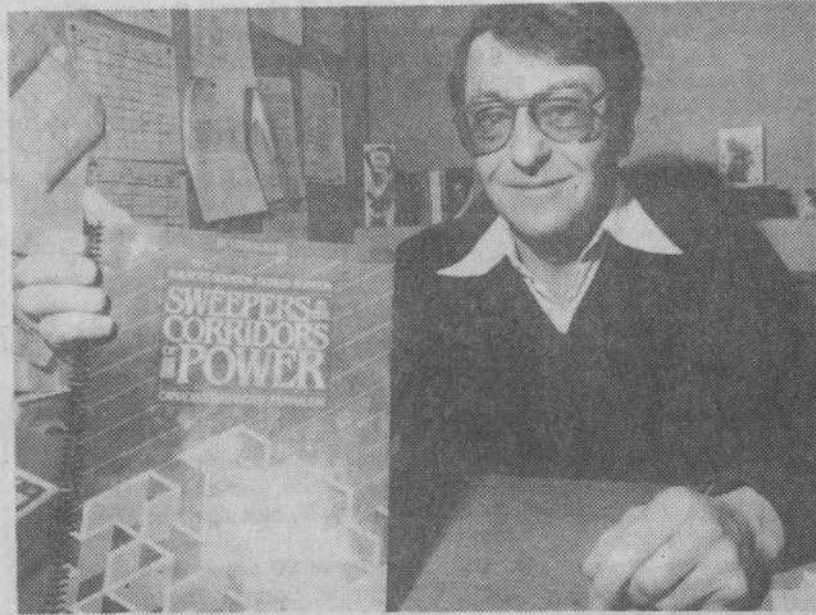


# A chance phrase, and students get a first all-Canadian text book



Broadcaster-turned-teacher-turned-author Phil Ross has written Canada's first textbook on broadcast journalism, in which he looks at both theoretical and practical aspects of his profession. The Loyalist College teaching master spent 25 years in the

business before leaving to teach a broadcast journalism program at Loyalist a few years ago. Some 17 colleges and universities across Canada have expressed an interest in the text.

(Staff Photo)

By BILL WHITELOW  
Staff Reporter

Years ago former journalist Phil Ross, working as Queen's Park bureau chief for CFTO television, was lounging in the press gallery between assignments when an offhand remark by one of his colleagues struck him as rather profound.

The newspaper reporter had told the gathering "we are sweepers in the corridors of power."

The statement stuck in Ross' mind over the years, even after he left the profession, because it seemed the best description of a journalist, print or broadcast, that he had ever heard.

The parallel is this: Just as a janitor attempts to sweep up every tiny bit of refuse, so the journalist tries to "sweep" up every last scrap of information about a story.

The "corridors of power" were, of course, the provincial government buildings.

But to Ross, those same halls are now all-encompassing, serving to illustrate one of the fundamentals of journalism: The public's right to know.

It's a message Ross drives home in Canada's first textbook written exclusively for fledgling broadcast jour-

nalists entitled, appropriately, *Sweeping in the Corridors of Power*.

Ross left a 25-year broadcast career behind a few years ago to teach a newly-conceived broadcast journalism program at Loyalist College. He had been news director at Toronto's CHFI-FM station and Queen's Park bureau chief for CHFI and CFTO-TV.

Stepping into the new position, however, proved to be no easy task. Not only was Ross forced to mould the new program. His job was hindered by a "complete lack" of material written by Canadians, for Canadians, on broadcast journalism.

American texts helped but there are many subtle - and some not-so-subtle - differences in American approaches to the handling of news that Ross said he found material from south of the border often virtually useless.

Then Ross had a chance discussion with a representative of Butterworths, a textbook publisher, and mentioned his concern about the lack of Canadian educational material in the field.

"Out of the blue" came a request from Butterworths to author one. But as Ross soon discovered, there is a lot more to publishing than simply sit-

ting down to the typewriter and pounding out the material.

He had to initially write some sample chapters which were circulated by Butterworths to people working in the field. They, in turn, gave the chapters exceptionally good reviews. That was followed by a market survey of post-secondary institutions which revealed 17 Canadian colleges and universities were interested.

So, from the birth of the concept until the book rolled off the presses, it took three years for Ross to join the ranks of published authors.

When putting his thoughts to paper, Ross tried to avoid a pitfall that characterizes the contents of so many textbooks: dryness. To that end, much of its contents are anecdotal - stories culled from history and Ross' personal experience and used to illustrate particular points in the book's lessons.

*Sweeping in the Corridors of Power* is more than a textbook in the sense that it goes far beyond merely teaching students how to write coherent, concise and cogent news copy. It also explores how the media works, why it covers stories the way it does and ventures into the more theoretical realm of journalism, probing such subjects as media ethics.

The first half of the book deals exclusively with radio and neatly makes the transition to television in a chapter entitled *There's a Picture on Your Radio*.

"The media doesn't have the time or money to train people...schools have to have them sufficiently trained to step right into the workforce."

Ross actually had some help with the book, co-authoring it with his wife Doreen, herself a freelance broadcaster.

But to people who know Ross and read his book, they're bound to be at least a little confused. His name appears as Phil Ross Boynton, which is, in fact, his real name. Though students may not be of an age to recall it, the background is a broadcast anecdote itself.

When he started his career in the late 1950s, there was a comedy airing on radio and television called *Our Miss Brooks*. Her boyfriend, a bit of a chump, was always the butt of the show's jokes. His name? You guessed it: Philip Boynton.

Ross, on the air at the time, was on the receiving end of as many jokes as his imaginary namesake. In terms of career advancement, he deemed it prudent to simply drop his surname and go with his middle name.

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