of the scale), each study provides just as much information about young people who have little access to the internet and/or even mobile phones. As the book illustrates, teen attitudes towards internet and social media are ultimately framed by a combination of parental attitudes, peer expectations and personal interests.

A most engaging part of the book is the way in which case studies are tied into broader media and academic debates about media usage. This is particularly true of Chapter 2, which examines the ‘hanging out’ aspects of teen friendships through social networking sites like Facebook, Photobucket and Myspace. This chapter engages with the common perception that social networking sites expose teens to more dangerous forms of relationships with unfamiliar people. Hanging Out provides evidence to show how, as the majority of teens are aware of the risks, interviewees are much more interested in using new media to maintain existing offline relationships. Teens use social networking websites to organise friendships according to similar interests and values, meaning that applications like ‘Top Friends’ on Myspace are well suited to teenage obsessions with social status and popularity. Here the authors present a convincing account of teenage autonomy through which friendship is performed through websites, gadgets and widgets to extend school-based friendships, hierarchies and anxieties. Hanging Out is a brilliant resource not only for scholars interested in new research methods and findings about new media, but also for parents and teachers wanting to understand more about teenage patterns of media usage, technology and education.

A real strength in that respect is the breadth of different contexts from which insights are gleaned – from computer use for school projects in the home and networked relationships in remote school communities to teens organising multiplayer online gaming events. There are plenty of situations with which parents will identify, just as many important points are made about different styles of parental and educational discipline. Such a cross-section of multidisciplinary studies serves well to address the common misperceptions about ‘youth these days’, and their supposedly mischievous, unruly use of technology – in the school classroom, at home and elsewhere. Above all, by showing that make ‘social participation and cultural identity’ are central components of young people’s learning experience (p. 31), the book is a highly valuable contribution to both the media and educational scholarly fields.

– Andrew King, Creative Industries, Queensland University of Technology


Jonathan D. James’ study of televangelism provides an overview of the reception of Charismatic TV-based evangelism, as well as its appropriation into glocal Christian and Hindu forms in contemporary India. His main thesis centres on the almost pan-Indian association of American-style televangelism with Western values, the more welcoming response to indigenised and lifestyle-oriented programs amongst educated urban Indians, and the growing commercialisation of religious programming in the case of both the Hindu and Christian faiths.

While many aspects of transnational televangelism have received scholarly attention over the past decade, the study of religion in this context remains a relatively neglected area. Given this, James’ work clearly establishes the globalisation of religion through television as being ‘border-making’, ‘border crossing’ and ‘border blurring’ in the sense of Vasquez and Marquardt’s usage of the above terms (they studied the globalisation of religion in the Americas). Hence, it appears that the author is cognisant of the macro cultural dynamics that inform this interplay of religion, nation and the media.
in a post-global world. He also displays a salient understanding of the history of the Christian tradition in the Indian context. The structure of the book reflects this logical flow from the global to the specific, while being attuned to India’s inevitable socio-political fragments that hinder any simple conclusion about the future of televangelism within its bounds. However, James’ belief that secular channels will increasingly pay more attention to religion and religious television appears to be justified adequately by his research.

Perhaps the author also needs to consider the history of television in India, and not merely that of Christianity and its impact on Hinduism and other religious traditions in the nation. This is because Indian media scholars such as Keval J. Kumar and Shanti Kumar have demonstrated that the popularity of broadcast television in India since the 1960s is inextricably linked to the telecast of Hindu mythological epics adhering to a dharmic (or practice-based) rather than a theological view of religion. While James makes note of this aspect of Hindu culture, and hence its resistance to a belief-centred Charismatic televangelism, there is some scope for tracing this back to the origins of Indian television.

The author’s most significant contribution, then, is to the field of cross-cultural religious studies rather than television studies. His ethnographic methodological approach (including content analysis and reception studies, as well as interviews with Hindu and Christian leaders) is thorough, the use of tables and figures is effective, and the application as well as appropriation of global cultural terminology such as ‘McDonaldisation’ and ‘McGospel’ is appropriate. James’ study of televangelism can also provide a useful model for examining the televisual presence of other non-Hindu faiths in India, and for considering how they interact with both the local Hindu mainstream and their global and diasporic arms.

— Sukhmani Khorana, Media, University of Adelaide


Fifteen years after his history of the early US postal system, Columbia University journalism professor Richard John has continued the story of the republic’s communications networks. This big volume takes the tale from 1840 to 1920, when the first radio broadcasts were made and the regulated AT&T monopoly that is sometimes seen as the whole history of American telecommunications was firmly in place.

There are a lot of histories of American telecommunications. The break-up of AT&T after 1984 and the supposedly deregulatory Telecommunications Act of 1996 were structural landmarks that encouraged researchers and writers on the thresholds of new eras to revisit the journey. John’s special tools are the records of telephone operating companies, especially the Chicago Telephone Company, available since 2002 at the AT&T Archives and Research Center in San Antonio, Texas, and the records of the former giant of the telegraph business, Western Union, available at Washington’s Smithsonian Institution since the mid-1990s.

John is an historian, and is especially interested in the political economy of communications. ‘Invention,’ he says often, ‘is not innovation, and for the historian of communications, the institutionalization of the fruits of invention is the more compelling theme’ (p. 1). He highlights important distinctions between the institutional forms that came to surround the telephone and the telegraph in the United States, resisting the single technological and institutional monolith implied by the name ‘Ma Bell’ adopted, American Telephone and Telegraph, and the European state-owned monopoly PTT model.

The endlessly shifting relationship between the private and public sector is a central theme. Samuel Morse initially wanted the state to buy him out, to turn