

Inauguration of the Media School  
Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie  
President, Indiana University  
Presidents Hall  
Franklin Hall  
Friday, October 17, 2014  
2:00 p.m.

1. INTRODUCTION: "A WATERSHED IN HUMAN COMMUNICATION"

In his book, *The 21st Century Media (R)evolution*, Jim Macnamara writes that "Changes occurring in media and public communication in the early 21st century are believed by many media analysts and social science scholars to represent a watershed in human communication as significant as the introduction of television in the 1940s and 1950s. Some go even further," he continues "and suggest that the Internet is as significant as moveable type printing developed in China around 1040 and in Europe circa 1436-40 which has been described as the first communication revolution."<sup>1</sup>

There is no question that the media environment has undergone dramatic change in recent years, with the mass adoption of the Internet and the proliferation of Web sites driving much of this change. Entirely new platforms for content-delivery have emerged, including mobile devices connected to fast networks and systems, on-demand and interactive television services, and satellite radio.<sup>2</sup> And these new technologies provide audiences with unprecedented control over when, how, and where they consume media.

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<sup>1</sup> Jim Macnamara, *The 21st Century Media (R)evolution: Emergent Communication Practices*, (Peter Lang, 2010), 1.

<sup>2</sup> This list is borrowed from Philip M. Napoli, *Audience Evolution: New Technologies and the Transformation of Media Audiences*, (Columbia University Press, 2011), 1.

These developments truly do constitute a watershed in human communication. And these advances in new media and communications technologies are, of course, having profound effects in higher education, particularly, in the disciplines that specialize in media.

Indiana University is committed to the fundamental principle that, as the world around us changes, and as new avenues for better understanding the world and contributing to its improvement arise, what we teach and the manner in which we teach it must also evolve.

Today, we gather to celebrate the latest Indiana University initiative that seeks to provide our students with the resources and skills they need to meet the new challenges of the 21st century: the establishment of the IU Media School.

## 2. BUILDING ON TIME-HONORED STRENGTHS

Though the school is just over three months old, having officially come into existence on July 1st of this year, the IU Media School builds upon and honors the traditions of excellence IU has attained in the fields that now serve as the school's academic foundation.

For example, the strong tradition of journalism at IU dates back to the early 1840s, when the son of IU's first president, Andrew Wylie, published one of Indiana University's first newspapers. The rich history of journalism at IU also includes IU's first course in reporting—taught in 1893—and the establishment of the Department of Journalism in 1911. Over the years, IU's journalism alumni have earned 34 Pulitzer Prizes, as well as scores of Peabody, Emmy, and other awards received for outstanding contributions to their fields.

Likewise, among IU's Telecommunications alumni are many members of the Indiana Broadcast Pioneers Hall of Fame and numerous recipients of national Emmy Awards.

IU's Department of Communication and Culture was formed in 1997 to capitalize on the interdisciplinary connections between the fields of rhetorical studies, performance studies, and media studies. For nearly two decades, its faculty, students, and alumni have made enormous contributions in these fields.

IU also has a long and well-respected history of film studies, and the program is rapidly emerging as one of the most prominent in the nation. One of the main functions of the nationally-renowned IU Cinema, dedicated in 2011, is as an exhibition space for IU film courses, and the Cinema and the campus have hosted visits by such luminaries as Werner Herzog, Peter Bogdanovich, Meryl Streep, and, most recently, IU alumnus Kevin Kline.

And in all of these fields, IU's outstanding faculty have been engaged in research and scholarship of the highest quality that has advanced these disciplines and contributed to our understanding of the evolving media and communication landscape.

Of course, one of our guiding principles in the process establishing the Media School has been to ensure that we preserve the existing strengths of all of these highly regarded programs.

### 3. SPECIAL THANKS

I would like to take a moment to recognize a number of people whose superb efforts have helped make the occasion we celebrate today possible.

I want to especially commend Provost Lauren Robel; Executive Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Larry Singell; and Lesa Hatley Major, who served as interim dean of

the School of Journalism and now serves as associate dean in the Media School. Not only did the three of them recommend to me the establishment of the new school, but all of us owe them a great debt of gratitude for their outstanding work in shepherding its establishment.

The school we inaugurate today grows, in part, out of the 2011 report of the New Academic Directions Committee, which recommended ways to bring the university's academic structure into the 21st century. Since the completion of that report, we have seen transformation of unprecedented scale and speed at IU, with the establishment of five other new schools at the university. I once again commend all who contributed to that report and the many faculty and administrators who have worked to implement its recommendations.

I also want to thank all of the faculty, students and alumni of all the units involved for their support during the extensive period of evaluation, discussion and consultation over the last several years leading up to the establishment of the Media School.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The innovative IU Media School positions the university for a future in which IU is the nation's leading gateway for students seeking to master the professional skills needed to actively engage in multiple platforms of media, both traditional and emerging, and to fully understand how media affect and inform our attitudes, beliefs and values.

The school is also well positioned to take advantage of innovative and emerging opportunities for education and research, including those made possible through IU's ongoing Media Digitization and Preservation Initiative, an ambitious project to digitize, preserve, and make universally available by the time of IU's bicentennial in 2020, all of the perishable media objects on IU's campuses, which number in the many hundreds of thousands.

Today, as we celebrate the inauguration of the Media School, we celebrate a major step forward that will help Indiana University students to thrive in a world of incredibly rapid change, and one that will allow Indiana University to continue to make important contributions to some of the most rapidly evolving academic fields.