

Foreword

*The big techs keep
gaining momentum.
Is it time for a new
research agenda?*

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The dominance of social media platforms, applications, and new communication channels, in addition to the blend of commercial and social interactions and the integration of information, misinformation, and news, all compel us to think more broadly and creatively about the discipline of communication sciences.

As we move into the third decade of the twenty-first century, people, communities, and institutions are becoming more dependent on the Internet and data technologies to use in various contexts, including societal, commercial, professional, and technical. Yet, concerns regarding profitability, equity, surveillance, data protection, infrastructure, and regulation, among many others, prove our inaptitude to fully grasp the multidimensional consequences of information and communication technology integration in societies. In the literature, academic and professional events, there has been a resurgence of interest in examining and understanding the development of information and communication technologies. As we keep harnessing a culture of innovation and as people become increasingly immersed in the praxis of new technologies and applications, among the challenges ahead of us is appreciating the purpose of increased digital connectivity and identifying research questions and methodological approaches appropriate to the ever-developing media and technological environments, including the metaverse,

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artificial intelligence, and virtual reality.

At its foundation, innovation, as an idea, concept, process, and product, refers to doing things differently and creatively. New ideas and knowledge are created, produced, and distributed to generate value. In recent decades, thought leaders and the literature on social, technological, political, and cultural innovations preached new concepts to optimize resources, attain better goals, and improve practices, but many proved wrong spectacularly. For instance, Bill Gates' 1996 famous line, 'The content is king,' couldn't get any more wrong: it turned out that connectivity won over the content in the digital space. While his line advocates that profitability (in digital marketing) comes from content exposure, we know today that Internet usage is, first and foremost, social. The competition to capitalize on content got misdirected, and new questions around revenue streams, for instance, emerged. Not only did content monetization become challenging and uncertain, but also little did we know that news could become so pervasively fake, and information could easily be biased.

In his talk, *The return of the state into the digital economy* delivered at the virtual seminar co-sponsored by the Columbia Institute for Tele-Information (CITI) and the International Media Management Academic Association (IMMAA), Professor and Director of the Quello Center at the Michigan State University Johannes Bauer examined the return of the state to shape the digital economy and solve global problems of public interest, including digital equity, infrastructure, online hate speech, and the public good. He noted that by resorting to state interventionism, we address recent problems with withdrawn practices inspired by the past. While his talk dealt with the reconfiguration of the state's relationship to the digital economy, he pointed to a misalignment between the global momentum of the reign of big tech companies and the tools we use to study and address information and communication problems. Bauer argued that we failed the governance of the digital economy because we had been using a traditional, static, industrial-oriented perspective instead of a dynamic, systematic approach that engaged with the issues at hand. He advocated for reframing the problems and the questions when developing solutions. Researchers need to question and revisit the old frames when dealing with the new media and technology issues. To fully grasp the ongoing changes in media and new communication and information technologies, researchers are called to wear new lenses that enable them to reconfigure frameworks and better engage with the current dynamic and multidimensional context.

THE ARTICLES IN THIS 9TH JOCIS ISSUE

In this spirit, this ninth edition of the JOCIS includes four articles that critically engage with the above-mentioned questions, a Terry Flew's book *Regulating Platforms* (Polity Press, 2022) review, a summary of the *Creative Economy Outlook 2022* report (United Nations, 2022), and the highlights from the 2022 IMMAA conference in Porto.

Bernard Miege's article invites us to think about today's research agenda in the field of communication sciences. His paper *Some major questions for research in information communication today* analyzes the discipline's development, the outputs of which are sectorial and fragmented, he says. He examines the power of the rise of the digital in societies and organizations, the dynamics of the current society's liberal capitalism, and the impact or aftermath of the tech giants on media (and) markets. He suggests revising the research methods to get to grips with the changing technological and media environment. For instance, he recommends the multi-dimensionality approach and the "medium-range" theorization that produces "sufficiently formalized elements of understanding, intermediate between observations coming from empirical research and conclusions coming from hypothetic-deductive hypotheses, but without pretending to universal validity for the results obtained," he notes. Miege suggests research programs that include establishing a relationship between historical and new media, reconsidering platforms' role in the cultural and information industries, and making regulation a research priority for the information-communication discipline.

Richard A. Gershon discusses the importance of innovation culture in the workplace; in his article *Media Business Transformation*, Gershon reminds us of the challenges of innovation and discovery in a highly competitive media environment. Businesses must cultivate a culture of innovation, he says. Those willing to experiment and take risks will learn better, even if they fail. Strategies that facilitate a culture of innovation include nurturing partnerships and collaboration, engaging in open communication, and cultivating the right kind of leadership.

Organizations that are ill-prepared for the new and disruptive transformations in their industries or global marketplace may fail. Using Sony, Blockbuster, and Kodak case studies, Gershon shows how easily even big and successful companies can fail if they're not abreast of technological changes in their environments. Thus, attributes like good risk management, experimentation, and external partnerships reduce risk and facilitate the repeatability and sustainability of product innovation.

Questioning the quality and variety of information available online, Marco Gambaro reflects on the information flow through the Internet. In

his essay *The quality and variety of information in the digital and traditional media: Competition and complementarity*, he discusses the production and consumption of online news and stories while pointing to their value for political and economic considerations.

In her empirical study *Culture and Conflict: The Framing of News in Three National U.S. Newspapers*, Angela Powers discusses three media organizations' practices that impacted the news coverage of the Black Lives Matter movement. Using the content analysis approach, Powers shows the differences in coverage among the newspapers studied (the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *Wall Street Journal*) and discusses how the liberal-leaning newspaper engages in sensational coverage while the conservative newspaper prioritizes the contextual elements of coverage. In addition to compatible/incompatible language used in their stories, the newspapers differentiate themselves by the news sources they use, which shapes their stories and, thus, their biases, Powers argues.

Along with these conversations about the new economy, a summary of the report *Creative Economy Outlook 2022* (United Nations, 2022) sheds light on national creative economy plans and strategies of 33 countries, proving that the creative economy became a global driver of social, political, and economic opportunities and sustainable development.

A review of Terry Flew's new book *Regulating Platforms* (Polity Press, 2022) engages with the study's key points. The book examines the current extended reach of digital platforms and the role they play politically, socially, and economically; "*Regulating Platforms* is indeed a must-read for all those who live, think, and breathe in the twenty-first century at a time when a large part of society has become intensely reliant on the Internet, either for creating content, getting informed, and sharing opinions or for the development of creative industries. Above all, it is mandatory reading for researchers, scholars, and thinkers of media and communication, who wish not only to understand the current context but also to think ahead in the pursuit of solving problems," the reviewer notes.

This volume of JOCIS concludes with the highlights of the 2022's International Media Management Academic Association conference, held in Porto, Portugal, on October, 21-22. Hosted by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto and led by Professor Paulo Faustino, the conference welcomed a community of eminent scholars, professionals, and early-career academics, including Ph.D. students. Read the summary to learn about the sessions, the keynote talks, the visit to the Porto Innovation Hub, and other news.

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