

About Journalism – Sur le journalisme – Sobre jornalismo

International scholarly journal

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Call for papers

Editorials and Public Debate

Starting date: **May 15, 2014**

Deadline for submission of article summaries: **July 15, 2014**

Deadline for submission of complete papers: **November 15, 2014**

Editors of this issue:

Gilles Gauthier (Laval University, Canada) Gilles.gauthier@com.ulaval.ca

David Pritchard (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, United States) pritchar@uwm.edu

Constantin Salavastu (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Romania) csalav@uaic.ro

This issue devoted to editorials seeks to examine a genre that is important to journalists, but that draws relatively little attention from scholars of journalism. Historians comb through editorials to reconstruct the "climate of opinion" of about various issues in different eras and socio-political contexts, and discourse analysts use editorials to identify and characterize discursive processes. But journalism scholars have not made editorials the subject of much study. We know relatively little about the characteristics of editorials, the conditions of their production, how they have evolved, and how they contribute to public debate.

Contributions to this issue are invited in any of three broad areas:

1. Characteristics of editorials.

The first area focuses on the characteristics of editorial expression (individual and institutional) and the conditions of the production of editorials. What are the specifics of the editorial as a genre (its style of expression, its methods of argument) compared to other forms of journalistic opinion and other forms of participation in public debate? How do information, analysis, and opinion relate to each other in editorials? Do editorials have a distinctive "rhetoric" compared with other forms of public expression of opinion?

How does a newspaper decide when to take a stand on an issue, and what stand to take? What influences the choices of which issues to address and which institutions or individuals to criticize? How do editorials balance criticism and respect, attack and subtlety? How do editorials connect specific political and ideological stands to appeal to the public interest and/or readers' common sense? Editorials often focus on issues that are complex and polarizing. How do editorial writers go about reconciling the need for clear and thoughtful writing on such issues with the need to work

quickly to express an opinion on behalf of their newspapers?

When an editorial takes a position, the entire newspaper is identified with the viewpoint, which may be one that displeases audience members, advertisers, donors, or public figures. How, and using what discursive strategies, does the newspaper react to potential conflict with such groups?

The roles of editorial writers also merit attention. They are activist intellectuals taking positions on issues of public importance while at the same time trying to be faithful employees of news organizations that often emphasize objectivity or neutrality. How do editorial writers reconcile these potentially conflicting roles? What influences editorial writers? Do they have true autonomy at their newspapers and, if so, how did they obtain it? How do they portray their social role and its legitimacy to journalistic colleagues, to readers, to people active in public debate, and to shareholders of media conglomerates?

What forms does editorial intervention take in different socio-political spaces and different media contexts? How are editorial opinions coordinated with the political/ideological stances news organizations? What effect does globalization of media infrastructures have on local editorializing?

2. The impact of editorials.

Editorials have a clear goal: To express positions on public issues. Their impact is less clear, however. Who reads editorials? And how do readers use editorials?

How do editorials make a difference? Are there certain styles of editorials, or certain sets of circumstances, that enable editorials to be more influential in framing questions of public interest and in getting citizens and policy makers to pay attention to them? What kind of interaction is there between the issues and arguments contained in editorials and the issues and arguments promoted by other participants in public debate? Who influences whom? And at what stage in an issue cycle do newspapers take editorial stands? Do they take a leadership role in the public debate, or do they simply react to issues and argument raised by others?

Who is the intended audience for editorials, and do people in that audience read the editorials intended for them? What are the views of the target audience about what an editorial is, and what it should be? What kinds of expectations does the audience have about this form of journalism that is supposed to tell readers what to think? Does the influence of editorials vary along the lines of different sociopolitical spaces and different political and media cultures?

3. The evolution of editorials.

The editorial is a product of its history. Questions about the characteristics and conditions of production of editorials, or about their influence, can therefore lead to longitudinal as well as comparative researches diachronic.

Newspaper editorials reflect a long tradition of opinion leadership. However, despite their prestige, the quality of their arguments, and their focus on rational public debate, the fact is that editorials are no longer among the most widely read parts of a newspaper. Free daily papers, which are taking

readers from paid daily newspapers in some large cities, don't bother with editorials. Popular tabloids often do without editorials as well. What do these developments mean for editorials?

While newspaper editorials seem to be in decline, the public sphere is alive with other forms of opinion. Social media and the Internet allow just about anyone to express views just about anything. Even in newspapers, commentary and other kinds of subjective content are on the rise, not only on opinion pages but throughout the newspaper.

Opinion is flourishing in other media as well, as the examples of political talk radio and television news shows that feature "debates" that often seem to treat all opinions, whether informed or not, as equally valid. Does this proliferation of opinion weaken the legitimacy of the traditional editorial voice? Does it undermine the authority that newspapers used to have in the public sphere? Have editorials simply become one of many voices in a cacophonous public sphere, a voice that – much like newspapers themselves – is losing prestige? Does the decline of the newspaper editorial also mean the fading away of a certain manner of debating public affairs?

Please indicate your interest in this issue of *About Journalism – Sur le journalisme – Sobre jornalismo* **by sending a two-page summary** of your article proposal to the guest editors before **July 15, 2014**, at the following email addresses:

Gilles.gauthier@com.ulaval.ca

pritchar@uwm.edu

csalav@uaic.ro

Summaries and articles may be submitted in English, French, Spanish or Portuguese.

The deadline for submission of complete articles (between 30,000 and 50,000 characters, including references and footnotes) is **November 15, 2014**. Articles should be submitted electronically at: <http://surlejournalisme.com/rev/index.php/slj/author/submit/1>.

Article submissions should include clear statements of the theoretical foundation of the research as well as the sources of data and analytical methods used. All submissions will be subject to double-blind peer review.

About Journalism – Sur le journalisme – Sobre jornalismo...

... is a space where historically shaped intellectual traditions and interests in journalism studies meet. The field of journalism studies has developed with different epistemologies, approaches and methods that inform national research traditions. The journal fosters the encounter of these divergent approaches via an international editorial board and active solicitation of submissions from international scholars. In a context of globalization and relative homogenization of media systems and journalistic practices, the journal also focuses on the similarities and differences between journalistic and scholarly cultures.

The journal is dedicated to research. A committee of four editors responsible for facilitating exchanges works with editorial boards that include scholars from Europe, Latin America, and North America. The members of the editorial boards are figures widely known for the quality of their research and the international and intercultural orientation of their approaches to journalism studies.

The journal is a springboard for the publication of innovative works in transdisciplinary perspectives; it publishes the research not only of established scholars but also of students. Published online and on paper, the journal's issues are organized around precise themes. Results of graduate theses, field and research notes, and scholarly reports may also be included in any given issue.

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