

Editorial

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The following contributions illuminate both the foundations and advancements of our research field. In the former context Tanner Mirrlees provides a three part explication of Herbert Schiller's writings on American Empire and communications. From 1945, after decolonization and during the Cold War, he saw that US entertainment, broadcasting, telecommunication, and advertising companies generated profits abroad while facilitating a new kind of cultural imperialism. Individualism, consumerism and free enterprise were the value-precepts of state-led persuasion campaigns which rationalized U.S. military interventions and support for developing world dictatorships as a defense against communism. Against this, Schiller adhered to the principles of the New World Information Order (NWIO) advanced by non-aligned countries and communication activists worldwide. Next, Mirrlees considers Schiller's response to the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and Third World liberation movements alongside the worldwide proliferation of neoliberal policy regimes. He acknowledged the new global figurations of capitalism and realized that transnational corporations and transnational corporate media were not direct instruments of the U.S. Empire. However, Schiller noted that U.S. based transnational corporations and media companies contributed to Department of Defense propaganda campaigns such as that associated with the 1991 Gulf War. For Mirrlees, Schiller's writings retain their efficacy in a 21st century world in which the U.S. remains the dominant, capitalist, military, and communications centre.

James McMahon updates a founding theme of critical communications research: the power and influence of Hollywood film studios. His argument derives from the concept of risk; the degree of confidence held by capitalists about the future earnings of a business. Large capitalists reduce risk and increase confidence by limiting, or strategically sabotaging likely competitors. In the case of filmed entertainment, Hollywood studios factor in the creativity of film makers, the habits of movie goers, and projected revenues from marketing synergies. McMahon critiques the standard view that project risk is always high and that consumer behaviour is, by nature, unpredictable. Such accounts overlook the predictable features of an already-instituted world of cinema that Hollywood itself has helped to create. Here, McMahon notes that in recent years, studio blockbuster releases have attracted an increasing percentage of U.S. box office revenue, even as non-Hollywood films have proliferated. Although studios still face the possibility of over production in any given film genre, commercial surveillance of social media comment about upcoming releases allows for more accurate predictions of movie goers behaviour.

That social media use helps to generate corporate media profitability is a theme developed in Michael Daubs' analysis of CNN's iReport. Initially, from 2006, this citizen journalism portal solicited user-generated news content amidst a prevailing rhetoric of internet democracy and online participation. CNN's re-launch in November 2011 featured new social networking elements. Thousands of iReporters built personalized home pages and followed each other's newsgathering activities. Special badges were awarded for meritorious reporting achievements. Three days prior to the iReport relaunch and rebranding, CNN announced lay-offs for approximately 50 workers, including media editors and photojournalists. Advanced digital video tools had made these positions redundant. Daubs shows how the iReport system allows CNN to reduce financial investment in staff and technology while expanding its international presence. Effectively, therefore, iReporter free labour maintains CNN's brand and profitability through the guise of online community formation. These arrangements need not be unassailable. Daubs notes that if iReporters collectively realized the economic significance of their contributions and postings, they could demand financial compensation from CNN.

It is against this general background that Edward Comor and James Compton illuminate the growing precarity of professional journalism. In a 2013 online survey, 343 Canadian journalistic workers were asked how digital technologies were shaping their job descriptions, professional environments and workload. Comor and Compton sought to determine the extent to which respondents perceived rapid technological change as constitutive of journalism per se. The overall findings were contradictory. Some respondents emphasized the enabling capacity of information and communication technologies (ICTs). For example, Twitter was cited as a means of sharing and promoting work. iPhones were seen as allowing for more time-efficient strategies of information collection. Conversely, some respondents, especially union members, understood that digitally integrated newsrooms enabled employers to lay off staff, increase workload and downplay the importance of fact verification. However, the wider economic power structures were not fully acknowledged - a state of consciousness which the authors term 'engulfed freedom'. Comor and Compton themselves argue that although digital technologies *do* open up creative possibilities for reporters and editors, these are largely negated by the financially-driven imperatives and labour restructurings of media corporations.

Oscar Gandy retrospectively overviews research on the public discourse framings associated with socio-economic inequality. Problem-solution and culpability frames percolate through a multi-level political system and shape the inter-relationships among news sources, news workers and news content. Neighbourhoods, activist groups and social movements develop oppositional frames about inequality and its associated social problems. More recently, this general process has become mediated through online social networks. Gandy stresses that the capacity of groups or organizations to mobilize frames depends upon the availability of economic, political and cultural resources. Just as importantly, messages must be structured so that they can be understood as intended for particular segments of the population. Research on these matters, Gandy suggests, should be a constitutive feature of the political economy of communication.