

assertions are carefully documented in thirty-five pages of notes.

History comes alive through Alwood's portrayals of the people, some of whom might otherwise have been forgotten, whose lives were irrevocably changed by these events. His writing style and close attention to detail makes the heroes (few), victims (many), and supporting cast three-dimensional characters in a drama that threatened to undermine the foundations of U.S. journalism. Yet Alwood doesn't stop there. Drawing in part on his own long-time professional experience as a broadcast news reporter, he outlines the relevance of his findings to today's political climate and makes very real the ongoing threat to First Amendment freedoms and civil liberties posed by current U.S. policies and agendas.

The book serves as a model of historical method, as an ethics text, and as a slice of best-not-forgotten media history. It's also just a great bedside table read, as recognized by the Connecticut Press Club, which named it the 2008 Best Book of the Year: Adult Non-Fiction. When Alwood received this year's Tankard Award at last summer's AEJMC Convention, he seemed genuinely surprised, but he shouldn't have been. The book easily meets the award's criteria.

As we look back at the 2008 finalists, it's notable that all three were written by authors with strong professional backgrounds that provide a depth of insight and context to their works that reach out to professionals and academics alike. This year's books also represent a wide range of approaches and subjects, in keeping with the intellectual breadth and sense of exploration that Jim Tankard brought to the journalism and mass communication discipline. As his wife said at the time of his death, Jim "furnished the backrooms of our minds." These books do the same, providing readers with fresh insights that question long-held assumptions and

truths, and as such, they belong on all of our shelves.

PATRICIA A. CURTIN
University of Oregon

- *Asper Nation: Canada's Most Dangerous Media Company*. Mark Edge. Vancouver, BC: New Star Books, 2007. 326 pp. \$21 pbk.

Marc Edge has written a comprehensive synthesis of the rise of the Asper family as a dominant player in Canada's highly concentrated media market. Working from news reports, opinion pieces, policy documents, and testimony before the broadcast regulator Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), and other committees, he has woven a detailed historical and biographical analysis of the debate about Canada's media ownership landscape from the focal point of the Aspers.

Edge begins with patriarch Israel Asper's creation in the 1970s of what became a third Canadian national television network, and his expansion into other media enterprises at home and abroad. Canwest, now an international media conglomerate, eventually gobbled up some of the country's largest broadsheet dailies and made Canada a case study in the perils of cross-ownership. The picture is most vivid in British Columbia, Edge notes, where Canwest owns the three daily newspapers and two television stations in the major cities of Vancouver and Victoria, just 70 kilometres apart. As a former journalist who worked at the *Vancouver Province*, now owned by Canwest, and wrote his dissertation on the city's newspaper monopoly, Edge is intimately acquainted with this important media market.

Edge, an associate professor at Sam Houston State University, makes a full accounting of the Aspers' political ties,

first to the Liberal Party and then to the right-wing Conservatives. Those ties led the Aspers to wield their news organizations—newspapers in particular—as ideological weapons. It is not that this practice is new; it's that they have been utterly shameless and unapologetic (Edge draws a comparison to Fox News that may be slightly overstated). They ordered papers to print identical editorials penned at head office, demanded glowing coverage of Israel, and pushed front-page news stories aimed against social programs such as Medicare.

Edge details one of the most egregious incidents, the 2002 firing of *Ottawa Citizen* publisher Russ Mills. A stalwart company man, Mills was fired over an editorial that called on then-Prime Minister Jean Chrétien to resign over a scandal in his electoral riding. Chrétien was a personal friend of Izzy Asper, and the patriarch was a one-time leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party. After his death in 2003, the Asper heirs personally endorsed Conservative leader Stephen Harper, who favors a lax media ownership environment and other corporate-friendly policies. They even loaned Harper the corporate helicopter during the 2004 federal election campaign, and named a long-time Conservative operative as chairman of Canwest after Harper became prime minister in 2006. Then there is Asper family support for Israel, so strident that Canwest editors have been pressed to insert the word "terrorist" where it didn't exist in news stories about Middle Eastern Arab and Muslim groups, a practice that led Reuters to request removal of its reporters' bylines. These and many other examples make for great reading and a strong argument about the potential political impact of media concentration.

Edge's discussion of media theory, largely contained in chapter 5, has the feel of being grafted onto the rest of the book. He gives a historical thumbnail sketch of communication theory from propaganda

to limited effects theory to Marshall McLuhan, cultivation theory and agenda setting. It is a discreet section of the book and its relevance is not extensively woven into the overarching historical narrative about "Canada's most dangerous media company." The short theoretical literature review reads as an afterthought.

Edge provides an important record of the development of Canadian media ownership and its consequences. He also levels criticism at the academy, pointedly critiquing the conflict of interest at play when Canadian media scholars, always starved for funding, take research dollars from media corporations through a CRTC public benefits program, which he argues has produced nothing short of administrative research. Edge saves special criticism for the founding director of the School of Journalism at University of British Columbia, whose arguments that Vancouver is not an overly consolidated media market would make Benjamin Compaine proud. The debate about the connections between Canadian journalism/communication schools and the country's large media corporations is an important one. It gets lost amid discussions about concentration, Canadian content regulations, the shrinking ranks of journalists and the Aspers' ostentatious editorial influence. The book would have benefited from an expanded argument and evidence on the CMRC to bolster Edge's assertion that its research is designed to help media conglomerates increase their market share.

This highly readable book does not till new soil in Canadian media research; Edge offers it as a "rough second draft" of history via secondary sources, and that is what it is. He makes a very strong case about Canada's recent hands-off ownership and regulatory environment as setting the table for the Aspers' market dominance, which has fed their blatant meddling in editorial affairs—material well-known to many of the scholars and jour-

nalists at whom the book is directed. But Edge also proposes solutions, such as a maximum 50% ownership limit based on audience share—not a restriction likely to be imposed anytime soon in Canada's current political environment. Edge assumes knowledge about the players and national politics that could limit the book's accessibility for those who have not studied the Canadian terrain. But there is great value in the context and scholarly analysis he brings to the dramatic media story of the Aspers. It is a valuable contribution and particularly useful reading for journalism and communication students at all levels.

KATHERINE BELL
University of Washington

- *Campaign Advertising and American Democracy*. Michael M. Franz, Paul B. Freedman, Kenneth M. Goldstein, and Travis N. Ridout. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007. 197 pp. \$25.95 pbk.

For many people, the mention of political advertising brings to mind attack ads such as the anti-Kerry Swift Boat spots of 2004, or the plethora of negative ads from both sides that blanketed the closing days of campaign '08. These negative ads, many believe, represent the worst side of politics and politicians, the argument being that this negativism and mean-spiritedness increase voters' distaste for politics and the political process. However, one has to wonder if some good can be found in political advertising, even the negative ads.

Campaign Advertising and American Democracy, released before the most recent election season, shows that not all is lost in the world of campaign advertising. The authors conclude that campaign ads, even attack ads, help to educate citizens. The book attempts "to provide a more compre-

hensive, theoretically rich, and methodologically rigorous account of the role of campaign advertising in American democracy than has been possible before, one that takes seriously past research on election campaigns, vote choice, media effects, and public opinion, but one that moves beyond prior work with new data and new methods." Using data from the Wisconsin Advertising Project, the 2000 American National Election Studies, the 2000 DDB Needham Life Style panel, and the UW-BYU 2004 Election Panel Study, the authors combine survey research and ad tracking to try to understand "how advertising actually influences what citizens know and how they act politically."

The opening chapters place televised campaign advertising in context, explaining why the authors feel a need for a revised methodology to study this form of advertising. Chapters 4 and 5 introduce the data set. A discussion of the (possibly) unintended impact of campaign advertising appears in chapters 6 through 9. The book concludes by revealing how campaign advertising aids in creating a healthy democracy.

One of the book's highlights is its comparison between campaign advertisements and multivitamins. For the authors, campaign ads "serve as vital information supplements; they enable people, in the absence of necessary information or sufficient motivation, to make reasonable electoral decisions." Thus, these ads are not sole providers of information, but beneficial additions to available campaign information. This explanation not only provides a logical connection that most readers can quickly grasp, but also adds depth to the study findings.

The dataset reveals a commitment to producing a fuller picture of the campaign environment. Instead of focusing merely on presidential elections, the authors focus on congressional and presidential elections from 2000 and 2004. This reinforces their belief that the entire political adver-

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