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# Introduction: Recalling Manuel Alvarado

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Manuel Alvarado, a board member of *Television & New Media* who died in 2010 at the age of sixty-two, was a major figure in the development of media education. In the 1970s he was one of a small group of highly motivated teachers combating the general prejudice against serious study of the media. Although film was just beginning to creep into the academic curriculum, taking a systematic and informed look at television was still regarded with suspicion. Becoming both the secretary of Britain's Society for Education in Film and Television and the editor of *Screen Education*, he was at the center of a movement that propelled the study of media from a fringe subject to a much more secure place in both schools and universities.

It is fitting, if tragic, that the last issue of *Television & New Media*'s first decade should mark his achievement. Very early in the life of the journal (vol. 2, no. 1, 2001) an issue was dedicated to the recently deceased Herbert I Schiller. Herb had hoped to write something for the first moments of the *TVNM* project. He was ultimately too ill to do so, but the journal benefited greatly from his early encouragement. The loss of Manuel ten years later is a parallel one not just in temporal terms but intellectually and politically, too. Herb was the beating heart of an internationalist, *engagé* media studies starting in the 1960s, and Manuel the same from the 1970s, though one came from economics and the other from literature, one from Brooklyn and the other from Guatemala and east London. Both sought to make a difference in wider civil and political society.

As is clear from the contributions gathered here, Manuel was different in other ways from most founders of discursivity about the media in that the formation he grew out of and helped to generate was not primarily an academic one. Even though it used scholarly methods and theories, the people who founded and sustained it mostly held neither doctorates nor university posts. Nor were they that rather tepid if self-important description, "independent scholars."

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After time spent as a teacher, Manuel went to work for the Society for Education in Film and Television in the early 1970s. As editor of its journal *Screen Education*, he promoted and pioneered work both on the education system itself (he was later to move to a senior appointment at London University's Institute of Education) and on the major forms of visual media, such as cinema, television, and photography. He was an indefatigable editor, cajoling, encouraging, wheedling if necessary. He was also writing himself, especially about television, and worked for UNESCO and the BBC's research wing.

In 1989, Manuel became head of education at the British Film Institute (BFI). The BFI was then a powerhouse of ideas and initiatives, and he made good use of its powers of patronage and publishing to advance media education, not only in Britain but around the world. He was a tireless traveler in the cause. When he left the BFI, he was appointed professor at what was then West Surrey College of Art and Design and subsequently held other professorships, at Luton, Sunderland, and City Universities. He was also very active in publishing, with John Libbey initially, then founding the University of Luton Press, and finally commissioning for Intellect Books. Manuel had been brought up, partly in London's East End and partly in Manchester, by his mother, who was separated from his father. Much later, Manuel was to rediscover his father, a distinguished professor of music in Guatemala, and his father's second family. Becoming acquainted with his half brothers in his late thirties was a source of great satisfaction to him, and Manuel threw himself with typical enthusiasm into learning more of his heritage and teaching himself Spanish.

Manuel will be remembered not only for his energetic and committed work for education but also for his ebullient and generous nature, which never failed to lift the spirits of any gathering.

One of the things that gave him most satisfaction in later years was to serve on the board of the Sir John Cass Foundation in the city of London, guiding its largesse toward deserving educational institutions. With his socialist convictions he seemed to take a particular pleasure in penetrating the inner sanctums of the financial establishment.

To give a sense of how committed he was to publishing, we conclude with this vignette by Rebecca O'Connor, who has been managing editor of this journal for half its life. Coming as it does from someone who worked regularly with Manuel yet never met him, it testifies to his sense of dedication, humanity, and fun, even at a long distance:

For the last five years, I've been the ghost untangling and retying the interwebs that tidy up into an issue of *Television & New Media*. I don't often meet the real talent of the journal in person, the authors, reviewers, and editorial board members, but I know quite a bit about them simply from their brief communications. I'm a pest really, asking for favors and often sending unwelcome news. So when my email exchanges are consistently exuberant and kind, I fall in love with the sender. I had no bigger crush than the one I had on Manuel Alvarado. He wasn't just kind to me. Few have as generous a spirit and honest encouragement to

authors as Manuel did. Manuel was a patron saint with a giving and brilliant heart. I have been wrangling *TVNM* long enough to notice who was truly a star behind the scenes and as well as in front and he was just that. In one particularly inspired email exchange, Manuel promised he would meet me at the Beach in Ipanema with beer in hand and instructed me to be at life-guard tower 9, where apparently the “in” people meet. If we get to wander a bit in the afterlife, when my time comes I hope he’ll keep his promise. I have much to thank him for. . . .  
(Rebecca K. O’Connor, managing editor, *Television & New Media*)

**Author’s Note**

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