

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Struggling for Possession

Professor David Rowe from the Centre for Cultural Research and Dr Brett Hutchins from Monash University are exploring media ownership and sports coverage using digital outlets through a three-year Australian Research Council Discovery Project.

'Sport is immensely popular in many media forms, and has been dominated by broadcast television for over three decades,' says Professor Rowe. 'But when sport coverage is presented online, who owns it and who has a right to access it? Recent disputes over ownership of online sport content demonstrate its pivotal role in both media and sport development. Many questions regarding private ownership by media companies, and citizens' rights to access sport in new media environments, are still to be effectively answered. There is a pressing need to explore the sources of regulatory uncertainty and provide policy direction to address concerns about the locking up of exclusive content by major media companies.'

The research team will focus on nine of Australia's most popular sports, including Australian rules football (AFL), rugby league, basketball and netball, by analysing web-based delivery of sport through news and information sites, live and archival video and audio streaming, and broadband television programs. The team will also analyse sport-related online activities such as competitions, online merchandising and the content of fan sites, and interview key figures in Australian sport media. This material will be examined in the context of regulations that may or may not exist to control access and provision. It will discover who is offering, hosting or controlling the content; what sort of sport content is being offered; and which trends or



patterns of delivery can be discerned.

As the first project of its type in Australia or overseas, it will enhance the understanding of changes in the political, economic and cultural positioning of sport and media industries, and contribute to international scholarship on sport, media and technology. By providing valuable input into policy debates over new media and content ownership, the research seeks to enhance cultural citizenship pertaining to digital access and equity in sport and other important forms of popular culture.

Project Title: Struggling for Possession: The control and use of online media sport

Funding has been set at: \$100,492 (through Monash University).

Contact Details: d.rowe@uws.edu.au,
<http://www.uws.edu.au/ccr>

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