideas. Students were required to select one element and describe how it communicated an idea in one of the texts studied. Many students gave examples of the element in their film and then were able to discuss how that example was connected to an idea or concept within the film.

The following response is an example of an appropriate answer to this question.

Editing

Editing in Moulin Rouge (Luhrmann 2001) is crucial in connecting the multiple storylines. In the 'EL Tango De Roxanne' scene, the use of parallel editing between Christian and Satine, emphasises their connection and the challenges they're facing. The editing of sound in conjunction with visual material in the form of simultaneous sound helps to link the two events to each other. The temporal duration contracts time to build suspense until the Duke's attempted rape of Satine and the juxtaposition of frames, helps to highlight both Christian and Satine's emotions.

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Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	17	31	33	19	1.6

This question required students to demonstrate their knowledge of how the structuring of time constructed meaning within a narrative. While many students effectively discussed suitable examples of narrative meaning being constructed, they did not clearly identify the structure of time technique being employed. A number of students confused the structuring of time with the concept of time as a theme within the narrative.

Stronger responses accurately identified then discussed a structuring of time technique (linear, circular, compression, expansion, montage, flashback, parallel actions) and then went on to discuss the meaning constructed within the text as a result of this technique. The following responses reflect an insightful understanding of the structuring of time and the way in which it has been used to construct narrative meaning.

In the film 'Pan's Labyrinth', the structuring of time has been used to construct meaning as well as create interest. The film is a circular narrative, meaning it begins with a flash-forward of the end of the film before flashing back and unfolding chronologically. The movie begins with protagonist Ofelia lying on a rock with blood returning into her nose, symbolising her 'rebirth' at the end of the film. It then returns to a shot of Ofelia reading a book, unfolding chronologically from then onwards. By doing this, Del Toro creates interest within the audience as they begin to question why Ofelia is lying down with blood drawing into her nose as well as constructing meaning of time.

In the Prestige (2006) Christopher Nolan uses the structuring of time in order to build suspense. Instead of events being depicted linearly, the structure of The Prestige is non-linear with various flashbacks and flash forwards being implied throughout. For example in the scene whereby Robert Angier watches Alfred Borden's magic trick, 'The Transported Man', Nolan manipulates temporal order to build suspense with the scene being depicted as a flashback in this encounter with Olivia. Nolan also used the technique of ellipsis in order to manipulate time, thus contributing to Borden's secret. The use of quick, fast paced crosscuts between the present and past action is intended to build suspense until finally revealing its climax.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	6	8	21	27	19	13	6	3.1

Many students appeared to find this question challenging as it had a number of components that needed to be addressed. Some students reused elements that they had written about in previous questions, often reusing them in an inappropriate context. Some students did not appear to understand the basic codes and conventions of genre, even when their text's genre was well-established with clearly defined production and story codes, i.e. science fiction or horror. Largely absent was an acknowledgment of audience expectations and how elements contributed to genre. Some students simply discussed elements, with no reference or acknowledgment of how they related to the text's genre.

Stronger responses weaved the use of elements into their analysis of the genre. This may have included an acknowledgment of the director's deliberate use of those elements to craft the conventions of the genre, or a discussion of how these styles or techniques directly impacted on the audience.

The following example successfully discusses how the structure of time has been used to construct meaning in the text.

Christopher Nolan's 'The Dark Knight' is a typical superhero movie that's use of production elements and story elements compliment its action genre. The story element of character, in this instance Batman, use typical action camera angles and sound to enhance the action effects. Camera shots, also referred to as a 'hero shot' a low angle amplifying Batman to seem larger than life, frequent throughout film in order to impress and endear the audience to him. Other camera shots and techniques such as a airborne dolly are used to view batman on top of a building, are typical of the 'epic' style that is viewed as a norm for action films. The diegetic sound of the film follows suit with gunfire and explosions often amplified to increase the awe, other diegetic noises such as the Batmobile, now dubbed the tumbler, roaring as it breaks through solid concrete with a crash to reach the scene of violence. This increase of volume as well as decreasing volume of other worldly noises work towards the epic style that the genre of action is known for. Nolan's 'The Dark Knight' however goes further in this due to its superhero basis to not only excite the audience like a typical action film, but to engross the audience fulfilling its status as a superhero epic.

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Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	9	6	10	19	22	14	8	5	4	2	1	3.8

Most students struggled to address all the components of this question, and failed to demonstrate an ability to compare and contrast. Many simply provided a word or phrase, such as ‘in comparison’ or ‘alternatively’ to join individual discussions between texts. Coherent and well-articulated responses successfully made comparisons and discussed contrasting use of both elements, together with the relationship between texts, audiences, consumption and reception. Thus strong responses were able to continually compare and contrast texts with each other throughout the discussion.

Many students were also able to successfully compare and contrast either production and story elements, or the relationship between a text, its audience, its consumption and its reception; however, very few students compared and contrasted both of these dot points.

The opportunity for students to discuss ‘the relationships between a text, its audiences, its consumption and reception, including how audiences read and are engaged by fictional narratives’ (p. 21, *VCE Media Study Design*) was embraced in its entirety by relatively few students. Some students addressed an aspect of consumption or reception.

The following excerpt provides an example of how the viewing experience contributes to audience reading and appreciation of narrative texts.

The large aerial shot cuts closer and closer to the ground, suggesting to the audience that they are sinking into a fairytale. This is reinforced by Mrs Cooper’s narration, creating the impression of being read to. Thus the audience is encouraged to suspend their disbelief in the fantastical equilibrium...

This example successfully addresses all components of the question.

Both ‘Vertigo’ and ‘Incendies’ use similar production and story elements in different ways to engage the audience. This is most likely a result of the vastly different historical and social contexts of the films releases, with Incendies released in 2010, almost six decades after Vertigo in 1958. The production element of sound is the most prominent of these differences, with the limited and sparse soundtrack of Incendies contrasting the elaborate and specially-composed orchestral score of Vertigo. Although different, however, both films’ use of sound effectively engages their audience. The rapidly ascending violin crescendo, interrupted by jarring trombone blasts and Spanish riffs and musical motifs, engages the audience by creating suspense and assisting with climax; in contrast Incendies seeks to engage its more contemporary audience with what is perhaps a consciously sparse soundtrack. ‘You And Whose Army’ and ‘Spinning Plates’ by Radiohead are used as soundbridges and engage the audience by linking similar scenes and ideas. This is perhaps a rare point of similarity between the two texts use of sound – wherever ‘Carlotta’ is mentioned in Vertigo, a Spanish riff plays, and ‘You And Whose Army’ is played in scenes mentioning Nihad. Relationships between characters in Vertigo are also developed and constructed in Vertigo through the sweeping and soaring romantic strings in scenes with Madeleine and Scottie. In Incendies, however, character relationships are developed more through lighting and mise-en-scene, with the opening scenes of Jeanne and Nihad exemplifying this. The twins are introduced to the audience to have a very dysfunctional and distant relationship through the low-key, hard lighting in the scene in Jean’s office. Moreover, the audience is engaged further into this central relationship through the way lighting combines with the visual composition in mise-en-scene of these scenes, with the twins placed far apart within the frame. In Vertigo, however, Hitchcock places much more emphasis on mise-en-scene that Villeneuve, with audiences of Vertigo expecting to find clues, hidden meaning and subtext about character relationships and the narrative progression. Hitchcock’s placement of tall towers in the background of the mise-en-scene with Scottie in the foreground, engages the audience by serving as a constant, subtle and visual reminder of both the character’s crippling fear and the film’s fatal ending on the belltower. This also highlights the importance of setting in Vertigo to the audience which is shared in Incendies. However, while Vertigo is set in essentially one location, Incendies uses the contrasting long shots of the brown, scorched and arid Middle East and the shots of cold wet and grey Canada to engage the audience and reveal information about the narrative progression. Moreover, while Hitchcock relies on subjective shots, long shots and zooms to highlight significant characters or moments in the film, Villeneuve in Incendies draws the audiences attention to important elements through manipulation of depth of field and use of close up shots.

Section B – Media texts and society’s values

Aspects of this Area of Study still prove problematic for some students. The study design stipulates the study of ‘an identified significant idea, social attitude or discourse located in a range of media texts’ (p.27, *VCE Media Study Design*) yet some students appeared to have studied multiple discourses across a range of texts, with some students writing on different discourses in each question. The study of multiple discourses within texts is not appropriate and evidently confused these students. This was also an issue in Question 4, where students who had studied multiple discourses had great difficulty exploring the tension between the values of a singular discourse.

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A wide range of texts were studied, but students seemed to have particular difficulty with cartoons or satires. These text types often feature characters that resemble caricatures, or have situations that are exaggerated, and students are not always able to identify or acknowledge these.

There also appeared to be continuing confusion regarding the difference between the terms ‘discourse’ and ‘values’, and how values are reflected in a particular discourse.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	9	28	63	1.6

This question was largely well answered, with the majority of students being able to identify a social issue or discourse. Students who simply referred to a discourse without providing a description could not achieve full marks. Students who responded with a value rather than a discourse were not awarded any marks.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	22	34	26	11	2.2

Responses to this question reflected a significant lack of understanding about how representations are constructed in media texts. Many students simply described characters or examples, without any significant understanding of the construction of these as representations of a social issue or discourse, despite the question explicitly asking for an explanation of the construction. Better responses discussed lighting, framing, costume, dialogue and/or plot as devices that constructed the representation.

This question did not require students to write about values, but instead focused on representations in media texts. However, students could acknowledge values if this supported their explanation of the representation but was not the focus of the response.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

This issue is shown to be present in the Stepford Wives in the clash of cultures between Joanna and Bobbie with the women of Stepford, revealed in their disparate representations. The costumes of Joanna and Bobbie, wearing casual jeans, certainly contrasts with the domestic attire of the Stepford wives, and, as these women are revealed by both the narrative and their inhuman, oscillating voice acting to be robots. Forbes is able to infer such submission to be unnatural and inhuman, condemning the dominant social value, in response to the social issue that women should be satisfied performing domestic duties. This is reiterated in the undesirable portrayal of the Men’s Association, balding, overweight and, in the case of Claude, stuttering, and in the mundane discussion of the club. Likewise, the sinister portrayal of Dale ‘Diz’ Coba, who ‘likes to watch women performing domestic chores’ in eerie shadows and his unnaturally calm voice, condemns the dominant response to the social issue even more.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	12	10	22	21	19	10	5	2.8

This question required students to analyse the relationship between a social issue or discourse and how values were represented and distributed via two or more examples. Some students drew on historical contexts to analyse the relationship between the texts and the discourse/social issue, whereas others focused on the content of the texts to form their response. Both of these approaches were acceptable. Better responses were able to use two or more examples to underpin their analysis of the representation of values in texts and to reference these examples in their analysis.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

In America in the 1960’s the youth felt that the ‘Establishment’ did not have the best interests of the American people and heart and were using them so to speak to further their own political agenda. The authority’s manipulative nature could be seen through the major social issue of the time- the war drafting process in which any man over the age of 18 could be selected to serve the country at any time and for this reason the ‘system’ was viewed as flawed and unjust. The authority’s seedy nature can be seen in Bonnie and Clyde through the Texas Ranger. In the film his principles are depicted as being warped and self-serving. For example he talks to Blanche Barrow in the films close purely to extract information from her and leaves her as soon as he obtains the information rendering him a sly and calculating character who cannot be trusted. In the Monkee’s movie head the Monkee’s are completely indifferent to authority figures. This can be seen when they run through the opening ceremony and the mayor’s speech in the film’s opening. Furthermore the police men are depicted as brutal, nasty characters when they attempt to ambush the Monkee’s once they have escaped the black box.



Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	11	10	19	18	19	9	7	4	2	3.1

Students found aspects of this question challenging, especially if they were not familiar with the concept of relationships or tensions between values in texts. Again, students who studied more than one discourse or social issue found it difficult to respond, as their responses lacked the depth that the study of a single discourse or social issue would provide. Many students did not answer the question correctly, simply giving examples of dominant, emerging and oppositional values without any discussion of the relationship or tension between them. Other students simply defined these terms, and as a result could not achieve high marks. Of concern was the number of student responses that did not discuss all three types of values. Oppositional values did not appear to be equally represented in comparison to dominant and emerging values.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

In the opening of Bonnie and Clyde there are a dichotomy of social values occurring. The film opens with a close-up of Bonnie's lips which reflects Bonnie's sexuality and the highly oppositional social value predominantly held by the youth at the time that women are sexual beings who are entitled to displaying their sexuality. In this opening scene Bonnie is pictured naked which may be considered a dominant representation in that Bonnie is portrayed as a passive sexual object. However this is challenged as the scene is not portrayed from the point of view of a male character but instead from the perspective of an impartial third observer or Bonnie's point of view. This reflects oppositional values of the time that women can possess agency in their own lives without the presence of a male figure. The film juxtaposes the characters of Bonnie and Blanche. Blanche's character can be considered to be the embodiment of the older conservative generation, as seen through her clothing which is reminiscent of the nineteen thirties. Blanche's character can be seen to support the dominant social value that women are defined by their household duties and have no personal prospects of their own. This sentiment is reflected in her husband Buck Barrow's statement. 'It's the face powder that gets a man interested but it's the baking powder which keeps him home.'

Julie Barnes in Mos Savad can be seen to represent the emerging social value that women can be an asset in the workforce. This can be seen in the chief's comments towards her 'Glad to have you aboard' and 'you were right Julie' when she furthers the case. However she is portrayed as not being as competent with her job as her male colleagues Linc and Pete. This can be seen in the show's opening in which Linc and Pete are represented as strong and persevering as shown through their agility and purposeful running. Julie however is breathless and cannot continue and the males resort to physically supporting her and dragging her along. This can be seen to reflect dominant values that women are fragile and passive and require the support of men.

Section C – Media influence

This section was accessible for the majority of students, offering diverse questioning and the employment of a quote in Question 3 to initiate discussion. Questions were addressed with varying degrees of success. Most students had a basic grasp of major theories and models of media influence. Some responses appeared pre-learned by students and did not necessarily address the question – this was particularly evident in Questions 2b. and 3. Many students appeared to employ information from Unit 2, Media Area of Study 2: Australian Media Organisations in their response to Question 4.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	8	13	28	30	21	2.4

This question gave students the opportunity to first explain two communication theories or models, then discuss their similarities and/or differences (stemming from key skill: identify, compare and contrast communication theories and models, p. 29, *VCE Media Study Design*). Most students performed well in the first part of this question, but few discussed similarities and/or differences well, tending to simply add short statements or dot points at the bottom of responses.

Interestingly, the Hypodermic Needle Model, Uses and Gratification Theory and Reinforcement Theory dominated student responses. However, a broad range of theories and models were noted across better scripts. A number of students discussed the Reinforcement Theory opposing the Uses and Gratification Theory because audiences seek out their own media in the latter. It is important to note that the Reinforcement Theory generally states that audiences seek out media messages that support other socialising ideals.

The following excerpts from student responses dealt with the question and demonstrated knowledge and similarities/differences of the characteristics of two communication theories/models.

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Response 1

...the main difference between these two theories is that Semiotic Constructivism pertains to the area of consumerism to do with why an audience receives a text, while the Agenda Setting Function Theory discusses what the media is doing to an audience. Both models assume an active audience, with individual ideas, but not impervious to influence, as the audience of Semiotic Constructivism will be effected by the codes they find in the media, and that of the Agenda Setting Function Theory will be told what to think about.

Response 2

The two reception theories Uses and Gratification and reinforcement both are based on the idea that communication is what the audiences do with the media. They both state that audiences are active and that they able to negotiate their own meaning. While uses and Gratification states audiences are not influenced very much at all by the media as they choose what to consume, Reinforcement states that they are equally influenced by socialising agents and those around us as the media. Both theories rely on pre-conceived values however, as Reinforcement states that the media is only influential if it introduces a new concept and Uses and Gratification ignores how people will not always pay full attention to what they consume (intermittent consumption)

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	8	17	39	36	2.1

Students managed their responses to this question in a variety of ways. Both positive and negative influences were discussed, along with a variety of media forms such as the internet, newspapers and television. Specific texts such as TAC advertisements, Michael Moore's documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* and 'Saints Row' were also identified. A number of students referred to 'The Kylie Effect' in their response without clearly describing the media text (commercial television news reports) or form (television). The nature of influence was generally soundly outlined by students, with reference to specific examples of attitudes and behaviour. Specific audiences were also generally soundly noted, such as vulnerable and susceptible young children. The following example illustrates a succinct response.

Michael Moore's 'Fahrenheit 9/11' documentary (2007) was considered to be influential. It suggested that George Bush's election was a conspiracy, as Al Gore was initially claimed to be the presidency, and later re announced as George Bush, by right-winged News Corporation 'Fox'. Moore says the chairman of his campaign was also the 'vote-count woman', thus it was rigged. The audience whom are affected are the American election voters. It's influence was to affect the perception of George Bush as it conveyed him a lazy 'hick' by playing country music. It influenced the American audience as it received positive acclaim and earned multi-millions in the Box-office.

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	14	15	22	18	16	9	6	2.5

This question gave students the opportunity to exhibit further understanding of the aforementioned media influence from Question 2a. They needed to demonstrate how the extent of the influence could be justified or explained via evidence and arguments. Further to this, a suitable communication theory or model needed to be integrated into the discussion to either support or refute the media influence. Most students struggled to address all of these components, with many tending to rely on anecdotal evidence. Some referenced appropriate empirical data, statistics or case studies, though this was minimal. It was also concerning to see many students reference the Hypodermic theory as a justification of influence, without an acknowledgement of the significant limitations of this theory in the context of contemporary media research.

The following response effectively addresses all elements of the question.

There exists multiple justifications and evidence that support the negative influence of video games, which often correlate to media theories. However it is impossible to ever truly reach an absolute knowledge about the extent of the media's influence. In a 2010 meta-analysis, a study which combines previous studies, arguments and statistics conducted by Craig Anderson and associates from the University of Iowa, a consensus was reached that there is a strong relationship between violent media and aggressive behaviour, with Anderson proclaiming unequivocal evidence that violence in the media increases the likelihood of violent and aggressive behaviour. This is a common argument used against the influence of violent video games. However despite this detailed analysis of previous studies, Anderson has received criticism for the inclusion of unpublished studies and his exclusion of those that disagreed with Anderson's perspective. Moreover, to assert unquestionably that the media impacts its consumer reflects the out dated 'bullet theory', a theory created by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in the late 1930's. This theory held that audiences are completely susceptible to the media's influence, accepting it like a bullet. This disregards other important factors, such as social agencies and health conditions. Therefore while there may be evidence suggesting strong negative influences of the media, it is impossible to attain it's true extent.



Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	16	14	17	16	14	8	5	4	3	2	1	3

This question asked students to reference the Catharine Lumby quote in their response. Most students were able to successfully integrate an issue from within the quote into their response regarding media regulation. Weaker responses relied solely on the quote, largely rephrasing Catharine's words. Others used the stimulus as a means for arguing 'for or against' the influence of the media, which was not required in this question. Some discussion regarding government regulation and self or industry regulation was evident in many responses. In terms of the rationale for and arguments about the regulation of the media in Australia, students largely focused on limitations in controlling new media, the notion of protecting vulnerable audiences and restrictions in media ownership. Some students accurately employed examples of evidence and arguments to support the notion that media regulation in Australia is effective to a degree, though this is a challenging field that clearly needs to evolve with an ever-changing media environment.

The following are high-scoring responses to Question 3.

Response 1

As specified above, there are issues surrounding Australia's current media regulation system. The extract above asserts that while we do have regulatory systems, they are ultimately antiquated, out of touch with the emergence of new technologies and their interrelationship, neglecting the new ways for individuals to attain regulated media content. Acknowledging how Australia's regulation only works for 'individual media silos; radio, TV, film and print', the extract observes Australia's self and government regulation. This is exemplified by the Classification Board, a government regulatory body who are responsible for making classification decisions regarding the release of films, video games and publications. Self-regulation also exists to ensure that media bodies regulate their own content, such as the Advertising Standards Bureau, who employ a national system of advertising regulation through the Advertising Standards Boards and Advertising Claims Board. This, for all intent purposes, are completely out of touch from the actual media consumers.

While the National Classification Code states 'adults should be able to hear, read and see what they want', in actuality due to strict regulation, this is not the case. Although bans on violent video games like 'Saints Row' may be beneficial to younger and more vulnerable consumers, the total ban that the Classification Board employed in 2013 prevents any individual from enjoying the product. This according to Catharine Lumby is out dated and unjust, typifying Australia's need for a greater relationship between media regulators and consumers. There are still many reasons to maintain excessive regulation, such as the need to protect the mentally ill. In the 1994 survey conducted by Stice and Shaw, statistics revealed a strong correlation between readership of female magazines and eating disorders. Despite this, Lumby pleads personal regulation – the need for adults to control their own media consumption. In a country that prides itself on a democratic prosperity, this is the only way for true and just regulation to be achieved.

Response 2

The issue raised in this extract is about the effect of media regulation now that new, convergent media exists, it is becoming more and more difficult to regulate. While this is important to consider and people can still access banned material for example on the internet, it is important that regulation exists for the sake of protecting susceptible audiences such as children and mentally disabled individuals from harmful materials. In a report released by the ARACY (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth) it is outlined that violent video games can have a huge impact in children, interrupting sleep patterns and leading to harmful and inappropriate thoughts. As children are seen as an investment for the future, it is important that their brain development is not affected and that they are protected. Another reason for regulation is to ensure there is not a monopolisation of the media. ACMA (Australian Communication and Media Authority) regulates this by ensuring that one media owner cannot reach more than 75% of the population and that there is diversity in the media and more than 5 voices in metropolitan markets. Although regulation could be expanded so that it covers all convergent media, this could potentially breach the Commonwealth Classifications Act which outlines that adults should be able to see, hear and read whatever they want, and if all media is excessively regulated, then adults may not be able to access whatever they want. The media is also constantly evolving and newer media forms are more difficult to regulate than individual forms such as television.