

THE SHENZHEN FORUM 2019

COMMUNICATION INNOVATION, NEW MEDIA, AND DIGITAL JOURNALISM Shenzhen, China, June 26–28, 2019

Co-sponsored by the
Shenzhen University (SZU) of China and the National Communication Association (NCA)

THE SHENZHEN FORUM WILL BRING TOGETHER SCHOLARS AND MEDIA PRACTITIONERS from around the world to engage in conversations about cutting-edge communication-based issues. The Forum will include three “tracks”:

TRACK 1: EXPERIMENTS IN COMMUNICATION INNOVATION, led by Dr. Rolien Susanne Hoyng, Chinese University of Hong Kong, rolienhoyng@cuhk.edu.hk (the NCA representative), and Dr. Chen Changfeng, Tsinghua University, fengchen5266@163.com (the SZU representative)

Despite critiques of the ongoing glorification of “innovation” within multiple corporate spheres, scholars remain committed to both studying and practicing inventiveness, newness, and difference. This track accordingly reflects on how different communicative habits emerge from within processes of technological standardization, global integration, and digital innovation. It looks across the front-end experiences of users and the back-end infrastructures of digital and global communication to prompt participants to consider the dilemmas and opportunities of innovation and inventiveness. On the one hand, the globalization of infrastructures and platforms seems contingent on their ability to accommodate different practices and uses, even while doing so within increasingly standardized settings. On the other hand, new technological applications may not simply partake in ongoing processes of globalization, but also can change where globalization is headed. This track will ask: Does “innovation” support or compromise existing corporate control and statecraft? Does it fuel targeted struggles for social justice in the age of globalization? Or, does “innovation” call forth new communicative possibilities that transcend our understanding? This track will pursue these questions by inviting scholars to share specific case studies of communication “innovation” in practice.

TRACK 2: INTERSECTIONS IN NEW MEDIA AND HEALTH COMMUNICATION, led by Dr. Yuqiong Zhou, Shenzhen University, yuqiongzhou@126.com (the SZU representative), and Dr. Amy Hasinoff, CU Denver, amy.hasinoff@ucdenver.edu (the NCA representative)

Traditional health communication scholarship has focused on face-to-face interactions, yet the proliferation of new media technologies means that many patients now speak with their doctor or nurse-practitioner via online messaging platforms, while many health care seekers resort to online systems for information and advice. At the same time, public communication about family health, dieting, gender and sexuality, and aging is now widely practiced via new media platforms, few of which are refereed for accuracy, and many of which are little more than marketing scams. Thus, while there has never before been so much information available to users regarding their health, there has also never been so much disinformation waiting to send users into tailspins of bad advice, risky behavior, and financial ruin. In addition, in both China and America, questions of new media and health communication hinge on access to the internet, meaning these issues touch upon class, wealth, and debates about how “public” the internet really is. In short, health communication and new media are now interlaced in empowering, alarming, and confusing ways. This track will enable participants to study the interweaving of new media and health communication via specific case studies drawn from American, Chinese, and other international contexts.

TRACK 3: THE DIGITAL JOURNALISM CHALLENGE, led by Dr. Qingwen Dong, University of the Pacific, qdong@pacific.edu (the NCA representative) and Xiaojin Gu, Shenzhen University, gxj@szu.edu.cn (the SZU representative)

A digital revolution is transforming how we think about journalism. “Legacy” outlets such as the *New York Times* and *People’s Daily* face challenges from a vast array of websites and emerging new media platforms. Some of these new outlets offer exciting opportunities for producing “citizen journalism” or “backpack journalism,” thus furthering the cause of social justice. Yet many of them have become the purveyors of lies, conspiracy theories, and calls for violence, meaning the world of journalism is fracturing. For example, in America, the “news” is now produced not only by credible journalists but also by propagandists at Fox, neo-Nazis at the *Daily Stormer*, and a reality-challenged tweeter from the White House. In China, the “news” is now produced not only by the Party’s many outlets, but by separatists in Xinjiang and radicals in Tibet. In India, Myanmar, and Iran, digital outlets have called for riots and stoked ethnic and religious violence. Many observers are therefore calling ours a “post-truth” age. Indeed, all around the world, we are facing a crisis in journalism that is underwritten by a crisis in notions of evidence, trust, and credibility—with the whole process being driven by revolutions in digital media production and distribution. This track will pursue the causes and consequences of this digital revolution in journalism, and will feature case studies of both negative and positive examples.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

NCA participants will arrive in Shenzhen on the evening of Wednesday, June 25. On Thursday, June 26, we will lead a morning excursion to the international headquarters of TenCent, one of the largest media companies in the world, where participants will interact with China’s new social media leaders. That afternoon, NCA will lead a pre-Forum workshop to discuss best practices in international communication, offering participants an opportunity to engage in open conversation regarding the complicated terrain of academic and political life in contemporary China. The Shenzhen Forum will then hold sessions all day on Friday, June 27, and Saturday, June 28, concluding Saturday evening with an NCA-hosted reception. Participants will depart from Shenzhen on Sunday, June 29.

In an act of great generosity, SZU will cover hotel accommodations for the nights of June 25, 26, 27, and 28, as well as all conference registration fees. To support the travel needs of NCA-member graduate students and early-career faculty members, NCA will award 10 \$1,000 travel grants to selected individuals.

APPLICATION INFORMATION

We invite submissions that address any of the “tracks” cited above. Applicants should submit a project proposal of roughly 1,000 words. Submissions can be made in English or Chinese and should indicate the submitter’s home institution. Submissions should be in Microsoft Word or Adobe.pdf format. The deadline for all submissions is February 1, 2018. Applicants will be contacted with results by March 1, 2018. Please note that we assume all applicants are making good-will submissions and will, if accepted, attend the Forum.

Submitters should send their materials to the appropriate “track leader” listed above (with all English language submissions going to the NCA representative for that track and all Chinese language submissions going to the SZU representative for that track).

RESULTING PUBLICATIONS

Following the model used to publish *Imagining China: Rhetorics of Nationalism in the Age of Globalization* (Michigan State University Press, 2017), the track leaders will edit two volumes, with one in English (NCA in charge) and another in Chinese (SZU in charge). These are not conference proceedings, but academic books wherein each chapter is an expanded version of the original conference presentation. The track leaders will solicit chapters from the conference presenters and will handle all subsequent book-publishing tasks working in conjunction with the series editor, Stephen J. Hartnett.



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