John Carey and Martin Elton, **When Media Are New: Understanding the Dynamics of New Media Adoption and Use**, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2010, 374 pp., $36.52 (paperback).

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Discussions of new media often unfold like a guidebook, detailing what is hot and what is not about new technologies. John Carey and Martin Elton take a different approach in *When Media Are New: Understanding the Dynamics of New Media Adoption and Use*. They examine how new media today and in the past were initially received and adopted by users. They write from a perspective "that balances guarded optimism with measured skepticism" and that combines theory with practice, making it useful to both professional and academic readers (p. 2). The authors explain the successes and failures of new technology and investigate the difficulties that arise when new media are introduced into markets and organizational settings. They use specific examples of earlier media innovations to demonstrate how a study of past initiatives can help us better understand the current and future status of information and communication technologies. In doing so, they provide significant insight into the massive changes occurring in the world of communication media.
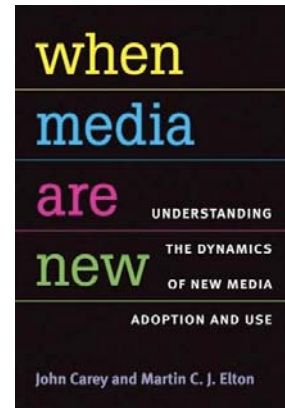
Carey and Elton examine specific cases to illustrate their central theme that "uncertainty is the core characteristic associated with new media" (p. 3). Rather than offer solutions to current problems, they emphasize lessons learned from the adoption of previous innovations and then apply those lessons to help reduce the uncertainty with new media.

When Media Are New is divided into two parts. Part One describes the processes of new media at the concrete and abstract levels: adoption, forecasting, implementation, and user research. Because successful new media affect a wide range of people and organizations, the authors explain not only what is expected to happen but also what actually happens when adopting and implementing new media. Part Two provides in-depth case studies to illustrate these processes, placing "emphasis on how people actually used new media as well as on the strategies employed to encourage adoption and the obstacles that hindered it" (p. 8).

Carey and Elton emphasize the importance of the adoption process of new media, especially how new technology meets an identifiable need in the marketplace, or in some cases, how new media creates demand. They assess common patterns associated with the adoption of new media and highlight parallels that exist in the adoption process in both past and current new media environments. The two also note that new media must "generate sufficient appeal that people will adopt the technology," so it is important to analyze successes and failures to avoid repeating the same mistakes (p. 5). Then, they argue that it is essential to use a scientific process (forecasting methods) to determine demand, yield future adoption

rates, and improve business solutions. Again and again, they stress the poor track record and limitations of forecasting methods and the need to make "the best of a bad job" (p. 60). Past forecasts have seriously underestimated the demand for products and services like the telephone, VCRs, and the Web, and most forecasts tend to overestimate success, as in the case of videotex and Picturephones.

Carey and Elton next turn to the implementation process where plans to integrate new media practices into incumbents' markets or organizations are developed, with time playing an important role in the projection of success. Innovations often undergo reinvention during the implementation process, so they argue it is crucial to understand the technology, users, and purpose of the products being adopted. The final part of the first section discusses the research process across disciplines, including communication, psychology, and economics. The authors continue their focus on individual media users and examine the types of services and products employed by various users. They claim that we are in the middle of a "storm" and require more research on the rapidly changing media environment due to the "explosive growth of the Internet and Web-based services" (p. 142).

Carey and Elton wonder how and why particular media succeed or fail and use case studies in the second section to seek answers. They start by analyzing how television technologies (DVRs, HDTV, VOD, Web TV) affected television-viewing behavior, prompting changes in programming. They also assess how earlier technologies, including the remote control, impacted television viewing and combine old lessons with new research to suggest clues for current new media success and implications for the future.

The authors use similar approaches to investigate video telephones, teleconferencing, and the undertold story of the development of the Web. They note that the less known videotex information services, Viewtron and Gateway, demonstrated "the value of communication in online services" (p. 233) and paved the way for the videotex community to transition to the Internet. Their assessment of interactive television (ITV) covers its history and the obstacles it will have to negotiate to ensure its future (after being a failure for several decades). Carey and Elton argue that although ITV is gaining acceptance as a platform for interactive advertising, movies on demand, and program guides, it is still unclear how it will challenge current technological and marketplace obstacles. The authors explain that ITV "is a modified version of content or a service that already exists" and will unlikely function differently in people's lives than do "the well-established functions of televisions" (pp. 278–279).

The case of satellite radio sets underscores a different type of challenge. The authors consider the U.S. satellite radio experience to be an excellent example of the adoption process—in that the price for the service dropped as competition increased. Satellite radio competes with the free and local radio channels, and it initially attracted a large audience willing to pay for the service. However, even after the Sirius and XM merger of 2008, the industry still struggles to find a successful business strategy due to high production and programming costs. Carey and Elton suggest that satellite radio is an example of how new media can at first appear successful, but ultimately result in a failed business model.

The authors conclude with a case on the integration of mobile phones into everyday life. Mobile phones are ubiquitous around the world, changing people's perspective of the world and on instantaneous information and communication. Using mobile phones to make calls, text, and access the Internet while in

public spaces and multitasking shows how mobile phones "can shape social behavior and how social behavior, (and) in turn, can shape subsequent iterations of a particular technology" (p. 302). This study returns to their central theme of how users adopt new media, and how they integrate the technology into their everyday lives.

Carey and Elton have written a book not only for academics but also for practitioners of new media. Despite the somewhat repetitive format used throughout the case studies, *When Media Are New* is a stimulating read, featuring a wide range of engaging examples and insightful analysis about the future success of new media services and products.