

# Introduction

Welcome to *Careers in Media and Film*. We hope that you have selected this book because you want to know more about working in the film, broadcasting or media industries. If so, you have chosen wisely; this may be the book that transforms the way you think about, and manage, your career and life.

## Who This Book is For

If you are a student, whether you are studying film, media and related disciplines or something completely different, this book is designed to give you all the tools and information you need to become a successful manager of your own life and career. At the very least, if you follow the advice in these pages enthusiastically and conscientiously, you will gain a greater understanding of yourself, your needs and your aspirations, as well as learn how other people have planned and created careers for themselves. But we hope you will do much more than that. We believe that this book will help you to make a successful entry into the career and life that suits you, matches your personal needs and characteristics and will bring job satisfaction and happiness to you in the future, however and whatever that may mean. For graduates of any discipline, this book will give you a valuable overview of the film and media sectors and offer advice on how you might use the skills and knowledge you have gained through your degree and apply these to finding interesting work in the media.

Perhaps you have chosen this book because you are a lecturer, teacher, academic or careers practitioner. If so, this book will enable you to support your students in their employability and personal development planning (PDP).

You will find the exercises and activities a valuable resource for supporting students to make informed decisions regarding their futures. If part of your role is teaching classes or delivering workshops, you will find the suggestions for teachers at the end of chapters offer many ideas for employability and PDP-related activities.

This book may be used as an educational text with either individuals or groups, within formal careers education courses or within advice and guidance processes.

## 2 CAREERS IN MEDIA AND FILM

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### What You Will Learn from This book

In this work, we have focussed particularly on careers in film and media because we have a long history and a great deal of experience of employability within this area. But much of the book explores a wide range of transferable concepts that will be useful for career development in general. Film and media continues to be a very popular area of study in both further and higher education. The subjects embrace a tremendous variety of different courses, including aspects of audio and visual media production, history and theory of film and media, with many courses offering both practical and theoretical options. Our research (Gregory, 1999) indicates that the popularity of these courses is due mainly to the fact that students believe they will help them to enter a career within the media. Popular career options include jobs in television, radio, film production or journalism. Why are they so popular? Because they are seen as dynamic, exciting and fast moving, offering fantastic opportunities for self-expression and creativity and, of course, we are all exposed to the media in all its forms all the time. For the majority of students, embarking on a course in higher education is seen as the first step towards achieving their goal: to get a great job in the media.

However, the expansion in courses has not always been met with the complete approval of employers, or the number of opportunities available. For example, Skillset (the Sector Skills Council for the Audio-Visual Industries) published a report (2003:17) showing that whilst the diverse provision of media and film education generally meets with the approval of the industries, there are concerns that students' expectations and industry's needs are not always being met. The report suggests that in order to secure employment and make an effective contribution to the sector, students need to be better equipped and have a better understanding of the skills they will need. They need better careers advice and guidance and they need to know how to enter and thrive in the working world.

This book aims to provide just that. It offers an informed view of what lies ahead if you wish to pursue a career in the media. It will also be of use to those who wish to update their careers or anyone who is considering returning to work after a career break. We will be concentrating primarily on employment in film, television, radio and journalism, but we also explore some additional careers which relate very closely to these including, for example, publishing, because we know that an open-minded, flexible approach is necessary to make the first steps into this volatile and changeable sector.

There is information on current employment trends, education, skills, work experience and typical career paths. Throughout the book there are references to real-life experiences through up-to-date case studies, providing a more personal insight into the reality of working in the media.

The authors have many years experience of teaching careers management and employability skills to students of film and media. Recently (2005) the Humanities Department at the University of Central Lancashire in Preston was designated by the government as a Centre for Excellence in the teaching of employability skills to humanities students.

This book is therefore the distilled result of many years' expertise in research, the design and delivery of careers management courses, liaising with employers and organising work experience and work placements. Our former students, who are now working as professionals within the media, feature in the case studies, where they share information about their own experiences of securing employment and progressing in their careers.

## The Book's Approach

The book is divided into two sections. Part I is all about your career development and starts in Chapter 1 with an overview of relevant labour market intelligence, evaluating the general picture regarding employment in television, film and radio and includes data on current trends, shortages and the exciting new areas of employment which are emerging. This will be followed in Chapter 2 by an analysis of the employers' perspective, looking at the issues they identify as being of concern and passing on a wealth of insider information and advice to prospective employees. You will then be invited in Chapter 3 to identify your own employability skills, and given guidance on how to use and enhance them.

Due to the highly competitive nature of the fields of this sector, networking, making contacts and assertion skills are critical and they are covered in Chapter 4. Work experience is vitally important and in Chapter 5 you will be given some tips on maximising your chances of finding paid or unpaid work experience and guidance as to how this will improve your chances of securing the all-important first foot on the ladder. Finally, Chapters 6 and 7 will offer detailed advice on how to approach applications and interviews for employment in the media and other industries.

References within the text about websites, organisations and books can be found in detail in the resource list in the Appendix to Part I.

Part II of the book concentrates on specific areas of employment in the industry, drawing on the real experiences of people like yourselves

## 4 CAREERS IN MEDIA AND FILM

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who now work in their dream jobs. Career opportunities within these areas of work is discussed in depth and there are case studies from industry professionals, giving insights into the day-to-day challenges of the jobs and providing hints on how to get a foot on the ladder, make a personal and professional impact and ultimately progress in your chosen career.

### How to Get the Most from this Book

This work is not intended to be read passively. To be successful in employment in the 21st century you will have to take charge of your career and life. No one is going to put the effort in and do the work for you. And, like a lot of things in life, it's the effort and work you put in that will give you results. So we have created exercises, questionnaires and prompts for action that you should undertake rigorously. Like going to a gym to improve your health, these exercises will improve your career fitness. They will help you to develop a proactive approach to your own career that will have huge benefits in the years to come.

So let's not waste any more time. Let's get started with the rest of your life.