History of Media Studies Newsletter December 2024

Welcome to the 45th edition of the History of Media Studies Newsletter. The monthly email, assembled by Dave Park, Jeff Pooley, and Pete Simonson, maintains a loose affiliation with the new History of Media Studies journal and the Working Group on the History of Media Studies. Please contact us with any questions, suggestions, or items.

1. Working Group on the History of Media Studies

Join us for the next remote session devoted to discussing working papers with authors. Hosted by the Consortium for History of Science, Technology and Medicine (CHSTM). Open to anyone interested in the history of the media studies fields. Instructions to join are here.

Wednesday, January 15
Wednesday, January 15, 15:00-16:00 UTC (10am-11am EST)

Reading for discussion:

- Katharine Gerbner, selected posts from her ongoing project on her grandfather, George Gerbner

For the Zoom link and the reading download, visit the Working Group page. Instructions for joining the group are here. Questions? Contact us

2. Conferences, Calls & Announcements

If you have a call or announcement relevant to the history of media studies, please contact us.

1. *CFP: Society for the History of Recent Social Science (HISRESS)*

- This two-day conference of the Society for the History of Recent Social Science (HISRESS), at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands, will bring together researchers working on the history of post-World War II social science. It will provide a forum for the latest research on the cross-disciplinary history of the post-war social sciences, including but not limited to anthropology, economics, psychology, political science, and sociology as well as related fields like area studies, communication studies, design, history, international relations, law, linguistics, and urban studies. The conference, hosted by the Department of European Studies at the University of Amsterdam, aims to build upon the recent emergence of work and conversation on cross-disciplinary themes in the postwar history of the social sciences.
- Conference dates: 6-7 June 2025
- **Deadline:** 3 February 2025
- More details

2. *History of the Human Sciences Early Career Prize 2024–25*

- *History of the Human Sciences* – the international journal of peer-reviewed research, which provides the leading forum for work in the social sciences, humanities, human psychology and biology that reflexively examines its own historical origins and interdisciplinary influences – is delighted to announce details of its annual prize for early career scholars. The intention of the annual award is to recognise a researcher whose work best represents the journal's aim to critically examine traditional assumptions and preoccupations about human beings, their societies and their histories in light of developments that cut across disciplinary boundaries. In the pursuit of these goals, History of the Human Sciences publishes traditional humanistic studies as well work in the social sciences, including the fields of sociology, psychology, political science, the history and philosophy of science, anthropology, classical studies, and literary theory. Scholars working in any of these fields are encouraged to apply.
- **Deadline:** 28 March 2025

- More details

3. *Call for Abstracts: European Communication Research: What, Whence, and Whither?*

- In its 50th year, *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research* invites to reconsider what European communication research is – and what it can be. From its start in 1975, the journal's mission has been to serve as a forum for scholarship and academic debate in the field of communication science and research from a European perspective. But what is in fact a European perspective? The jubilee conference invites us to rethink what constitutes European communication research. The conference offers a moment to rethink what a European perspective could mean for scholarship and what kind of Europe is in fact evoked here. The conference is open to theoretical and empirical approaches. It invites emerging and junior scholars as well as senior faculty to contemplate the peculiar character of European communication research.
- Conference dates: 29–30 September 2025
- **Deadline:** 15 April 2025
- More details

3. The Journal

HMS encourages submissions (en español) on the history of research, education, and reflective knowledge about media and communication—as expressed through academic institutions; through commercial, governmental, and non-governmental organizations; and through "alter-traditions" of thought and practice often excluded from the academic mainstream.

4. New Publications

Works listed here are newly published, or new to the bibliography.

The History of Communication Research Bibliography is a project of the Annenberg School for Communication Library Archives (ASCLA) at the University of Pennsylvania.

1. Eisenmann, Clemens, Jakub Mlynář, Jason Turowetz, and Anne W. Rawls. "'Machine down': Making Sense of Human--Computer Interaction--Garfinkel's Research on ELIZA and LYRIC from 1967 to 1969 and Its Contemporary Relevance." *AI & SOCIETY* 39, no. 6 (2024): 2715--33. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-023-01793-z.

> **ABSTRACT:** *This paper examines Harold Garfinkel's work with ELIZA and a related program LYRIC from 1967 to 1969. AI researchers have tended to treat successful human--machine interaction as if it relied primarily on non-human machine characteristics, and thus the often-reported attribution of human-like qualities to communication with computers has been criticized as a misperception--and humans who make such reports referred to as "deluded." By contrast Garfinkel, building on two decades of prior research on information and communication, argued that the ELIZA and the LYRIC "chatbots" were achieving interactions that felt human to many users by exploiting human sense-making practices. In keeping with his long-term practice of using "trouble" as a way of discovering the taken-for-granted practices of human sense-making, Garfinkel designed scripts for ELIZA and LYRIC that he could disrupt in order to reveal how their success depended on human social practices. Hence, the announcement "Machine Down" by the chatbot was a desired result of Garfinkel's interactions with it. This early (but largely unknown) research has implications not only for understanding contemporary AI chatbots, but also opens possibilities for respecifying current information systems design and computational practices to provide for the design of more flexible information objects.*

2. Fridzema, Nathalie, Susan Aasman, Tom Slootweg, and Rik Smit. "Revolutionary Discourses from the Past: A Digital Hermeneutical Analysis of Widely Read Academic Publications on the Social Impact and Significance of the Internet." *Information, Communication & Society* 27, no. 12 (2024): 2222--41. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2024.2420025.

> **ABSTRACT:** *From the start, the academic community was deeply involved in both the technological and conceptual development of the internet. Works by Rheingold, Castells, and others put forward influential, intellectual imaginaries. Over thirty years later, these sources offer valuable insights, reflecting the novelty and excitement of the time. Often infused with rhetoric of radical transformation, these authors either consciously or unconsciously foregrounded a revolutionary period marked by digital utopianism, while also presenting critical views. This paper aims to identify and historicize common themes and concepts in influential academic publications on the internet's significance and social impact. By adopting a longitudinal and comparative approach, we aim to provide a historically informed understanding of Internet Studies. Our paper contributes to a*

tradition of media historical scholarship, examining how new technologies were socially constructed, how dominant discourses shaped popular imaginaries, and their role in the evolution of Internet Studies.

3. Jensen, Klaus Bruhn, and W. Russell Neuman. "The Effects of Elihu Katz: A Stepwise Enrichment of the Concept of Communication Effects." *International Journal of Communication* 18 (April 29, 2024): 22.

ABSTRACT: *The field of communication research has remained preoccupied with the effects of media, relying all too often on an impoverished notion of "effects." Departing from Katz and Lazarsfeld's original differentiation of communication effects as a two-step flow, this article retraces the gradual enrichment of the concept of effects through 6 cumulative traditions of research, illustrating each tradition through reference to Elihu Katz's sustained and nonsectarian contributions. We detect the implication, across the traditions, that the field should ask about the effects of communication, rather than of media. Having outlined the continuing relevance of the 6 traditions for research on digital communication environments, we go on to identify both a 3rd and a 4th step of communication, which may further enrich research by including within the conceptualization of effects historically variable technological and institutional structures of communication.*

4. Jerolmack, Colin, Abigail Westberry, and Belicia Teo. "Frame Analysis and Animal Studies: Erving Goffman's Overlooked Thesis on Animal Metacommunication and Mind." *Symbolic Interaction* 47, no. 4 (2024): 578--97. https://doi.org/10.1002/symb.715.

ABSTRACT: *Erving Goffman's concept of framing is one of his most enduring contributions to social science. Despite the canonical status of Frame Analysis (1974) in multiple fields, few acknowledge its intellectual engagement with animal studies. It was Gregory Bateson, in an analysis of animal play, who first posited the idea of frames as metacommunicative propositions that signal the meaning of behavior. In this paper, we show that Goffman did not just opportunistically borrow the idea of framing from Bateson, but also advanced Bateson's thesis that nonhuman animals are capable of (re)framing the meaning of behavior. He emphasized that animals and humans could meta-communicate with each other as well. Goffman polemicized against human exceptionalist theories of cognition and communication--not only in Frame Analysis, but also in unpublished remarks he delivered at a controversial conference on animal communication, and he suggested that the ability to meta-communicate is a more appropriate index of mind than language. Although new research indicates that many species use "significant symbols" and have a "theory of mind," most interactionists have not reckoned with the sociological implications of animals as "minded" social actors capable of metacommunication with each other--and with people.*

5. Johnson, Nathan R. "Five Approaches to Rhetorical Agency." *Rhetoric Review* 44, no. 1 (2025): 62--69. https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198.2024.2425479.

ABSTRACT: Rhetoric Re-View was established under the founding editorship of Theresa J. Enos and has been a feature of Rhetoric Review for over twenty-five years. The objective of Rhetoric Re-View is to offer review essays about prominent works that have made an impact on rhetoric. Reviewers evaluate the merits of established works, discussing their past and present contributions. The intent is to provide a long-term evaluation of significant research while also introducing important, established scholarship to those entering the field. This Rhetoric Re-View essay examines the question "How ought we understand the concept of rhetorical agency?" as it was discussed at the September 2003 Alliance of Rhetoric Societies (ARS) conference and has been taken up by numerous scholars since that time.

6. Macrea-Toma, Ioana. "More than 'Soul Catchers': Understanding Eastern Europe through Audience and Opinion Surveys at Radio Free Europe during the Cold War." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 26, no. 3 (2024): 85--121.

ABSTRACT: In 1989, Radio Free Europe (RFE), an international anti-Communist shortwave radio broadcaster located in Munich and financed by the U.S. government, concluded after a vast survey operation that 53 percent of the adult population in East Europe listened to RFE programs. Based on such findings, historians from the region have argued that the collapse of Communist regimes was attributable in part to the importance of the diffusionist character of Western-inspired notions of freedom and democracy. Recent studies have raised questions about the methodology and findings of the RFE surveys. Although methodological discussions are important, a close reading of RFE surveys from the 1950s to 1989 reveals another side to the story, showing how Western Cold War institutions helped to frame key problems in Eastern Europe and mold the way individuals in those societies thought about the choices facing them.

7. Ruddock, Andy. *History, Politics and the Evolution of Cultivation Theory: Beyond Violence?* Palgrave Studies in the History of the Media. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-75911-6.

ABSTRACT: This book provides a cultural history of cultivation theory, a North American mass communication paradigm best known for arguing that television violence was a potent agent of political socialisation. Decades after its inception, cultivation theory remains an evocative force in imagining twenty-first-century media power. This book reveals how many factors shaped the theory: the spectre of twentieth-century fascism, the Cold War, political turbulence in 1960s America, and the realisation that television had profoundly altered the rhythms of social and political life. The book also explains how cultivation theory became a means

of analysing diverse media influences, thanks to various scholars who brought different motivations, perspectives and skills to the project. Cultivation theory succeeded because its practitioners related their work to the changing political moods of post-war America. In doing so, they created a unique critical perspective within mass communication research, which continues to shed light on the role media play in political conflict.

8. Schwendener, Martha. "Into the Abyss: Vilém Flusser's Theories of Art, Nature, and Culture." *Critical Inquiry* 51, no. 2 (2025): 290--315. https://doi.org/10.1086/732920.

> **ABSTRACT:** *The Czech-Brazilian philosopher Vilém Flusser was best known for his technical image trilogy, Towards a Philosophy of Photography (1983), Into the Universe of Technical Images (1985), and Does Writing Have a Future? (1987), which expanded photography theory into a radically inclusive philosophy of still and moving images for the digital age. However, he was also fascinated by concurrent developments in biology and biotechnology that were changing notions of nature, materialism, and humans. This essay will look at Flusser's writing around these ideas, particularly his para-biological fable Vampyroteuthis Infernalis (1987), his "Curie's Children" column for Artforum (1986--1992), and his collaborations and correspondences with artists impacted by his ideas.*

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