Introduction to Issue 2(1)

Anders Olof Larsson

University of Oslo

a.o.larsson@media.uio.no

While the concept of *innovation* is certainly a multi-faceted one, narrowing the thematic possibilities down a bit with the addition of a suitable prefix – say, *media* – can be helpful when attempting to define an area of scholarly interest. The trick is to make such a demarcation narrow enough to make thematic sense, but also to keep the boundaries set by such delimitations, descriptions and preferences broad enough to fathom not only what could be considered as core issues of media innovation research, but also those research papers that could perhaps be described as more loosely related to whatever definition of media innovations one might subscribe to. Letting a thousand flowers bloom, as the saying goes, seems like a suitable metaphor for any channel of scholarly output that strives to move beyond too narrow a focus. Continuing the floral metaphor, then, it pleases me to see a rather diverse bouquet featured in the current issue of the *Journal of Media Innovations*, providing insights into a series of different topics.

The first paper in our current issue takes a somewhat different approach to delineating the field or area of research into media innovations. Suggesting a research agenda for, as he labels it, *Communication Innovation Studies* (CIS), author Josef Trappel argues for a specific focus of research undertaken into media innovations. While such normative efforts have been previously featured within the journal (Nyre, 2014), Trappel takes a somewhat different stance. Specifically, he aligns himself with democratic theory and theories detailing the contours and contents of a "democratic public sphere, shaped by the digital age" (p. 9). In so doing, the author largely goes beyond what could be considered as some of the more managerial aspects of innovation study that are sometimes presented in fora such as these. Instead, Trappel expresses an interest in more critical perspectives on media developments and innovations. Indeed, posing suggestions such as "[c]ommunication research rather needs to establish why certain technologies have been developed, by whom and to whose benefit" (p. 11) clearly signals such an ambition. From my own personal research horizon, many of Trappel's suggestions resonate well with what I have perceived as a dearth of critical viewpoints, questions and ideas in the collective output of more general so-called 'new media' research. As such, Trappel's perspectives constitute a welcome addition to the journal, and could be expected to spur some debate regarding what should – and should not, consequently – be placed at very center of our research efforts. Such debate is, of course, welcomed, much like the *Journal of Media Innovations* will continue to welcome contributions that do not necessarily align with Trappel's suggestion that research according to the suggested agenda "[...] is not about the improvement of media or communication industries' efficiency or profitability; it is not about ways and means how to extend audiences and audience ratings; and it is not about how to increase satisfaction of consumers" (p. 9).

While the study of journalism, journalistic practices and organizations are certainly at the core

of what the *Journal of Media Innovations* places its focus on, a rather large amount of work in this vein has been geared towards assessing innovation adoption and subsequent practices in what could perhaps be described as mainstream news media outlets (e.g. Nygren, 2014; Westlund & Krumsvik, 2014). This is picked up by Katherine Champion in her piece in the current issue - *Experimentation and Imitation: The Journey to Elle 360*. In the paper, Champion suggests that "the magazine sector remains considerably less researched than the newspaper sector" (p. 25), adding that a comparably large amount of work has been performed from the domains of critical theory or employing feminist perspectives. As such, issues of innovative media practices need to be scrutinized also for titles such as these, which is exactly what Champion does. Specifically, the paper adopts a case study approach to provide insights into innovation processes undertaken at *Elle UK*, focusing especially on assessing the outcomes of the multi-platform strategy, labeled *Elle 360*, that had been in effect for eighteen months at the time Champion performed her semi-structured interviews with staffers at various levels within the organization. The author finds that despite an official discourse of platform neutrality with regards to where and how *Elle* should be published, the practices of the jour-

nalists, editors and other involved personnel suggest a preference for the printed page over emerging platforms. As such, findings suggesting what could perhaps be labeled as a somewhat hesitant or conservative approach within media organizations are discernable not only within the broader news media (e.g. Mitchelstein and Boczkowski, 2009; Thorén, 2013), but also when looking into work practices related to publishing 'glossies' like *Elle UK*.

Moving from Champion's insights into what must be considered as a rather different journalistic context, the article by Daniel Mutibwa, *Advocate, Copycatting or Simply Pragmatic: Reconceptualising Contemporary 'Marginal' Journalism(s)*, deals with the type of media organizations that could be referred to as alternative or indeed marginal, as is suggested by the author. Specifically, what is presented here is a multi-method study looking into the changes and challenges faced by contemporary marginal media outlets. Mutibwa places his focus on three different publications – *AsiaNet* (founded in 1972, reporting on issues specific to London Gujarati and Hindu communities), *Ummah Post* (founded in the 1980s to serve the London Muslim community) and *Warburg Radio* (an East German radio station founded in 1974, targeting the countercultural scene in the

then communist state). While some of the societal issues and problems that led to the inception of these marginal journalistic outlets still exist today, Mutibwa suggests that "as socio-political, socio-economic and technological circumstances evolved from the 1980s onwards, marginal journalism(s) professionalized: journalists covered broader subject matter partly to reflect the transformation in society and to tap into new markets that diverse, hitherto, unserved communities provided" (p. 45). The author uses insights from all three cases to suggest the term *third sector journalism* as a more suitable concept to understand the contemporary state of marginal journalism(s). Such conceptual development could indeed prove helpful to those interested in journalism as it is practiced beyond tabloids and broadsheets – journalism that is often undertaken by what could perhaps be regarded as semi-professionals, working largely for non-profit type goals.

Providing further perspective on innovative practices within differing journalistic environments, Vittoria Sacco and Diana Bossio presents a study on war reporting in their paper, *Using social media in the news reportage of War & Conflict: Opportunities and Challenges*. Based on interviews with 22 journalists working in major Swiss media companies, Sacco and Bossio focus on as-

sessing the ways in which media professionals such as these make sense of and try to integrate information regarding ongoing conflict, war and sudden events made available on social media platforms with what could be considered as more traditional journalistic practices. Using the events making up the so-called 'Arab Spring' as examples, the authors find that social media appears to have become a commonplace tool for information gathering in relation to events like these – the quick, ambient nature of updates on services like Twitter can certainly serve as suitable when striving to make sense of rapidly developing events (e.g. Hermida, 2010). However, the speed with which these events unfold – and especially with how social media services are consequently updated – certainly create problems as well, especially "in terms of verification of information and contextualization" of news events (p. 59).

Adopting an international, comparative perspective, the contribution authored by Turo Uskali and Heikki Kuutti entitled *Models and Streams of Data Journalism* presents some initial results from the *Data Journalism Work Practices* research project, which covers innovative practices along these lines in newsrooms in three countries: Finland, the United Kingdom and the United States. The authors initially argue that while the concept of *data journalism* has often been described in conjunction with much of the hyperbole surrounding so-called *big data* - i.e. journalism based on such large-scale data sets – this must be seen as a simplification. Employing elite interviews focused on journalists of some renown working within this comparably novel field of the media sector, the authors suggest a more fine-grained approach to describing and defining data journalism. By providing typologies for the organizational structures often associated with such innovative practices, as well as for the practices themselves, the article could serve as a useful starting point for other researchers interested in similar topics of newsroom innovation – or for journalists or managers seeking to understand the drivers behind such changes.

Where the first four articles serve as examples of studies into media innovations in differing, yet distinctly journalistic contexts, the contribution penned by Niamh Ní Bhroin reminds us of the broad spectrum covered by this journal. Specifically, Ní Bhroin's contribution, entitled *Social Media-Innovation: The Case of Indigenous Tweets*, details the concept of *Social Media-Innovation*, which is introduced in order "to analyze innovations in media that aim to address social needs" (p. 90). Mirroring preferences expressed in Trappel's piece as discussed earlier, the focus is placed on minority language use in social media, and Ní Bhroin studies such uses by using the *Indigenous Tweets* web site – www.indigenoustweets.com – as a starting point. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the author provides insights into the uses of this portal by Northern Sámi and Irish language Twitter users, who appear to be largely using the service for different purposes – yet similarly grounded in social needs and needs of language expression. Concluding, Ní Bhroin suggests that "as a Social Media-Innovation, Indigenous Tweets does not constitute a radical departure from the communication capabilities of the Twitter platform" (p. 102). Such a claim seems reminiscent of how the Twitter service initially developed in a largely bottom-up way, when comparably early adopters started to use the @ character to signal direction in tweets, and the pound sign (#) in conjunction with some suitable keyword, to facilitate something akin to threaded discussions (e.g. Honeycutt and Herring, 2009). Indeed, Ní Bhroin shows in her contribution how services like Twitter certainly carry with them the potential for innovations like these – potentials that will hopefully be able to come to fruition also as the Twitter platform becomes increasingly commercialized (Burgess and Bruns, 2012).

The broad field of study that is media innovations certainly lays the ground for multidisciplinary

approaches. In our current issue, such an advance is perhaps most clearly visible in the piece offered by Anders Fagerjord, entitled Humanist evaluation methods in locative media design. Combining perspectives from what could be referred to as a subfield (although some will almost certainly disagree with that position) of the Information Systems discipline, Design Science (e.g. Hevner, March, Park, and Ram, 2004) with perspectives found largely in hermeneutic or humanistic traditions, Fagerjord discusses evaluation methods of IT artifacts commonly found in the user experience field, suggesting such methods tend to focus on the interfaces that users are exposed to rather than the actual content offered. In order to broaden the scope of user evaluation approaches in ways informed by humanistic traditions, Fagerjord thus suggests three methods to be employed – ideally, perhaps, in combination with other, more traditional approaches. First, qualitative interviews with evaluators combined with semantic analysis of the provided answers; Second, within-subject A/B tests with alternative versions of the evaluated artifact; and third, peer review by experienced design scholars. The author shows how these concepts can be applied empirically by providing insights from the Musica Romana web site, a locative service aimed at tourists visiting Rome that allows for streaming

of music relevant to specific locations in the Italian capital. Fagerjord's suggestions, drawing on tools and approaches primarily associated with separate scholarly spheres, show how important and stimulating interdisciplinary approaches can be when aligned properly with one another and the overarching project goals.

Following the full-length articles, the current issue also features two research briefs. Moving back into the realm of studies into media innovations as closely related to journalistic and media organizational practices, the research brief penned by Jens Barland, entitled *Innovation for new revenue streams from digital readers – the case of VG+,* details the seemingly ever-present quest for new revenue streams in the newspaper industry. Specifically, Barland presents what is effectively a pilot study, looking into the last of the suggested *four D's for strategic development of user involvement:* deliberation, donation, distribution and data gathering (Krumsvik, 2013). Drawing on elite interviews within the Norwegian tabloid newspaper Verdens Gang (VG), combined with document analyses from that same media outlet, Barland marries together perspectives of user involvement and revenue efficiency. Through these efforts, the author finds these developments to be primarily incremental in character and undertaken "through a step-by-step

approach with experiment and experience" (p. 129) rather than being radical, sudden – much less revolutionary. Working closely with the studied newspaper, Barland's findings will surely be of relevance to interested researchers and practitioners alike. At the same time, the results presented seem to resonate with a broader theme sketched out previously: namely, for all the emphasis in 'innovation' on the dramatically new – long-lasting change usually arrives at a slower pace - in part because of important internal resistance to innovation processes.

Taking a similarly 'hands-on'-perspective, *Introducing Social Semantic Journalism* by Bahareh Rahmanzadeh Heravi and Jarred McGinnis offers a self-explanatory title if ever there was one. Essentially, this research brief deals with many tasks that must be undertaken by journalists in order to gather, analyze, make sense of and finally publish information based on content made available on various social media services in the event of breaking news. Given the ambient nature of such news items as discussed previously, journalists will arguably find themselves surrounded by potentially newsworthy items. How, then, to approach these possibilities in a more efficient way than is often the case in newsrooms today? Presenting a largely conceptual argument, the authors argue that the set of principles, models and modes introduced as *Social*

Semantic Journalism could serve as a way forward here. Explained in short as a "Semantic-based solution that can formalise and link unstructured UGC [user-generated content, editors comment] to other semantically-enriched data sets in what is termed the 'Linked Data Cloud' for integration, verification and fact-checking purposes, e.g. government datasets or DBpedia/Wikipedia" (p. 134), the authors align themselves with broader discussions regarding the so-called semantic web, often thought of as the 'next step' in the development of web design, functionality and use (e.g. Allen, 2013).

This first issue of the second volume of the Journal of Media Innovations ends with two book reviews. The first of these two is penned by Robert G. Picard and deals with *The Media Welfare State: Nordic Media in the Digital Era* authored by Trine Syvertsen, Gunn Enli, Ole Johan Mjøs and Hallvard Moe. Our second book review, provided by Sabine Baumann, offers a reading of *Television Audiences Across the World: Deconstructing the Ratings Machine*, a title edited by Jérôme Bourdon and Cécile Méadel.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of myself and my colleagues involved in the production of the Journal of Media Innovations to provide a heartfelt thanks to the many people involved in pulling together the current issue. The authors and reviewers involved deserve some special gratitude – thank you for delivering your high-quality texts on time, all the time. In conclusion, I hope to see you in Brussels at the beginning of June for the Fourth Symposium on Media Innovations. Also, interested authors are asked to keep the April 15th deadline for the upcoming second issue of the second volume of the present journal in mind. We look forward to reading your submissions.

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