YEARS AGO, WHEN I WAS IN COLLEGE studying film in a mass communications department, television was the dominant major. Many students were enamored with the entertainment it gave, the stories it told. On a summer break, I had the opportunity to work in Los Angeles on a “single-camera” television series. I was struck by the fact that its production practices had little to do with television and everything to do with film as taught in school. I knew students who had chosen to study television because they wanted to make the cinema-style shows they watched on television. As this article demonstrates, some had, in effect, entered the wrong major because of a disconnect between the academic and professional worlds, a disconnect rooted in the lack of an accurate definition of cinema from a production perspective.

Entering the professional world, I again encountered issues related to defining cinema. Early in my career, I was hired to direct a relatively low-budget cinema-style series shot on videotape. As a cinema-style show, aside from budget, it was essentially identical to the cinema-style series I had directed on film—and the training I had received as a “film student.” In addition to the money the production company saved using video instead of film, shooting on tape enabled them to produce the series under the Directors Guild of America (DGA) Freelance Live & Tape Television Agreement (FLTTA). The FLTTA was intended for “multi-camera” production but was defined by the use of tape and had a lower pay scale than the Basic Agreement, which was intended for cinema-style production but was defined by the use of film. These limitations in the contractual language led to my working with an out-of-his-depths multi-camera associate director rather than a qualified cinema-style assistant director.¹ In 2002 the Interim Settlement Agreement (ISA) reached between the DGA and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers first addressed this issue by making contractual definitions more about production practice than technology—but the ISA’s “single camera style” provision applied only to prime-time dramatic programming (Directors Guild, Interim Settlement 24–101). As of this writing, even the DGA’s own Web page on joining the union still uses film or tape technology, rather than production practice, as the defining attribute (Directors Guild, “How to Join”).

Entering academe as a professor, I was dismayed to find the issue from my youth still present. In years past, students might have mistakenly studied television because they wanted to be part of the production team that made Hill Street Blues (1981–87). Now it might be Lost (2004–10) or The Office (2005– ). The shows have changed, but the confusion has remained or, if anything, grown with the addition of digital technologies such as high definition, the Internet, and iPhones. I also found that these digital technologies were leading some to

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push for the dissolution of cinema into convergent terminology, theories, and curricula. Thus, what had begun as an issue of the relationship between cinema and television had now broadened to include new media and convergence. I wondered—from a production perspective—what is cinema? How do you define it to reflect actual professional practice? Have those answers changed in a converging digital age?

Countless articles and books have addressed these questions in their own way, some with titles quite similar to that of this article. Yet on a practical level, misunderstandings seem to be increasing as academic programs attempt to stay current. In part, this may be because the public and many in academe have not spent time on entertainment industry productions. It is only natural for those unfamiliar with professional practice to think that everything made for television is best learned by studying “television production,” and everything made for the Internet is “new media.” In part, this may be because some who teach television production seek to include cinema-style shows because of their “high quality,” whereas paradoxically, some who teach cinema production prefer to exclude them because of their “low quality.” And in part, this may be because the confusion relates to production, and production perspectives can be overshadowed by the breadth and depth of the theoretical constructs of cinema studies, even though production makes up a substantial portion of academic programs. Studies perspectives, though essential, are often focused more on the abstract than on the practical. When one asks, “What is cinema?” thoughts will more quickly turn to an André Bazin essay than a method of production. Studies perspectives tend to emphasize looking back from reception for meaning rather than forward from conception toward making, and so their language, interests, and conclusions can be different from those of production perspectives. As a result, there is no clear and concise language—no articulated paradigm and set of definitions—that has effectively disseminated a common understanding of cinema from a production perspective, even though it could change the focus of study for students throughout academe as well as potentially impact the organization of departments and curricula.

Consider this question: “If a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it, does it make a sound?” A philosophical answer would contemplate intractable questions about the nature of existence and its relationship to perception, making a definitive answer elusive. However, a more pragmatic approach would simply be to define whether “sound” means the production of sound waves or the reception of sound waves. Similarly, this article takes a pragmatic approach, built on defining terms, to what can otherwise be vexing questions about the nature of cinema. The “Theory” section explores existing approaches to defining cinema and proposes a simple but significant shift in how many of us think about cinema. “Semantics” provides and explores definitions based on that shift. “History” looks at the evidence the past provides for the veracity of the definitions. The concluding section, “Convergence,” applies the definitions to a digital age, particularly to the topics of convergence and academic program design.

Many of our students who seek professional careers have a difficult time deciding what path they should choose. The hope is that this article, by providing a paradigm and definitions that accurately voice what is implicitly understood in the entertainment industry (along with deeper reflection than is practical in the professional world), will help us make their daunting journey from academe to the professional world less like wandering through a maze of tangled trails and more like hiking on clearly marked roads. As digital technology increasingly replaces photochemical film and “convergence” looms, the time has come to eliminate long-standing confusions.

Theory

Although the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines cinema concisely as “films collectively, esp. considered as an art-form; the production of such films” (“Cinema,” def. b), it tells
us nothing about what defines the art form or its production. There is nothing in the OED to distinguish between cinema and other forms of moving images. In fact, with the switch of a single word, the same definition could just as easily describe painting. Interestingly, in part based on their limited or nonexistent discourse on animation, Gerald Mast believed that even

Rudolf Arnheim, [André] Bazin, Stanley Cavell, S. M. Eisenstein, Siegfried Kracauer, Christian Metz, Hugo Münsterberg, Erwin Panofsky, Gene Youngblood, and others have failed to define what cinema essentially is... True, they have defined some kinds of cinema; they have defined some of the qualities unique to those kinds of cinema; they have defined the characteristics and devices they find most valuable in some of those kinds of cinema; but they have simply not defined cinema. (4)

Of course, others have. Robert Gessner, founding president of what is now called the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, opined that cinema was “the forms of visual rhythms, supplemented by sound, to describe, narrate, inform, and symbolize” (Parts 31). Though this provides a concise definition suitable for Gessner’s purposes, like the dictionary’s definition, it does not distinguish between cinema and other forms of moving images. Mast noted that one of the “central issue[s] in the theory of film is the attempt to distinguish the uniqueness of the film art (or medium) from that of any other art (or medium)” (5). But he and, later, Noël Carroll both saw problems with that debate. To Carroll, “the view that every artform has a distinctive medium appears false... since artforms generally involve a number of media” (Theorizing 50–51). Rather than attempt to define cinema as distinct from other forms of moving images, Carroll’s solution was the classificatory “anti-essentialist” approach of using “the idiom of ‘moving images’ over ‘cinema’ or ‘film’” (Theorizing 49). This is an elegant solution from a studies perspective where one evaluates produced work, particularly in a digital age. On one’s computer, for instance, moving images of all stripes can be screened—whether theatrical features, television series, or webisodes. Since they can all potentially be viewed in the same manner, why risk the traps, enumerated by Mast and Carroll, of trying to segregate cinema?

A production perspective, however, requires a different approach. Although all moving images can be converged into a single method of exhibition, they still require different methods of production. For instance, in narrative multiple-camera television production (e.g., sitcoms), two of three or more cameras might simultaneously get cross angles of two different actors facing each other on a three-wall set that could potentially be cut “live” through a switcher—potentially, like a play, with an audience watching from where the fourth wall would have been. This is distinct from narrative multiple-camera cinema production—increasingly the standard (Weir 34)—where, typically, two cameras might simultaneously get two different, parallel shots of the same actor on a potentially four-walled set that would be edited later in postproduction. These are decidedly different production practices, each with its own training.

Let us also consider the impact of digital technology. Skeptical about the prospects of digital exhibition, John Belton argued that digital technology was a false revolution. “For it to be truly digital, it must be digital for the audience as well. There would have to be a computer mouse or a virtual reality glove at every seat in the theater... As far as I can see, the only transformation of the motion picture experience... has been the development of stadium seating!” (105). Innovations notwithstanding, cinema remains a linear rather than interactive mode of expression for the audience.

Stephen Prince and others have cataloged some of the many changes in production, postproduction, and exhibition, detailing how new technologies have upended, transformed, or expanded some of the basic elements of cinema theory, production practice, and aesthetic content. Focusing on the physical differ-
ences between film and digital video, Prince concluded, that “it is here—in the nature of the light-induced perceptual experience—that the medium is transforming most radically” (32–33). Yet, Prince understood, “movies will continue to tell stories using editing, camera movement, lighting, and sound, whether on celluloid or digital video.” There is no doubt that digital innovations have expanded what is possible, and that expansion has altered and added production practices. But these are production practices with a small “p” that remain under an overarching cinema methodological umbrella. From sound to color to widescreen to digital, with evolutions from “MTV editing” to the photorealistic performance capture of Avatar (2009), innovation after innovation, at its core, cinema remains cinema.

From a new media perspective, Lev Manovich concluded that in moving to digital technology, cinema changed, becoming “a particular case of animation” (6). Without impugning the value of his work, for our purposes the phrasing of Manovich’s conclusion is problematic. Although visual effects can certainly be considered a particular case of animation, and some forms of motion/performance capture can be considered a hybrid, to state the obvious, live-action production practices—even with the addition of digital cameras and green screens—remain clearly distinct from animation as we understand the term today (i.e., excluding the animated photographs that make up live-action). Yes, in some cases a live-action shot is just one small piece of the final image. But even before the advent of visual effects, each live-action shot was always just one potential piece of the postproduction puzzle. It is the nature of cinema that the crucible of production is ultimately only an intermediary step in the storytelling process. To downgrade live-action to a subset of animation ignores methodological and practical realities. Furthermore, Manovich’s view was based on a conception of cinema as synonymous with live-action and born of, but separate from, its “bastard relative,” animation (4). To Mast excluding animation from within the umbrella of cinema was a sign of an incomplete viewpoint (4). As this article will show, to an extent, both views—animation as a part of cinema and animation as separate from cinema—are valid. What we can say here is that in a digital age, animation has expanded. Through visual effects it can join seamlessly with live-action, and increasingly, live-action is incomplete without it. It is also now equally a part of the realm of new media, particularly interactive gaming.

Thus, in crafting a definition of cinema from a production perspective, we need to distinguish it from other types of moving images and allow for what is constant, for what is changing, and for a historic understanding of cinema that both includes and excludes animation. However, before we can proceed, we need to clearly understand form and medium, the key terms we will be using. Noël Burch wrote that his own use of form was “loose and hazy” (xviii). To provide more clarity he adopted the definition of form that André Hodeir used for music: “The form of a work is that mode of being which ensures its unity while tending to promote, at the same time, the greatest possible diversity” (qtd. in Burch xviii). “Loose and hazy” can arguably be applied to the use of form, when taken as a whole, because of the different meanings ascribed to it. For instance, Mast used form more narrowly, seeing it as defining the term movie (14). Whereas Burch’s use of form could encompass the entire art form of cinema, to Mast, narrative movies, documentaries, and experimental films could each be considered a different form of cinema. Carroll, on the other hand, wrote that “forms are formal choices,” which is another way of saying formal elements (Engaging 143). As such, one can make a case for there existing at least three general, related meanings of form: a mode of expression (as in art form), a category within a mode of expression (as in movie), and the executed elements that make up a mode of expression (as in formal elements).

Similarly, Carroll observed that the definition of medium could be “very vague,” potentially referring to “implements,” “materials,” or “formal elements” (Engaging 6)—the last of which
echoes what has already been called form. In addition to the technologies of the implements that can create and the materials that can store expression, the term medium can also be used in the communication studies sense of the institutions and technologies that can transmit or display expression. For instance, if one were to say “film is a light-sensitive medium,” one would be referring to film stock, whereas if one were to say “film is a powerful medium,” one would be referring to an art form commonly associated with theatrical exhibition. There are, perhaps, even more interpretations of medium than form. Erwin Panofsky defined medium as “physical reality” (122)—that is, that which is physically recorded by a camera—whereas Stanley Cavell wanted to “free the idea of a medium from its confinement in referring to the physical” (105). To Cavell, “genre was a medium”—he deliberately used medium in a sense similar to the way others (such as Mast) used the term form (36, 105). Thus, from a studies perspective, medium in the sense of physical materials or reality can be used as a way of defining form in the sense of an art form; and across different authors, medium can at times be synonymous with form in all its senses: art form, movie/genre, and formal elements. Given the multiplicity of meanings, it is necessary to clarify how the terms will be used herein.

To craft a definition of cinema from a production perspective, we need to begin shifting existing paradigms by separating form and medium from technology. As this article demonstrates, in cinema a pure unity of form, medium, and technology never existed. Let us use technology then (rather than the ideologically encumbered studies term apparatus) to describe the materials and devices used for creating, storing, transmitting, or displaying expression. Thus, a paintbrush, paint, and canvas are the foundational technologies of painting, and film and digital cameras, stock, and projectors are the foundational technologies of cinema.

Next, we need to define form and medium. Expression must be realized in two different ways: production and exhibition. By way of example, although the production method might be speech, the exhibition method might be direct (standing on a soapbox) or mass-mediated (through radio or television, for instance). To better distinguish between the two and clarify terminology, from herein, production realization will be called form, in the sense of a mode of expression such as an art form, and exhibition realization will be called medium, in the communication studies sense. Finally, to complete this paradigm from a production perspective, we need to categorize form by production practice. Put simply, from a production perspective, form is defined by how we create expression (rather than what we create), and medium is defined by how we present expression (rather than what composes it). Therefore, although some in studies might see cinema as a form defined by its medium, in a production paradigm, cinema is not one thing, but two: a form and a medium, neither of which is bound to the technology of film stock.

Not recognizing the separation of form, medium, and technology has created enduring problems. Let us momentarily think of cinema as one thing, using medium as the singular term for the expression linking conception and reception. The root of medium is middle (OED). Cinema studies generally begin at exhibition (which is to say after a project has been completed, even though its investigations may explore a project’s production), so exhibition can naturally be seen by this field as defining the expressive midpoint between conception and reception. This view dominates academe, as witnessed by academic programs generally teaching cinema through studying that which has been exhibited theatrically. Exhibition is also where commercial expression is monetized, so exhibition can naturally be seen as defining the medium from a business perspective. This is the dominant view of the professional world. As such, the academic and professional worlds seem harmonious (and align with public perception). However, from a production perspective in both the academic and professional worlds, making a project is the expres-
sive midpoint between conception and reception. Therefore, a production perspective can naturally see production as defining cinema. Seeing cinema as only one thing and defining that by the medium of theatrical exhibition or the technology of film, rather than the form of production, has created a disconnect between the academic and professional worlds for students interested in production—as well as convergence-driven turmoil for scholars. As shown in this article, since the early years of television, cinema production training has applied to more than just what is seen in movie theaters and, in a digital age, more than just what is shot on film. This disconnect can be readily apparent to those entering the entertainment industry and related professions, but even with increasing numbers making the return trip, it can be under-recognized in the academy.

Some in academe metonymically use film when referring to art and use cinema when referring to institution (Bisplinghoff 157). This linguistic distinction can be traced back to Gilbert Cohen-Séat in 1946 (Stam, Burgoyne, and Flitterman-Lewis 35), although Christian Metz’s more widely disseminated critique is likely most responsible for its popularization. It can be argued that as used today, this metonymic preference is, in part, an intuitive recognition of the split between form and medium. Film in the simple sense of the word refers to the technology of film (“Film,” n., def. 3b), which, prior to a digital age, was generally used to define form (as the term is used herein); and art implies a focus on the production form in addition to its resulting “text.” On the other hand, cinema, meaning a movie theater in the simple sense of the word (OED), is synonymous with the exhibition medium of cinema; and institution includes the complete world of cinema that has been built on that medium, extending beyond production to include the public and the fields of business and studies. The entertainment industry has also intuitively developed phrases to deal with the split between form and medium. Series produced for the television medium in the cinema form are called single-camera television to distinguish them from shows produced in the television form. When discussing shows that are logistically challenging or when taking pride in their work, those working in cinema-style television will say they are making “little movies” as a means of demonstrating their work’s kinship to cinema. Consciously recognizing the theoretical distinctions between form, medium, and technology can help resolve the decades of confusion that have persisted with an intuitive vocabulary.

Although the entertainment industry has relatively recently had to make contractual adjustments to separate technology from form in defining cinema, in practice it has long accepted form’s reach across media. John T. Caldwell observed that “feature films are largely created by the very same production communities in Los Angeles that create prime-time television programs” (“Welcome” 92). Famous examples such as J. J. Abrams (Lost, Star Trek [2009]) illustrate that although there are no unbreakable barriers, production personnel are arguably more likely to move between feature production and its sibling, cinema-style television, than between cinema-style television and multi-camera or reality television production. Linda Mendoza (MADtv [1998–2007], Scrubs [2006–09]), one of the relatively few directors who work in both multi-camera and cinema-style television, believes that overcoming her multi-camera background was a greater obstacle to breaking into cinema-style production than was being a Latina (Mendoza). It should be noted, however, that Caldwell made his observation in support of the idea that “film now functions mostly as a subset of television and electronic media.” As with Manovich’s view of the relationship between cinema and animation, this is a problematic conclusion. Although Caldwell’s exploration of the “industrial perspective” is important and too rare (“Welcome” 95), his conclusion does not fully factor in the split between form and medium or the organizational and cultural realities of the entertainment industry. Although cinema and television are intertwined in a number of ways, and theatrical exhibition is just one source of movie revenue, rhetorical flourish aside, cin-
ema clearly remains an institution alongside, not under, television and other media.

That *film* and *television* can each potentially refer to a form of production, a medium of exhibition, and a technology has helped obscure the separation of the three that has always existed. In fact, each form and medium of expression can have its own technology (e.g., shoot on film and project digitally or vice versa), which is just one part—and often not the most significant part—of what defines it. As noted by Michael Nielsen, “the ‘film look’ is not only a product of technological determinants” (“Labor's Stake”). The method of production (including such things as design, lighting, and coverage to name just a few) is far more significant than whether a film or digital camera is used, or whether the result is shown in a theater or on a television. To rephrase Carroll, each form of production potentially employs multiple technologies and media of exhibition. Separating form and medium from film technology and defining form by production practice eliminates the issues that medium- and technology-based conceptions of cinema have caused.

**Semantics**

**The Cinema Form**

Cinema defined broadly by production practice is a form of expression composed of edited live-action moving images, ideally emphasizing artistic form or content.

*Form*, as used in this definition of cinema, is the production of expression, the first realization of content. *Production* is used broadly in this sense, covering the entire process from speculation/development to postproduction. Content must also be realized in the sense of exhibition, referred to as *medium* herein.

*Expression*, as used herein, is a root term encompassing both communication and art. Rather than looking at communication (e.g., journalism) as the root of art (e.g., literature or documentaries) or at art as the root of communication, it is arguably better to think of each as a different approach to expression. Communication (defined herein as expression with a greater emphasis on the efficient delivery of content and its function) and art (defined herein as expression with a greater emphasis on the aesthetic form of content) are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are overlapping spheres that create a continuum from, say, a newscast to a scratch film. Although not all expression can be called art, all art expresses.

An *edited* production practice, as used herein, involves acquiring audiovisual material discontinuously for later assembly. It also includes the choice of not editing. Although the earliest “primitive” films were made up of a single shot (Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson 159)—perhaps nothing more than a positive print of an unedited camera roll—virtually all cinema productions since then have gone through some sort of editing process. Even the rare production made up, or seemingly made up, of a single shot is likely to be selected from multiple takes, have titles and added leader, or (at the very least) be evaluated with editing technology. For instance, Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rope* (1948), although largely made to appear as a single shot, was made with a number of shots and even retakes that had to be selected and assembled (Hitchcock 181). The editing process allows for considerable creative control. Material can be acquired multiple times from multiple angles. It can be acquired out of sequence, added later, or omitted altogether.

Edited production practices are distinct from switched or presentational production practices. *Switched*, as used herein, means material shot continuously, usually with more than one camera, using a video switcher or edited in emulation of a video switcher even if refined by traditional editing later. *Presentational* is used to mean anything created in PowerPoint or similar means with relatively limited audiovisual capabilities. *Edited* can be synonymous with *single-camera* but is broader since it does not imply the use of only one or even any camera (and so is inclusive of multiple-camera cinema production and animation). Similarly, *switched* can be synonymous with *multi-camera* television production but is intended to reciprocally shift the focus away from the
number of cameras used to the underlying production practice.

Edited production practices create linear productions. In a linear presentation structure, the audience receives a complete, fixed-chronology, venue-independent production. Linear presentation structure, as used herein, is meant to differentiate cinema from interactive new media and venue-dependent media art such as a museum-type installation or theatrical performance art. New media, such as a Web site streaming moving images, and media art, such as a live theatrical performance projecting moving images, can include the cinema form (just as the cinema form can include other arts, such as dance), but the totality of the end result would not properly be considered cinema. In time, what is commonly considered cinema may go beyond the linear, but experiments notwithstanding, it remains to be seen whether there will be any enduring interactive, installed, or performance subforms best described simply and solely as cinema.

Live-action can be thought of as life-action. Live-action is based on visually capturing life that exists as opposed to animation’s visual creation of life with inanimate elements or completion of life for incomplete, inadequate, or static live-action elements. Edited live-action has what can be considered two general systems of production: smaller-scale (where the ideal is a small crew, such as in traditional documentary production) and larger-scale (where the ideal is a larger “industrial” crew with divisions of labor that enable expanded manipulation of the physical and visual worlds, such as in narrative production). It should be noted that whereas I refer to “smaller-scale” and “larger-scale,” in a similar fashion Janet Staiger uses “social division of labor” and “detailed division of labor,” language adopted from Harry Braverman’s Marxist critique of capitalism (Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson 91). That, however, is a problematic association. Divisions of labor can increase the quality and quantity of production. Simply put, in Braverman’s view the detailed division of labor is the deskilling (and dehumanization) of labor primarily for the purpose of increasing the quantity of production and, therefore, profit. But in larger-scale cinema, as in “legitimate theater,” the division of labor is necessitated by the complexity of the enterprise and the quest for quality, independent of considerations of quantity. Hence, small independent features and even advanced student shorts benefit from larger-scale production. To believe that even the “lowly” grip is an unskilled laborer would be a misconception. In cinema it is in the studio system, more than in the division of labor, that one finds economies of scale.

Moving images, as used herein, encompass recordings with or without sound for any medium, with any technology generally designed for and capable of effectively portraying natural movement (i.e., beyond the novelty approach of an archaic zoopraxiscope or a flip book).

The inclusion of “ideally” in the definition of cinema is an acknowledgment that much of what can be classified as cinema in the broad sense of production has neither the art nor the craft one would wish to associate with the honorific aspects of the name. It is also meant to separate issues of budget from form and medium. Although art can be elusive at any price, craftsmanship generally increases proportionally with budget. Largely because of differences in budget, theatrical features such as Jurassic Park (1993) are more cinematic than cinema-style television series such as Lost (just as Lost is more cinematic than older, relatively less costly cinema-style shows such as Fantasy Island [1977–84]), but these and more, regardless of budget or medium, are still the cinema production form because of their edited production practice and ideal aesthetics.

In 1950 director Irving Pichel noted how budget and form transcended medium when he wrote, “Other producers of television film . . . use only a single camera . . . shooting . . . only the sections of scenes in each angle which the director intends using in the completed film . . . . This is, as a matter of fact, the method of the [theatrical] ‘quickies’” (367–68). A production can be in the cinema form whether it is shot with an inexpensive digital camcorder in a few
hours or a 35mm Panavision camera over several months.

Artistic form or content is meant to differentiate cinema from edited projects emphasizing communication (e.g., the edited version of the television form, discussed later). Art, for this purpose, requires a degree of complexity and so can also be seen as an issue of production practice. Examples of complexity, for this purpose, can include having the potential for significant creative selection (such as in narrative production), an extended period for one or more production phases (such as a documentary that shoots or posts far longer than is feasible for a project in the edited television form), or sufficient logistical needs to warrant an assistant director (such as in larger-scale live-action). Additional practical descriptors are included in this article’s definition of the television form. Although practical considerations would be out of place in a definition from a studies perspective, they are necessary for clarity from a production perspective.

In addition to medium, foundational technology, and budget, also excluded from considerations of form are the dimensions of the targeted first-release screen (and its effect on composition), program length, and program content. Although various factors have come into play, first with early television and now with such things as webisodes, to encourage closer angles, shorter lengths, and different content than found in theatrical features, from a production perspective these distinctions are not sufficiently significant in relation to the plethora of choices inherent in the form—and made for each and every production regardless of exhibition—to rate as principle defining factors. Therefore, because of their inherent potential for creative selection, edited, linear productions that are narrative (i.e., live-action fiction) and experimental should always be considered the cinema form, whether they are theatrical movies, television series, or just Internet shorts. The cinema form also includes documentaries, music videos, and cinema-style commercial, corporate, and educational productions.

The Cinema Medium

Cinema defined narrowly by exhibition market is a medium of expression composed of linear venue-independent moving images shown to the public collectively. Whereas the cinema form is distinct from the animation form, the cinema medium includes both, thus somewhat explaining the contradictory views of Mast and Manovich. Since under this definition market (how, where, and when productions are delivered) matters, a private home theater would not be considered the medium of cinema at this time.

The Television Form

Television defined broadly by production is a form of expression composed of switched live-action moving images as well as edited live-action moving images emphasizing communication. Edited television production practice is commonly called field production, whereas switched production practice is commonly called studio production—although mobile control rooms enable switched productions to be produced in the field, and the cinema form also has motion picture “studio” sound stages. Simplified television studio production that does not require a switcher can be called one-camera production (Directors Guild, 2005–2008 Freelance 9).

Switched studio production practices also create linear productions. They can potentially emphasize artistic form or content without limitation, like the cinema form, although its production practices have inherent limitations not found in cinema, such as the need to light relatively evenly for simultaneous shooting from different angles. Common examples of studio production include news, sports, talk, game, and theatrical stage productions ranging from variety shows to opera. Also included are traditional sitcoms such as Two and a Half Men (2003–) that use multiple “film style” cameras (rather the television pedestal cameras) and edit in an emulation of a video switcher.

Edited field production, however, should be defined by an emphasis on communication, so it may be distinguished from cinema.
(with its ideal emphasis on artistic form or content). That is not to say that aesthetics are not considered in field production composition or lighting or that artistic, cinematic images cannot be captured. Rather, the emphasis on communication and its focus on function allows for simpler, more expedient productions. Although news packages are a clear example of an emphasis on communication, the classification of other types of edited production can be problematic—such as some types that fall between broadcast journalism and documentaries or commercials, corporate, and educational productions made at lower budgets. Typically included under field production is unscripted, alternative, “reality” programming such as Survivor (2000–) and much of what is seen on cable networks such as HGTV and the Travel Channel.

An excellent indicator of the form of an edited production is the equipment used. For instance, cinema-style productions would ideally have access to a camera dolly and accessories such as a matte box and a follow focus, as well as—compared to field production—more lighting and grip equipment (even though in practice low-budget cinema-style productions may have few, if any, of those things). The difference might also be seen in the formatting of the script. In narrative productions, for instance, features and cinema-style television programs essentially share one format, and television studio productions use another (Ruddin and Downs 349). It should be noted, however, that although it can be necessary to separate the edited television and cinema forms in academe to design majors or courses, for those working professionally on the border between the two, there is no need to definitively classify a production as one or the other.

The Television Medium

Television defined narrowly by exhibition is a medium of expression composed of linear moving images shown to the public separately and simultaneously. Market also matters under this inherently venue-independent definition, so real-time and time-shifted network, syndicated, and local programming delivered via broadcasting, cable, or satellite as free, basic, premium, or pay-per-view offerings would all be considered the television medium, but such things as video-on-demand, home video, podcasts, and in-store moving image advertising would not. As “pulled” video-on-demand content replaces “pushed” simultaneous broadcasting as the norm, a reevaluation may be appropriate.

History

Once sought, the separation between technology, production form, and exhibition medium can be found throughout the life of cinema, beginning with its inception (Table 1). Technology must precede production, and production must precede exhibition. With the invention of roll film technology in 1889, the commercial exploitation of moving images could begin. After Thomas Edison’s company finished the Kinetograph camera in 1892 and the “Black Maria” studio in 1893, it began producing the shorts needed to make its single-viewer “peephole” Kinetoscope player viable. However, in 1894, the year the first kinetoscope parlor opened, a young inventor named C. Francis Jenkins was already demonstrating a multi-viewer film projector. In 1895 Jenkins and his short-lived partner, Thomas Armat, introduced the Jenkins-Armat Phantoscope projector, which could use the very same Edison company films that were shown in Kinetoscopes (Spehr 16). Hence, the exhibition medium changed independent of the production form. When Edison’s company bought into the projection technology at the start of the new year, the production issues that arose were related to the dilapidated condition of Black Maria, its distance from New York City, and the development of a portable camera (Musser, Before the Nickelodeon 64)—not the change in exhibition—and thus the form developed independent of the medium. So although the cinema medium began in 1895, the smaller-scale cinema form actually began in 1893 (with larger-scale production becoming the narrative norm by 1907). In 1896, permanent purpose-built movie theaters began to appear, and by
1897 Kinetoscopes were already past their prime. Nonetheless, the peephole medium continued past the birth of the film animation form in 1908, so there was never a time when film or cinema represented a singular unity of form, medium, and technology.

In 1894, the very year Jenkins previewed his film projector, he also published his first article on what would eventually be called television (Jenkins 193). By 1923 he already recognized that the medium of television would deliver both the “radio movie” (i.e., cinema) and the “radio vision” (i.e., live television) forms (Society of Motion Picture Engineers 27). In 1928 the man who projected the first filmed images in the United States became also the first to broadcast them on the nation’s second television station (Table 2). Although cinema began with no way of being directly viewed by an audience, television began with no way of being recorded and, therefore, edited. This forced television to evolve into a switched form, also by 1928. Even though the medium of television was officially launched in the United States in 1941, it was not until the introduction of Ampex Quadruplex videotape recorders in 1956 that television became a truly natively recordable (i.e., it could be shot and recorded with the same type of technology) and marginally editable format; and thus, “radio vision” began overlapping the technological capabilities of “radio movies.” Prior to that, a television image had to be filmed as a “kinescope” if it was to be edited, rebroadcast, or distributed beyond those few stations linked by coaxial cable.6 As such, from its experimental phase until today, television has always relied on cinema, first for its technology and then for its content and form. It took another twenty years, but in 1976 Sony introduced a portable broadcast version of the U-Matic S format and launched electronic newsgathering, “the video version of the traditional film style single-camera system” (Bensinger 187). Once again, the capabilities of video overlapped with those of film, this time marking a point where some smaller-scale productions began diverging from the cinema form.

By 1939, it was expected that the cinema form would supply the television medium with “from forty to more than ninety percent” of its programming (qtd. in Boddy 65–66). In fact, on July 2, 1941, the first theatrical movie was broadcast on the nascent medium (discounting experimental broadcasting). This marked

Table 1: Film Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>George Eastman's company manufactures the first transparent roll film (Vitale 2).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Kinetograph, the first motion picture camera used for commercial production, completed (Musser, Emergence 72).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>W. K. L. Dickson shoots the Blacksmith Scene, the first commercial-length short, at Black Maria, the first motion picture studio (Musser, Emergence 72).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Holland brothers open the first Kinetoscope parlor (Musser, Emergence 81); Jenkins demonstrates his first film projector (Jenkins 71).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>First paid performances of projected motion pictures including the Latham family business’s Eidoloscope, the Jenkins-Armat Phantoscope, and the Lumière family business's Cinématographe (Musser, Emergence 91, 96, 103).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Edison’s company contracts with Raff &amp; Gammon and Armat to manufacture the Phantoscope, renamed the Vitoscope (Musser, Emergence 110–11); the Mark brothers open the Vitoscope Theatre in Buffalo, the first space known to be constructed as a permanent movie theater (“Vitoscope Hall”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Edison loses money on the manufacture of Kinetoscopes (Musser, Nickelodeon 93).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>“The ‘director’ system of production” becomes the norm for narrative live-action (Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson 117).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Emile Cohl draws 700 frames for Fantasmagorie, the first fully animated film (Abel 286).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a divergence of the television medium from the television form—just one day after the medium’s official inception. There were some, including NBC president Lenox R. Lohr in 1940, who believed television could not support original, larger-scale, cinema-style programming because of its high cost and the small size of early television audiences (Boddy 66–67). However, surprisingly, smaller-scale and larger-scale, cinema-style television evolved relatively concurrently. In 1944 Radio-Keith-Orpheum Corporation became the first of the “Big Five” cinema conglomerates to produce for television. Its new subsidiary, RKO Television Corporation, filmed news footage of the Republican convention for WNBT that June and, by the end of the year, had filmed the “first movie made for television” for WABD. If one discounts peephole devices, this can be said to mark the divergence of the cinema form from the cinema medium.

In 1947, with the end of World War II and the beginnings of regular network programming, theatrical short subject producer turned television pioneer Jerry Fairbanks won the gold rush to sell a larger-scale series pilot. As predicted, despite efforts to minimize expenses, the cost of production exceeded the price the sponsor was willing to pay (Schatz 438). While Fairbanks focused on reducing production costs, the first cinema-style series to actually air, the Emmy-winning *Your Show Time* (1948–49), focused on quality, reluctantly embracing deficient financing—that is, producing a show at a loss for its initial airing in hopes of earning a profit on subsequent sales (Rubin). A risky notion at the time, deficit financing became a norm, solving the problem foreseen by Lohr and allowing West Coast–based cinema production to become a pillar of then East Coast–based television.

Divergence continued in uneven steps. Not long after, in 1949, the television form diverged from television technology with a filmed multi-camera episode of the musical program *Nocturne*—shot by Fairbanks’s company using a process developed over twenty-six months as a cost-saving alternative to deficient-financing cinema-style shows (Fairbanks). This process reached a lasting form two years later with *I Love Lucy* (1951–57) (Freund). Then, in 1964, the cinema medium reciprocally diverged from the television medium with the theatrical release of a kinescope of a multi-camera video version of *Hamlet*, a Broadway production starring Richard Burton. That was followed by the reciprocal divergence of the television form from the television medium when, in 1973, skits from a classic multi-camera video television series were released theatrically as *10 from Your Show of Shows*. Then, in 1983, the cinema form diverged from film technology with the low-budget, cinema-style video feature *Signal 7*.

Although digital technology played an intermediary role in postproduction from 1971 on
(Turner), the introduction of Sony’s D1 digital format in 1986 (Table 3) and its enabling of digitally originated production can arguably be seen as the beginning of a digital age for moving images. The groundwork for digital television exhibition was laid in 1996 with the adoption of the Advanced Television Systems Committee (ATSC) specification. Shortly thereafter, in 1998, the cinema medium diverged from film technology with the digital exhibition and subsequent satellite distribution of the low-budget video feature *The Last Broadcast*. It was not until George Lucas’s *Star Wars* prequels, however, that cinema as an industry was pulled into the digital age—first in 1999 with the exhibition of *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace* and then in 2002 with the production and exhibition of *Star Wars: Episode II—Attack of the Clones*. It took a few years, but in 2005, an official digital framework for cinema was finally in place. As of 2009, in both form and medium, television was fully digital (with the exception of legacy analog equipment), and cinema could run the gamut from fully photochemical/physical to fully digital.

Although these are some key examples, history is littered with crossovers. Radio, home video, the Internet, and mobile telephones provide even more examples. For instance, the 2004 ABC network cinema-style pilot *1/4 life* evolved into the 2007 Internet series *quarter-life*, which was picked up by NBC as a 2008 network series. Canceled after an unsuccessful premiere, it migrated to NBC’s basic cable sister, Bravo, where it aired once more as a marathon (Hendershot). In fact, with more recent Web-to-broadcast crossover examples, such as *Childrens Hospital* (2008, 2010–) and *Web Therapy* (2008–), new media seems poised to grow as a low-cost incubator for some types of television programming.

Thus, though cinema at its core has not changed since its initial development, the words needed to describe its form have evolved through the years with technology (Table 4). When it was first introduced, cinema was defined merely by its ability to animate images at lengths of more than a few seconds. This, however, was insufficient for staking a claim to art, so as theorists began discussing cinema’s nature, this simple definition was obscured by complex formal arguments. As observed by Mast, these arguments often overlooked animation, which could be identified as a separate form by 1908, with specialized studios appearing by 1914. Because television’s moving images began as a purely “live” form, the focus shifted from cinema’s motion to its permanence, which, like its motion, was derived from film technology. In 1949, once multi-camera television production could also be recorded on film, the difference between the cinema and television forms needed to be defined by production practice. Finally in 1976, when broadcast video became portable, part of what had been included in cinema became television, and the current definition took shape.

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**Table 3: Digital Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Sony’s D-1 becomes the first commercial digital tape format (Daniel, Mee, and Clark 209).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>FCC adopts the ATSC standard, and commercial digital broadcasting begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td><em>The Last Broadcast</em> is the first all-digital feature from production to exhibition (Kirsner 87–89).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td><em>Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace</em> is the first major motion picture exhibited digitally (Kirsner 105–06).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td><em>Star Wars: Episode II—Attack of the Clones</em> is the first major motion picture produced and exhibited digitally (Winston 383).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Analog broadcasting ends in the United States.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Convergence

Some might believe that prior to a digital age, linear moving images did not converge and that, rather, they were defined by a unity of analog technology and exhibition (such as film and cinema or video and television). As digital technology replaces film, such a belief can make cinema seem in peril. However, as we have seen by looking at history and the differences between form, medium, technology, and budget, that is at best an incomplete view.

Some might believe the production value of Lost is a manifestation of convergence, whereby television is newly on its way to emulating cinema (Parsons). In fact, those producing cinema-style television series and commercials have been saying they are making “little movies” since at least 1959, when Desi Arnaz tried to convince movie star Robert Stack to appear in one-hour episodes of The Untouchables (1959–63) (Hofler 270). Shows such as The Sopranos (1999–2007) and Lost are just more recent manifestations of a trend of escalating budgets, technology, and aesthetics in cinema-style television production that reaches back into history (Caldwell, Televisuality 32, 66). The same can be said for theatrical production: compare the aesthetic and technical quality of The Omega Man (1971) to I Am Legend (2007), two studio features produced from the same book thirty-six years apart. The ravages of time make The Omega Man look like a bad television episode in comparison. Both cinema and cinema-style television are evolving. Conversely, some might believe converging digital cameras mean that television studio production can now be called digital cinema (“Assistant Professor”). However, as we have seen, cinema and television are different forms regardless of technology, and as Francis Ford Coppola discovered while trying to merge cinema and television studio production on One from the Heart (1982), treating cinema as television production is neither creatively nor financially helpful (Fielding 47).

One could eliminate the problem of distinguishing between live-action cinema and television field production by converging them into a single form. This could be achieved terminologically by using edited and switched as the primary designations of form while reserving cinema and television solely as terms for medium. Although there is an appealing simplicity to this approach, it does not conform well to professional practice—even with advances in imaging technology enabling field production to become more cinematic and thereby expanding the gray area between edited television and cinema. Field and studio production practices are simply too tightly woven in television formats such as news to be completely segregated. That said, the production practice of smaller-scale cinema can be similar enough to field production for the two to arguably be grouped together—just as the aesthetics of smaller-scale cinema have contributed to its historically grouping with larger-scale cinema. Hence, for better or worse, one could imagine a convergent approach whereby the migration of smaller-scale nonfiction production from cinema to television, which began in a video age, is completed in a digital age. A problem arises, however, in trying to group larger-scale cinema with television. After taking my cinema production course, television majors who had already taken television production consistently told me how surprised they were at the dissimilarities between the two. Narrative cin-
Ema production is more than field production with actors. The gap caused by differences in larger-scale cinema and television field production practices and aesthetics is too great to be effectively bridged by a single classification. Perhaps counterintuitively, another convergent approach would be to recognize three forms of live-action instead of two. For better or worse, one could imagine an academic structure where a foundational, potentially nonfiction-focused media production course (converging documentaries and field production) is followed by separate courses in either studio television production or larger-scale, potentially fiction-focused cinema production. The alternative—trying to converge two or more forms into one (i.e., combining cinema with a television, interactive, or installation-based production)—is a recipe for mediocrity. There is a reason orchestral symphonies are not performed, at least on a professional basis, by a one-man band. A person may be able to critically listen to the sound of any instrument, but one person cannot professionally play every instrument.

So what is convergence and its relationship to cinema? As in physics, every action has a reaction. When something diverges, something else can be seen as converging. Convergence can be defined as a single form, medium, or technology capable of spanning multiple forms, media, or technologies. Although divergence largely drives the definition of the cinema form, repeatedly distilling it to its core, convergence expands cinema’s exhibition media and technologies. Therefore, exhibiting a theatrical movie on television in 1941—a divergence of the television medium from the television form—can also be seen as a beginning of convergence for cinema and television. The potential inclusion of the cinema form in new media and media art can also be seen as a type of convergence, as can animation’s existence within both cinema and interactive gaming. And there is, of course, also convergence in a number of cinema’s component parts, such as digital editing. Nonetheless, cinema remains distinct. That expression comprises a web of overlapping spheres does not negate the value or necessity of drawing lines of separation. For instance, although all moving image forms may use digital editing, if we fail to recognize that the aesthetics and techniques used to edit cinema and cinema-style television are different in focus than those used to edit a trailer for cinema or, even more so, a promo for cinema-style television, we are either teaching at a foundational level or teaching software rather than editing at an advanced level. Convergence does not redefine cinema’s core, which is why its occurrences are under-recognized. Narrowly defined in terms of theatrical exhibition, the medium of cinema is precluded from fundamentally changing. Broadly defined by production practice, the form remains essentially the same whether film or digital technology is used and whether the production is exhibited in a linear medium such as theatrical cinema or broadcast television or through converging new media such as a computer or mobile telephone.

It is not so much that advances in technology are leading to an inevitable dissolution of cinema in a sea of convergence as that they are creating new opportunities. Although the television medium eliminated newsreels from theaters and the portable VCR began the migration of some smaller-scale production from the cinema to television form, more significant than what technology has taken from cinema is what it has added to it and other forms. In television, better cameras at lower prices have brought a higher level of aesthetics to the television form, and the so-called 500-channel universe—with its voracious appetite and fracturing of audiences (and advertising dollars)—has spawned new types of field production, such as reality programming. In new media, growing storage and bandwidth have made moving images ubiquitous, with the streaming of the cinema form possible at ever-higher levels of quality. And in cinema, digital technology has infiltrated every aspect and created a bridge between live-action and “animation” that Mary Poppins could never imagine. As Manovich observed, “When, given enough time and money, almost everything can be simulated in a computer, to film physical reality is just one
Green-screen environments, motion/performance-capture elements, and other visual effects now mean the palette of cinema production can fall anywhere along a physical/digital continuum.

In 1984 Nielsen speculated that “to make electronic cinema work, management is going to call for reductions in work force all along the chain, from camera crew to projectionists” (“Hollywood’s High Frontier” 41). He anticipated wholesale reductions that did not occur because he failed to recognize the primacy of form over technology. The entertainment industry has long understood that, although spending money is no guarantee of making money and holding down costs is a necessary struggle, cinema requires a huge investment. Saving production dollars is of little use if it costs a greater share of box office tickets or television ratings. Hence, even though Fairbanks could be called the father of cinema and television production convergence, his focus on cost rather than quality arguably pushed him out of broadcasting. If anything, the budgetary, technological, and aesthetic “inflation” in movies and cinema-style television is greater than ever as producers try to rise above the onslaught of reality television and YouTube videos. Although digital environments will likely reduce the person-hours invested in physical construction and production, their digital replacements will require a reciprocal increase in postproduction person-hours. With improved technology, there has also been an expansion in what postproduction can achieve. In addition to computer-generated characters, places, and things, digital manipulation can invisibly alter live-action performers, performances, and backgrounds. Besides better-known examples from *Gladiator* (2000) and *Star Wars: Episode II—Attack of the Clones* (Prince 25), invisible effects can include everything from giving a well-known actress a discreet digital chin-tuck to putting a bottle in an actor’s hand to match continuity. Given this professional evolution, traditional live-action cinema programs, particularly at a graduate level, should look for ways to routinely incorporate significant trends such as visual effects and multiple-camera cinema production.

Although this article has principally been framed around distinguishing between the linear forms of cinema and television, it also applies to distinguishing between linear forms and nonlinear, interactive new media forms such as Web sites and gaming. The pedagogical problem in decades past was students studying television when they were actually interested in making cinema. As the cinema form is increasingly distributed through the Internet and smartphones, the problem of the future will likely be students mistakenly studying new media instead of cinema. As we have seen in “old” linear media, cinema as a form is confused with medium. With the advent of “new” nonlinear media, we are faced with the potential of cinema as a form being confused with some notion of formless new media content. Michael Wesch’s viral video *Web 2.0 . . . The Machine Is Us/ing Us* argues that content is effectively formless in the digital realm. Though this is true for the point he makes, he does not acknowledge that cinema-style content must be completely formed independent of the Web prior to becoming “formless.” The skills of television and new media may overlap with those of cinema, but they are still different in priorities, scope, and depth. As educators, we should ensure that students (and faculty who teach introductory courses or act as advisers) have the information they need to select the best path for current ambitions before majors or relevant courses must be chosen. Invariably, many students change their goals as their experience grows (and as they grow as people). But students should not have to change their major, sometimes late in the game, or resign themselves to what they feel is the “wrong” major (both of which I have, regrettably, seen) because they did not truly understand the differences between forms/majors when they made their initial choices.

Although the structure of programs is largely dependent on historical departmental trends, budgets, and influential faculty and administrators, we owe it to our students and ourselves
to also consider the nature of cinema and how it exists in the professional world. In academe, technology should converge, but forms should not. All moving-image programs, including cinema, can benefit pedagogically from digital technology whether or not they also offer production on film. But convergence should not be allowed to become a threat to cinema. The chapter on convergence in *Mass Communication Education* illustrates the focus the advocates of convergence have on journalism and, to a lesser extent, integrated marketing. Nary a word about cinema, art, or entertainment is included. Convergence is “just another way of getting the news out” (qtd. in Utsler 92). We should guard against cinema being distorted by a paradigm built from the perspective of those in print and, to a lesser extent, broadcasting who see new media as their future, perhaps even in ways it might not be. A study on convergence for academe, not surprisingly focused on news, discovered a disconnect between the rush of some academic programs to convergence and the realities of the professional world. Ultimately, it found that “a high level of convergence is not practical,” “the overall quality of the [news] report may ultimately suffer,” and accordingly, students “still need to specialize” (Tanner and Duhé 8–9).

Though seductive, the idealized view that students can receive adequate training in the skill set of every form that can be exhibited in convergent media is problematic. Constrained by a finite number of courses, breadth (which, to a degree, might be better for some students, particularly with regional aspirations) comes at the expense of depth (which is needed by other students, particularly with national ambitions). We know what *cinema production* and *television production* mean, but what about *media production*? If it matches cinema production, why not call it that? And if it does not, then cinema production still needs to be taught as the art it is rather than being reduced to a skill set equivalent to learning production technology and postproduction and Web software. *Documentaries are more than a reporter with a camera.* Administrators and faculty who have not experienced the great demands of production, particularly narrative cinema production, can all too easily underestimate them. The potential for convergence in exhibition media does not diminish the need for a distinct cinema production form. Although organizational mergers based on resources (administrative “convergence”) or curricular mergers based on “moving images” (studies/medium “convergence”) or even *foundational* production/craft courses (technology “convergence”) might be appropriate for some schools, we should recognize the differences between cinema, television, and new media just as we should between form, medium, and technology (Table 5). Each is a distinct culture, with its own educational association, such as the University Film and Video Association, the Broadcast Educator Association, and the International Digital Media and Arts Association. Although some may belong to multiple groups, few would argue they all should be converged into a single organization. Similarly, we should resist efforts to re-label cinema or converge it with other production forms in ways where the end result might be an erosion of the methods, equipment, standards, courses, or professors that cinema and its students need to thrive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live-Action:</th>
<th>Cinema</th>
<th>Television</th>
<th>New Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form:</td>
<td>“Single” camera</td>
<td>Studio and field</td>
<td>Interactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium:</td>
<td>Theatrical</td>
<td>Broadcast (station, cable, satellite)</td>
<td>Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology:</td>
<td>Commercial projector</td>
<td>Consumer receiver</td>
<td>Computer</td>
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<th></th>
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<th>Mobile</th>
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Table 5: Cinema versus Television versus New Media
Because the ideas expressed here may differ from long and firmly held beliefs and could result in some students (a prized commodity in academe) shifting from studying television or new media to cinema, it may seem to some that rather than merely suggesting more accurate definitions for cinema as it exists, this article seeks to realign the relationships among cinema, television, and new media. As I hope I have shown—and can attest to from years of professional experience—that is not the case. If we combine a theoretical framework with definitions and a reevaluation of history, cinema’s place in expression can be more clearly understood, the tangle of words and meanings unraveled, and the gap between the academic and professional worlds more effectively bridged. Doing so makes it clear that those interested in programming cinema-style television series such as Lost or The Office should study the television medium. Those interested in conceiving the cinema-style commercials that pay for those series should study the marketing function. And those interested in designing the Web sites for promoting and possibly distributing those series should study the new media form. However, those interested in actually producing cinema-style series or commercials can best be served by studying the cinema form. As Gessner observed in 1964, “Cinema—theatrical, documentary, industrial, or the Grade B television versions—is the art of the moving image” (“An Approach” 90).

NOTES

The author wishes to thank Jeffrey Gerheiser for his research assistance, Frank Tomasulo for patient consultations through multiple drafts, and Noël Carroll and David Bordwell for their valuable feedback.

1. Associate directors work in a multi-camera television environment with a different production practice and, generally, fewer production variables than cinema-style assistant directors.

2. See Belton, Manovich, Prince.

3. I say “perspectives” because just as there are different views in cinema studies, the views of those with an entertainment industry background can be different from those with regional or academic production backgrounds. This article is written from a live-action entertainment industry perspective.


5. Quickies were low-budget theatrical features (“Cinema: Quickie King”).

6. Kinescopes (also known as “kines”) were films made by photographing programs off of television tubes before the advent of videotape. They should not be confused with Kinetoscopes, the early peephole devices.

7. Fairbanks’s series, The Public Prosecutor, was produced from 1947 to 1948 in twenty-minute episodes, but NBC decided to switch to thirty-minute time slots before it could air. It took until 1951 for the show to air in syndication, reputedly the first to do so.

8. Not considered in this article is the failed hybrid known as “theater television,” which placed television technology, form, and content in cinema theaters until the mid-1950s.

9. Early nonlinear editing systems were capable of only “off-line” quality. As such, they could only generate edit decision lists, which were then used to “conform” analog masters.

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