**Transcript: Lawrie Zion – Journalism**

I guess what makes journalism at La Trobe really different is a magazine called *Upstart*, which is at upstart.net.au, which has been designed not just as s student showcase, but as an online magazine for emerging journalists. It’s the only student publication in Australia that publishes content every weekday of the year, and while some of the material that you find on the site comes from assessments that students have done, there’s a lot of other material, and students who actually want to get into the habit of publishing weekly can do so.

So we have thirty students who’ve got 100 articles with their by-lines on them, and it was originally going to be a kind of student showcase for the really good work students did – of course lots of universities do that – and we thought why not go a step further and make it a publication for emerging journalists? It might have sounded a bit ambitious but the mission has been realised with thousands of people following us now on Facebook and Twitter, and assignments right from first year onwards are set for students, and instead of saying ‘You’ve got to do a feature article for a newspaper,’ you say ‘You’ve got to write something for *Upstart*, and you’ve got to write the Twitter plug for it and post something about it on Facebook as well.’

A lot of students have built up really great publication records so if you go and look at the URL of a couple of our third year students, you’ll look and see that they’ve got 100 pieces to their name because they’ve got into the habit of writing every week or so for the site from first year.

A number of our students have made a habit of writing outside of any kind of assessment requirement, and so one guy who’s about to graduate has written 120 articles for *Upstart* over his three years here. He’s got a one piece a week habit. And we set assignments now and say ‘We want you to do an interview but you can either deliver it in a text format, you can deliver it as a video or you can deliver it as audio,’ and that material, if it’s any good, ends up on the site.

For a group of students in third year every semester they also get the chance for academic credit to edit the site. So they learn what it’s like to be part of an editorial team. It’s like an internship that we happen to have on campus.

All our staff are people who are still active as journalists or commentators. So I’d like to think that we can say that we’re up to date. We’ve said print and text are all still important but we don’t want to privilege them above all the other kinds of media that have developed and of course are now integrated into the whole mix.

Journalism’s changing really quickly, and a few years ago it might have made a lot of sense to say ‘We’ll have a print stream and a radio stream and a television stream,’ but these days any graduate who’s going to have a serious chance of scoring a job straight out of a degree has to show some competence in more than one area. So our degree has been redesigned to reflect that. That’s one of the exciting things that’s happening with journalism graduates. If they’re competent with digital media then there are far broader range of choices than you might have imagined.

They know how to write, they know how to post content, they understand how social media works and they’re able to cut to the chase when trying to put a story together.

Our graduates have gone into a whole range of jobs. Quite a few have ended up at a newspaper such as The Age, The Herald Sun and their equivalents in other cities. A number of students have gone into the ABC or SBS. A lot of jobs have opened up in the last three or four years that you couldn’t have even imagined ten years ago, and journalism skills are actually deployed across a much broader range of professions than they used to be.