Ten years and onwards

It has been two years since we composed editorial, the last one having been for the ten-year anniversary issue of *New Media & Society* published in February-March 2009. We would like therefore to seize this moment and muse, albeit briefly, about the current year and recent past.

We have compiled a few basic indicators in the table below, spanning the previous five-year period. It is clear that the number of submissions has risen progressively across that period: the submissions in 2010 is almost double the number for 2006.

Regarding the rates of acceptance of submissions, these figures have remained in the 19–20 percent range. The acceptance rate for 2010 is abnormal due to the many manuscripts submitted in late 2010, not all of which have completed the full cycle of processing. And, the number of requests to revise and resubmit manuscripts has increased dramatically. Although not evident in the table, essentially all submissions involve at least one round of revision and many involve more rounds before a decision to publish is made.

We are pleased that the amount of time between submission and completion of review (the row ‘Days to review’) has dramatically declined across the years, and the time period now is just above two months. The last row in the table, ‘Registered users’, reflects the number of persons registered on the journal’s submission website, who are by and large the body of reviewers from which we solicit reviews of submissions.

Such tabular overviews provide a picture of a few variables useful in monitoring a journal. The figures, of course, fall short of identifying longitudinal changes in topics covered in the published articles, in the theoretical fashions that come and go, in the methodological approaches undertaken, in geographical and institutional distribution of the authors of published articles. In short, the table provides little information regarding changes in the research agenda for new media or in the intellectual centers where that agenda is developing. Such concerns could be the focus of studies charting new media scholarship from a perspective such as the sociology of knowledge. We hope – and expect – to see such theoretically grounded reflections in the coming years.1

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<tr>
<td>Total submissions</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>203</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accept</td>
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<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Decline</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>81%</td>
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<td>85%</td>
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<td>Days to review</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>167</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registered users</td>
<td>3469</td>
<td>2770</td>
<td>2235</td>
<td>1540</td>
<td>874</td>
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Table. Longitudinal overview of NM&S submission site statistics
At this point the best we can do is sketch what a single outlet for new media scholarship, NM&S, published in a single year, 2010, in eight issues and almost 1400 pages. To begin with a few figures, 70 full articles, six review articles, and 20 book reviews were published that year. The volume was launched with a themed section of five articles on mobile phones in a cross-cultural context, guest edited by Naomi Baron. This themed section provides an uncommon comparative assessment of the uptake of mobile phones, drawing on data from Sweden, US, Estonia, and Japan. While the richness of the material cannot be encapsulated in a simple sound bite, one overriding theme from the articles is that ‘context counts’, and cultural differences relate to the way a communication technology such as the mobile phone is integrated into everyday life.

The remaining 65 articles published in 2010 cover the broad spectrum of new media studies. There are studies of a palette of personal media forms: Twitter, MySpace, blogs, YouTube, Wikipedia. There are articles focusing on special age groups (e.g. teenagers) and geographic locales (e.g. China); there are articles concentrating on domains of social life (e.g. social and political action, news production and consumption, recreation and gaming); there are articles on the integration of new media into societal institutions (e.g. government, religious organizations, media operations). With such diversity it is difficult to identify core or dominant themes; that, too, would merit considered scholarly attention in a manner impossible in a mere editorial. What is identifiable, however, is the overriding concern for theoretically grounded elaboration and understanding in the published articles. Above all else, the articles published in NM&S in 2010 (and in any previous year, for that matter) reflect this intent: contributions to understanding the societal importance of new media developments, drawing on theoretical vision and empirical data.

Theoretical reflection is a touchstone of NM&S, which is also present in the contributions to the Reviews Section of the journal. In 2010 six review articles were published and a score of individual book reviews. The review articles ranged from consideration of recent publications on game studies, civic and political engagement, research methodology, and the digitalization of everyday life. These review articles have become a staple in the material that NM&S publishes in each issue. We are pleased that NM&S contributes such considered reviews of recent literature.

Measures of audience use and gratification are limited for any medium, and notably for scholarly journals. One of the popular measures, used and misused, is the Citation Rankings developed by the Thomson Reuters Institute for Scientific Information (ISI). NM&S has been included in the ISI database of journals in the field of communication since 2003. In that year NM&S was ranked 18th out of 44 journals with an Impact Factor of 0.689 for articles published the previous year. In 2008 the ranking was 24th out of the 45 communication journals in the ISI database, with an Impact Factor of 0.821. For 2010, the ranking of NM&S has risen to 10th place out of 54 communications titles, with an Impact Factor of 1.326. Many interpretations – and criticisms – of these figures are possible, but the safe conclusion is that the position of NM&S within the broad field of communication studies has become increasingly prominent, and the journal’s articles are increasingly used by scholars.

Other indicators of use, and in some sense appreciation, are the frequency of downloads from the SAGE Journals Online (SJO) site and citations in the SAGE database. The section of the SJO Web site for NM&S provides information on these two indicators, ‘Most
Read’ and ‘Most Cited’. For both categories the top 50 articles are mentioned, showing rank order and frequency of downloads (the operationalization of ‘Most Read’) or of citations. Although reporting only rank order severely limits the utility of these lists, the information does suggest the popularity of *NM&S* articles and, to a degree, across time. For December 2010, the most frequently read article (based on full-text and pdf views) dates from 2008: an article by *NM&S* board member Sonia Livingstone on teenagers and social networking sites. The most cited article, based on data from HighWire-hosted material, is a piece published in 2002 by another *NM&S* board member, Zizi Papacharissi, on internet and the public sphere. All kinds of conditions influence such rankings (e.g. assigned readings in courses), but the listings do suggest that articles in *NM&S* have a longer shelf life than the number of the issue in which published. Some of the contributors to articles of 2010 can, in other words, expect their work to be consulted for years to come.

That shelf life is, in some ways, a reflection of quality, and that quality is considerably influenced by the reviewing procedures employed by *NM&S*. As with most journals, *NM&S* exercises a double-blind peer review procedure; in that respect, we do what virtually every established journal does to ascertain suitability for publication of submissions. That *modus operandus*, however, is where the similarity ends. Unlike many sister titles, *NM&S* relies on detailed essay-style assessments of submissions rather than short multiple-choice responses by reviewers on forms provided by journal editors. The exchange between scholars unknown to each other, sometimes across several rounds of manuscript revision, reflects a collective commitment to quality scholarship. We as editors of *NM&S* are impressed by the level of interaction in this process, and appreciative that all involved, authors and reviewers, contribute to this time-consuming procedure. It is a procedure resulting in the kind of quality reflected in the above figures of impact and ranking. A special word of thanks to reviewers of submissions to *NM&S* during 2010 is reserved for the last pages of this issue.

Words of thanks are also due to the many persons working ‘behind the scene’ to ensure issues of *NM&S* are completed properly and on time. The SAGE staff does an outstanding job in this department, in particular Production Editor Caroline Sparrow who has been with *NM&S* almost since its inception a decade ago. Caroline is now moving on to other challenges at SAGE Publications, and we wish to express our gratitude to her for so many years of service. Other persons have also provided support and we wish to especially thank Jeremy Hunsinger for helping repel a spam attack on the *NM&S* website last summer; his computer expertise kept the site up and running and we are especially grateful.

Several journal-related events are scheduled for 2011. We will, as usual, be publishing individual articles, review articles and book reviews – the basic staple of an issue of *NM&S*. We will also be publishing one, possibly two, theme issues in 2011. The first is already in production and will be included in the second or third issue of the year: a theme issue prepared by guest editors Rich Ling and Heather Horst, entitled ‘Mobile Communication in the Global South’. Other theme issues are planned on political communication, on internet studies, and on human rights; rather than sketch the details of these projects here, we prefer to simply say ‘stay tuned’.

As some readers may remember, *NM&S* published a double issue at the commencement of 2009, entitled ‘The Long History of New Media’, which was a product of a previously held pre-conference at the International Communication Association (ICA) conference in Montreal in May 2008. That event was followed up by a second pre-conference in Chicago
in 2009, resulting in an anthology now in production by publisher Peter Lang, to be released at the 2011 ICA conference in Boston. We are delighted that NM&S has been able to contribute to these scholarly events and the book-length collection, and look forward to celebrating the launch of the book later this year.

Like much of scholarly journal publishing, NM&S is slowly making the transition from a print-only environment to a hybrid publishing model where the online version is rapidly outpacing the print version as document for consultation. NM&S is still printed, but by far the largest numbers of users of the journal consult the online version maintained at the website of SAGE Journals Online (SJO). Some of the features of this site are available to all viewers (e.g. search function, tables of content, article abstracts), but access to articles is restricted to readers affiliated with institutional subscribers – university libraries and research institutions. In 2010 SAGE upgraded the SJO sites and functionalities substantially, and it now provides a rich venue for researchers, not only for new media and communication specialists, but for scholars in the broad range of disciplines reflected in the nearly 600 journal titles maintained on the SJO site. In addition, the site includes another feature, OnlineFirst, that allows publication of articles accepted for publication in NM&S to appear first online before release of the print version of the journal, which may be three to six months later. In December 2010, 29 NM&S articles were available in this form, providing more timely accessibility to the work of these authors. NM&S is pleased to be part of these initiatives.

We are aware of the accelerated rate of change presently ongoing in scholarly publishing, and are anxious to experiment with new forms where informal and formal modes of scholarly communication become intertwined. SAGE is exploring such remixing, and launched in December 2010 an initiative called Communicationspace, which is essentially a web-based meeting point for communications scholars. Although NM&S is not directly involved in this initiative, we have been pleased to see board members and authors contribute to the space, and articles from NM&S are frequently highlighted in the venue.

2011 is still very young and much time remains for consideration of yet other innovations in scholarly publishing. Some members of the ‘NM&S family’ – authors, reviewers, board members, editors – are involved in experiments related to open review, to open access, and to ‘enhanced publishing’. We begin the year in confidence that some of these initiatives will find reflection in NM&S, if not this year, then in the next. Most of all, we are confident that whatever initiatives emerge, our emphasis on the quality of scholarship and the plurality of theoretical vision will remain steadfast.

Endnotes


Nicholas Jankowski & Steve Jones, Editors
David Park, Reviews Editor