

# ENG TELEVISION NEWS THIRD EDITION

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T H I R D E D I T I O N

# ENG

## TELEVISION NEWS

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*The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.*

*New York St. Louis San Francisco Auckland Bogotá Caracas*

*Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City Milan Montreal*

*New Delhi San Juan Singapore Sydney Tokyo Toronto*

## **ENG: TELEVISION NEWS**

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 FGR FGR 9 0 9 8 7 6

ISBN 0-07-013530-4

This book was set in Cheltenham by ComCom, Inc.  
The editors were Hilary Jackson, Fran Marino, and Tom Holton;  
the production supervisor was Denise L. Puryear.  
The cover was designed by Amy Becker.  
Quebecor Printing/Fairfield was printer and binder.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available.  
LC Card #95-36822

# Foreword

By Connie Chung\*



No reporter ever forgets his or her first story.

In 1969, I was working at WTTG-TV—a small Metromedia station in Washington, D.C.

I had been hired as a copyperson out of college, and on this day was on the assignment desk.

A power failure—electrical, not political—had crippled parts of the city and the assignment editor needed a warm body . . . fast.

My job: to go out with the cameraperson and nail down facts, footage, and interviews in time to make air.

I was scared to death—and thrilled.

Electronic News Gathering—ENG—was a thing of the future. I was covering this story with a *film* cameraperson, Bob Peterson, who was not only a pure professional but an extraordinarily generous and helpful friend.

\*A veteran broadcast journalist, Connie Chung has been a correspondent and anchor for CBS News and NBC News.

Bob taught me on day one that a symbiotic relationship in the field is crucial to making words and pictures mesh in the edit room later.

We raced back to the station, I wrote up the story, and just a few hours later, our report made the Ten O'Clock News.

Twenty-five years later, I was fortunate enough to still work with Bob Peterson. But he was by then an *ENG* cameraperson.

*ENG* technology has given broadcasters a flexibility we never dreamed would have existed in those days.

We can transmit pictures and sound from a telephone line in any hotel room in the world.

Because of the extraordinary satellite capabilities, I could anchor the *CBS Evening News* from virtually any location—and at a moment's notice.

As dazzling as this fast-advancing technology is, it is still only the messenger.

It is the message that has always and will always count.

The single most important tool you must have to be a fine journalist is writing. Good producers, reporters, editors, camerapersons, managers, technicians are good writers.

When you come to work in television, you leave your ego at the door. Collaboration is the key to producing a first-rate television news report.

*ENG* technology promises to be an even greater partner in that collaboration in the future.



# Preface

*ENG: Television News* is a comprehensive and realistic presentation of the field of television news from a professional and ethical point of view. The authors provide in a single college-level textbook a thorough and systematic treatment of the editorial and technical processes of television news. Their treatment of the subject elaborates two basic themes throughout: (1), a consistent stress on content over technology, and (2), a consistent stress on journalistic ethics and standards of professional conduct. The authors' view is that any journalistic enterprise is content-driven; that the content of the message is more important than the technology used to create it and the delivery system used to disseminate it; and that the issue in contemporary television news is not its technology but control of this technology to achieve editorial excellence. This stress on the journalism and the ethics of the profession is a main feature of this textbook.

The authors hold an integrated view of television news, integrated in the sense that TV news work—field reporting, interviewing, videography, editing, writing, producing, anchoring—involves a team effort. The book stresses teamwork. The reporter must work well with the videographer, the videographer must be responsive to the editor's role, the editor must understand both videography and news writing, the writer must work with pictures and sound as well as with words, the producer must meld these components into a unified whole, the anchor must deliver the product purposefully and convincingly, and those who manage the system must provide the tools and create the rationale, environment, standards and ethic of the enterprise. This comprehensive treatment of integrated editorial and technical functions of TV news is another main feature of this book.

Control of technology requires a solid grasp of the technical aspects of the TV news process. This textbook examines the uses of technology today and in the future to communicate news by television, characteristics of standard electronic news equipment, and the latest technical advances—notably in digital technology and the application of computer technology to the news production process.

To provide unique views of this journalistic and technological mix, the authors called on six gifted television professionals to write personal essays in which they share with the reader something of the ins and outs of television news work, the demands and rewards of the craft, the ups and downs of daily routines, the ethics and responsibilities of professional behavior. These personal essays occur in the Foreword and at the ends of Chapters 1, 3, 6, 7, and 8. These professional essays constitute a unique feature of this textbook.

## PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF ENG

The first edition of *ENG* was written by Professors Richard D. Yoakam and Charles F. Cremer. When this textbook was conceived and written—the late 1970s/early 1980s—the television news industry was moving through a period of rapid, industry-wide technological change. Indeed, the first edition of *ENG* was published as a direct response to technical advances in TV news at that time.

Of those technical advances begun in the mid-1970s, one became a symbol (some would say *the* symbol) of the emerging “new order” of the industry. Television news retooled its main news gathering device—from the “chemical/mechanical” technology of 16 millimeter motion picture newsfilm to the “electronic/electromagnetic” technology of videotape. Early on in this conversion process news gathering by videotape came to be known as *E-N-G*, the buzz phrase for Electronic News Gathering. Professors Yoakam and Cremer intended that their textbook be used by advanced-level college students, working professionals, and student interns, as a bridge over this transition from “chemical/mechanical” to “electronic/electromagnetic.” From that point on the technology has continued to change, and so has this textbook.

The most readily apparent changes to the book for this third edition are indicated on its cover—a revised title, and the addition of a third co-author. In the revising, rewriting, editing, and reorganizing of text for this third edition—now titled *ENG: Television News*—Professor Phillip O. Keirstead of Florida A&M University joined the team as a co-author. Professor Keirstead brought to the revision project his extensive knowledge and expertise in the field of new technologies in broadcasting and cable, including his broad background in the incorporation of computers into television newsrooms and the diverse applications of computers to TV news.

For this new edition, Professor Yoakam's role was less concerned with arranging, organizing, and executing the numerous details of text and graphics revision. His attention was directed more toward guidance and overall supervision of the revision process. Besides his diligent reading and notation of manuscript drafts, he offered counsel and constructive criticism (and moral support) to authors Cremer and Keirstead. Professor Yoakam's detached view, coupled with his keen judgment, wide professional knowledge, and enthusiasm, helped steer his co-authors safely around pitfalls in the revision process. He was a main source of steady and invaluable guidance throughout.

Professor Cremer's responsibility was that of senior author for this third edition of *ENG*.

## FEATURES OF THE THIRD EDITION

New material dealing with computers in the newsroom, digital editing and other applications of digital technology in electronic equipment have been added to bring the content of the book technologically up to date.

New essays have been added for the third edition. In addition to a new foreword, professional essayists contributed two new chapter essays—one from the point of view of the emergent “information superhighway” including interactive television as it may apply to TV news, the other on television news producing, a specialty of continuing and increasing importance and complexity in the modern television news process.

The adaptation of new technological tools to TV news has resulted in changes in the area of news department personnel. Responding to this facet of change, the authors have included fresh material on job categories and skill requirements, career paths into the various TV news positions, and a wealth of ideas from working professionals about suitable ways for students aspiring to a career in the TV news profession to prepare themselves for the challenges that lie ahead.

In the law chapter, new material has been included on the impact of tabloid television on libel and privacy litigation, access to information, cameras and microphones in courtrooms, and reporter-source confidentiality.

## PLAN OF THE BOOK

Chapter 1 examines the contemporary field of television news: its basic tools—cameras, recorders, edit decks, microwave and satellite technology; and its personnel—those who gather, edit, and deliver news; those who operate the electronics; those who direct the production; those who manage the enterprise.

Chapter 2 is devoted to a nontechnical explanation of the technology of *ENG*. A main goal of this chapter, unchanged from earlier editions, is to provide broadcast journalism students and professionals with information they need to know about the *characteristics* of typical *ENG* equipment. They also learn to recognize a given unit's *capabilities* and *limitations*, and basic steps in the proper use of *ENG* equipment to produce electronic journalism.

Chapter 3 concentrates on how television news is communicated, the structural elements of that communication, and how to make the content of news reports clearer. This chapter takes the student through a step-by-step process for shooting video in the field.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 take up the crafts of editing, scripting, and field



reporting. Chapter 4 examines the editing process, both video and sound, in detail; Chapter 5 explores the techniques of television news writing; and Chapter 6 takes a wide-ranging look at reporting in the field. Each chapter presents examples of various techniques of this trio of interlocked crafts, including the intricacies of the separate editing of pictures and sound, with graphics enhancement; writing techniques for coordinating text with pictures and sound; and examples of field reporting, interviews, standups and packages.

Chapter 7 takes the student on a tour of the inside workings of a television newsroom and explains how television newscasts are put together.

Chapter 8 discusses in detail and with real-world examples the techniques, strengths, problems, and pitfalls of live television news reporting.

Chapter 9, contributed by Dr. Dwight L. Teeter, Jr., a legal scholar and recognized expert in mass media law, explores legal issues, cases, and decisions from the special point of view of television news and ENG. This chapter serves to emphasize to the student the need for heightened awareness of the legal problems themselves and the need for vigilance and the exercise of sound and ethical journalistic judgment. The law chapter reinforces a theme permeating the book, namely that ethical sensibilities are crucial to responsible journalism.

In Chapter 10 the authors explore television news industry trends, the constantly changing and evolving technology, and what this means for newsroom personnel, management, organization, and policy.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to acknowledge the help of TV news directors, TV and cable news senior executives, technology experts and technicians, and anchors, reporters, videographers, editors, and desk managers who deal with ENG/SNG daily. Their help went well beyond the normal bounds of professional courtesy. We especially acknowledge the contributions of our guest essayists: Connie Chung, Mark Casey, Larry Hatteberg, Lynn Cullen, Valerie Hyman, and John Premack. Special thanks also to Dr. Dwight L. Teeter, Jr., co-author of the law chapter in this textbook's original edition but solely responsible for law chapter revisions for this edition.

The authors also gratefully acknowledge the courtesies extended to them by the president of the Radio Television News Directors Association, David Bartlett, and are most appreciative of his statement of endorsement of this edition on behalf of the RTNDA.

The authors wish to thank with deep appreciation the following: Woody Coates, WWBT-TV; Donna R. Danis, Avid Technology; Beth Dolinar, WTAE-TV; Jeff Field, Reuters America, Inc.; Sandy Genelius, CBS News; Dana Grande, WFSB-TV; Carolyn Bailey Lewis, WNPB-TV; Jamie Logue, WBOY-TV; Mel Martin, WINK-TV; John McPherson, KPRC-TV; Jon Petrovich, CNN Headline News; Kathleen Revitte, ABC News; Steve Schwaib, WVIT-TV; Don Shoultz, CNN

Headline News; Roger Sheppard, WTAP-TV; Paul Sisco, Worldwide Television News; Nick Smith, Nick Smith Productions; Deborah Syverson, Conus Communications, Inc.; and Ken Tiven, CNN.

The authors are grateful for services, resources, and facilities provided for this revision project by the West Virginia University School of Journalism, with special thanks to Dean William T. Slater; former dean Emery Sasser; Donna Meadowcroft, accounting I secretary; and Sandra Willard, senior administrative secretary. WVU Law Professor Charles R. DiSalvo provided timely research help. Likewise, at Florida A&M University, the authors received assistance from Gloria Horning, Ernest Jones, and Gloria Woody, for which they are most thankful.

Special thanks also to Dr. James L. Hoyt, University of Wisconsin at Madison, who was mentioned in the preface of both the first and second editions of this textbook and who for this third edition again reviewed the complete manuscript. His thoughtful and constructive criticisms were helpful and most appreciated.

The authors express thanks to Fran Marino, McGraw-Hill College Division associate editor, who introduced them to the McGraw-Hill way of doing things and organized the many details of the revision project to get that project started and then keep the process moving; to Tom Holton, editing supervisor, for his diligence in supervising final preparation of the manuscript and graphics for production; to Carolyn Viola-John, whose editing expertise was gratefully acknowledged in the preface of the first edition of ENG and whose editing of manuscript for this edition was most skillful; and to Carl Leonard, marketing manager, for gathering and organizing data for the marketing effort.

The authors have received much support and encouragement from broadcast and journalism educators who have adopted this book as their television news textbook in colleges and universities nationwide and whose comments and suggestions the authors value and appreciate. For this edition of ENG the authors are once again most grateful to their reviewers: Steve Anderson, Virginia Tech University; John Broholm, University of Kansas; Clay Carter, California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo; Lori Cooke, Marist College; Gloria Horning, Florida A&M University; Kenneth Nagelberg, Southern University; Robert Richards, Pennsylvania State University; Karen Slattery, Marquette University; Gale Wiley, University of Texas at Austin; Evan Wirig, Eastern New Mexico State University; and Stacey Woelfel, University of Missouri at Columbia.

The authors received expert computer assistance from, and are deeply grateful to: Dr. Patrick Conner of West Virginia University and graduate assistant Daiming Liu; and Helen Womack of the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Additional computer information and advice was provided by Helen Cremer, Jesse Montrose, and Kent Munro.

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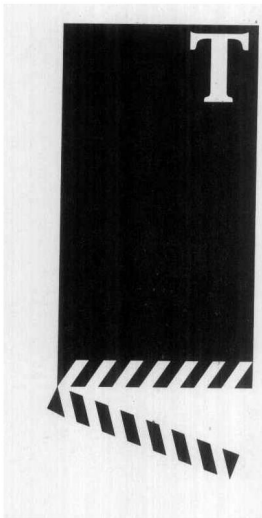
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# Impact and Challenge



Technological developments in television news in the last twenty years have been part of a widespread technological explosion in all media. One analyst has called that explosion the most profound development for information media since the coming of the telegraph and telephone. Big concept. And, yes, big changes, now and to come.

Developments in transmitting pictures and sound have brought about the portable microwave, wireless telephones, helicopter-borne homing antennas, mobile satellite transmitting and receiving dishes, CDs, computers, fiber optics, and digital networks, and have made it possible for television news outlets—local, network, all-news cable—to report live from just about anywhere and to cover just about anything that happens.

Adapting these technological tools to TV news has resulted in changes to the organizational, policy, operational, budgetary, and personnel areas of the news department.

Technology continues to provide television news with new and fascinating electronic tools with which to gather and report the news. The basic concept behind the adoption of these technical marvels is the idea that by using these tools skillfully and wisely, we ought to be able to gather, process, and deliver TV news better than ever before.

New technical capabilities also have helped reshape the thinking as well as the duties of those who run TV news. These executives broaden their coverage horizons with a much more wide-angle view of the world to be reported on each day. This broadened scope of news as a part of the overall station/cable channel service to audiences—and its profitability for owners and stockholders—has changed both the role of news executives and their staffs and the news they broadcast.





**Figure 1.1.** Covering the news with ENG. A typical field reporting team. The reporter is responsible for the facts and the words used to report the story. The videographer is responsible for taping the video and sound elements of the story. Technicians in the van control the equipment and the microwave transmitter that send the video and sound back to the TV station through the microwave antenna on the roof. (Courtesy of WLWT-Cincinnati. Photo by Jeff Gamblee.)

## ENG—JUST WHAT IS IT?

Electronic News Gathering (ENG) is the basic method of gathering and editing pictures and words. ENG technology is relatively standardized and has three important technical features—helical scanning, portability, and ease in editing—and is related to a much larger family of electronic tools.

First let's look at **helical scanning** technology (see Figure 1-3). The small, lightweight ENG cameras provide picture and sound signals to a small tape recorder. The tape, sealed in a cassette the size of a small notebook or even smaller, travels around the record heads helically—in a spiral. Thus the pictures and sound are put on the tape at a slant—rather than in a horizontal line as earlier tape technology prescribed.

The tape itself comes in various widths—one-inch, three-quarter-inch, half-

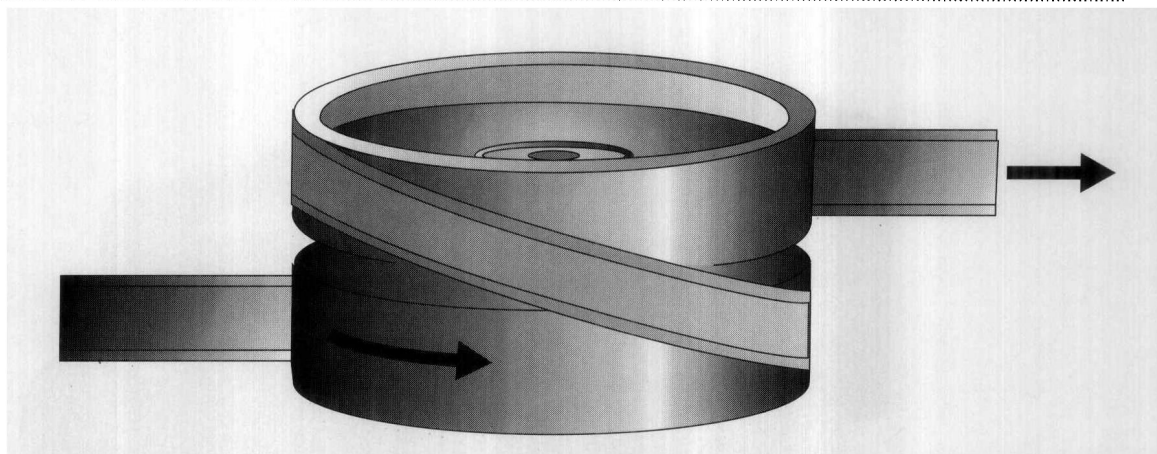


**Figure 1.2.** A professional portable video camera, a basic tool for television news gathering in the field. The unit shown is a 3-CCD Camcorder using the S-VHS format. (Courtesy of Panasonic Broadcast & Television Systems Company.)

inch, quarter-inch, 8-millimeter, the trend has always been toward smaller sizes—thus advancing the second technical feature, **portability**. The narrower tape also makes it possible to mount the recorder right in the camera—a feature the home video industry pioneered. The one-piece **camcorder** eliminates the bulky separate videotape recorder with no loss of picture quality.

Cameras are more portable because of important technical breakthroughs, mainly smaller and smaller TV pickup tubes and miniaturized, transistorized internal circuitry. Cameras weighing 10 to 15 pounds, fitting comfortably on the shoulder of the camera operator, are common. The charged-coupled device (CCD) camera, which uses solid-state chips in place of pickup tubes, brings even greater portability and reliability.

**Editing** is fundamental to TV news and here, too, technology continues to evolve. The raw news material gathered in the field can be edited immediately by the use of standard helical record-playback videotape machines linked electronically by an editing controller. A variety of editing functions can be performed by the transfer of selected scenes and sounds from one videotape to another merely by pushing a few buttons. In the simplest technique, selected shots from the raw videotape made in the field are transferred to a blank videotape, one scene at a time. This editing technique is called **linear** editing. The editor moves the raw videotape forward and backward, “shuttling” through unwanted portions picking out only those scenes wanted in the finished product. The editor thus “assembles” the story in its final



**Figure 1.3.** How the signals that contain the video and sound are recorded onto videotape using the helical scan principle. The videotape passes around a drum that contains the recording heads as the drum rotates rapidly. Thus the signals are placed on the tape at a slant. This design dramatically reduces the size and weight of the recorder, improving its portability.

order, one scene at a time, by going back and forth through the raw videotape.

Most professional stations use sophisticated equipment which allows for the recording of a **time code**—a visual number that appears in each frame of picture—during the original shooting or later. This code can be used with professional editing equipment to ensure accurate edits. Time code is also used with a computer memory to program edits. The operator types the beginning and ending time codes for a series of scenes into the editing controller. The controller then searches out those “edit points” and makes a series of edits to assemble a whole story, or even a whole program. More advanced systems allow an editor to take pictures, sound, and electronic effects from a wide array of sources and put them all onto one finished videotape in a very short period of time.

Editing by copying from the tape taken out of the camcorder to an “assembly” tape is being replaced by a new approach. This latest editing technology comes from the world of computers.

The material shot by a videographer is **dubbed** (copied) into the hard disk memory of a fast personal computer. (Next we will see camera tape recorders replaced by storage devices which use computer or optical disks. Further along, the pictures will be stored by computer “chips,” solid memory devices.)

The editor can view scenes on a color computer monitor, store scenes selected (using a still picture on the screen as a reminder), and then instruct the computer to assemble the finished tape, with effects, from the raw video now stored on the computer hard disk.

This editing method relies on sophisticated **digital compression** technology. It is often called **nonlinear** editing, meaning you do not have to keep