

Welcome and Introduction to the Inaugural Issue

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On behalf of our authors, reviewers, editorial board, editorial team, and supporting institutions – we warmly welcome you to the inaugural issue of *The Journal of Media Innovations*.

Why a new Journal? Why Open Access?

In an age of information abundance – if not of information floods that threaten to drown millions (Romiszowski, 1990: 330) – the notion of beginning a new, academic journal requires some explanation and justification. To begin with, the field of media innovations – better, the collocation of diverse research fields and academic disciplines, along with the perspectives and insights offered by professionals and practitioners in media industries – is relatively young. To be sure, there is a rapidly growing body of relevant literature and empirical studies—much of which is helpfully organized and surveyed in especially our first four articles (by Axel Bruns; Leyla Dogruel; Valérie-Anne Bleyen, Sven Lindmark, Heritiana Ranaivoson, and Pieter Ballon; and Iris Jennes, Jo Pierson, and Wendy Van den Broeck). At the same time, however, the academic contributions that seek to explain new invention or innovation processes in the media and communication industries remain largely scattered and contained within print-based publication venues. But by definition, media innovation is about rapid and sometimes disruptive change. Given the usual one- to two-year lag between acceptance of an article in a first-rank journal and its appearance in print – unfortunately, much in such an article risks becoming outdated before its readers will see it. Finally, to state the obvious, print journals are often quite expensive. There are some good reasons for this, along with other, less salutary reasons.

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However all of that may be – the upshot is that such expense often presents an insurmountable barrier to access and diffusion of current and valuable research and scholarship to a wider audience both inside and outside academic circles.

To overcome these various deficits we seek to establish *The Journal of Media Innovations* as a premier venue for current research and documentation of contemporary innovations and development practices within the media industry. First-rate quality, of course, demands standard practices of double-blind reviewing from relevant experts, editorial gatekeeping, and thereby the opportunity for authors to improve (often substantially) on their first submissions. Of course, we follow these standard practices: but as an online-only publication, the *Journal* provides a much quicker publication timeframe – in the case of this inaugural issue, less than six months from first submission to publication. Finally, by providing current research through an Open Access Journal, these best results are immediately and freely available to all who have the requisite Internet access.

Of course, it is no little matter to undertake such a venture. It is especially worrisome for a new editor and editorial team: what sort of quality can we expect or reasonably hope for – who would submit first-rank work to an absolutely new journal, one that has no track record, or even (so far) an ISSN number?

Most happily, these worries did not materialize. On the contrary, for this inaugural issue, we received many more submissions of publication quality than would comfortably fit in a single issue. A select set of these will appear in our second issue – one that will focus on innovations in the newsroom. More specifically, the five articles that we selected for our first issue directly contribute to its defining theme– namely, of helping to map out a comprehensive account of what “media innovations” may mean as both a research domain in the academic field, as well as a field of practice in the media industries, including ICT industries and design. At the risk of immodesty, we believe the results are clear: both individually and together, these articles – complemented with a Research Brief and our Book Review section – offer nothing less than first-rate research, scholarship, insight, and essential critique. Indeed, we believe it fair to say that the research and scholarship presented here comfortably stands on a par with the best quality publications in the field.

Overview of the inaugural issue

This first issue offers both more comprehensive and more fine-grained examinations of how media innovations can be defined, as grounded both in historical overviews of relevant literatures and critical evaluations of both strengths and limits of extant understandings and approaches. The upshot – in both individual articles and more collectively – are largely complementary accounts of how media innovations have been, could be and should be addressed as a topic for critical and exploratory research that includes academic, industry, and practitioner perspectives. This includes specific attention to *design* for

innovation, on both theoretical and utterly concrete levels, in Lars Nyre's article and in Jan Bierhoff and Sander Kruitwagen's Research Brief on the "Reading Radar." This inaugural issue thus demarcates the foundations of media innovations as a field, foregrounding many of its important components and thematic foci, and thereby points to a range of important challenges to innovation on both theoretical and practical levels.

We hope that these coherent overviews of the field's foundations, literatures, current research trajectories, and example challenges will fuel and inspire further research. Most ambitiously, we hope the *Journal* will serve all interested communities of researchers and practitioners as a commonly venue, one that will contribute to a shared vocabulary and conceptual taxonomy, as these are essential for overcoming the otherwise intractable barriers between academic disciplines and media industries.

Articles

We begin with Axel Bruns' "Media Innovations, User Innovations, Societal Innovations." This article deftly introduces both our Inaugural issue as well as *The Journal of Media Innovations* more broadly. To begin with, Bruns offers here a comprehensive overview of what "media innovations" might mean from a broad perspective – one informed by Bruns' signature emphasis on "ordinary users as active content creators and media innovators," an emphasis that requires rather specific and detailed attention to the "everyday processes of media and societal change." At the same time, to invoke ordinary users means to lift up persons as further engaged in and shaped by larger societal transformations as well: we cannot, in other words, somehow isolate "users" as "just" consumers, as might be done, for example, in some older approaches to media innovations and technology design. This point, in fact, will be further developed as a shared thread through both following articles and our Research Brief, as we will see.

Bruns further draws on both media ecology and analyses of mediatisation of society (e.g., Hjarvard 2008). This broad perspective makes clear that "media innovation" almost always entails interwoven and interdependent innovation in both media *technologies* and media *practices*. This introduces a second thread running through our inaugural issue: as we will see especially in the following articles by Valérie Bleyen et al, Leyla Dogruel, and, in an especially concrete way, in the *Research Brief* by Jan Bierhoff and Sander Kruitwagen: for better and for worse, established media practices – including familiar patterns of both media production (e.g., as in journalism) and media use, consumption, and "prosumption" (Bruns) – often serve as a brake on innovation in these domains vis-à-vis innovation in media technologies and ICTs more broadly.

Finally, Bruns raises a primary ethical and political concern – namely, attention to *commodification* as perhaps inextricably interwoven with our emphases on user interaction and content creation online, given that these online

venues, technologies, affordances, etc., are almost always corporately owned and controlled spaces, designed, of course, to generate profit. In these environments, as Bruns trenchantly notes, "... amateur creative works are repositioned as commercially exploitable, personal thoughts as publicly shareable, and private information as a tradable commodity." Bruns thus foregrounds a concern with commodification – one that is ultimately a *normative* one as it forces us to consider such basic questions as the *fairness* of the so-called free labor of amateur content producers (e.g., who offer up their photos on their favorite social networking site, a carefully crafted video on YouTube, etc.) as both the product of their labor as well as the data these products help generate in terms of user patterns, advertising potentials, etc. are the source of profit for the owners of these venues. Even more fundamentally, as others have pointed across the range of Internet Studies, such commodification frequently entails a *self-commodification*, a presentation of the self as, in Bruns' term, "a tradable commodity" (cf. Livingstone 2011, Baym 2011, Fuchs and Dyer-Witherford 2012). As Bruns suggests, such self-commodification immediately puts at risk our privacy – where privacy, moreover, is part and parcel of core beliefs in human autonomy and dignity that ground modern liberal-democratic states (cf. Ess, in press). More specifically, as Iris Jennes, Jo Pierson, and Wendy Van den Broeck take up these themes below, they focus on user empowerment (as a specific dimension of autonomy) and its tensions with audience commodification as a core component of media industry. The results, as we will see, are both enlightening and perhaps somewhat unexpected.

For our purposes, finally, this attention to commodification articulates in a one concrete way a critical aspect of media innovation studies as undertaken here: such studies – and, as we will see, correlative practices, e.g., in design – must ultimately take on board *normative* dimensions, such as the ethical and political concerns raised here in conjunction with commodification.

Bruns' broad overview leads naturally to our next article, "A Typology of Media Innovations: Insights from an Exploratory Study." Here, Valérie-Anne Bleyen and her co-authors Sven Lindmark, Heritiana Ranaivoson, and Pieter Ballon, begin by pointing out that "media innovation" is – as we would expect from a relatively young field – "poorly defined and not well understood." Bleyen et al first offer an extensive and, especially for those new to the field, very helpful review of how media innovation is taken up in media economics and media management. Their examination of how far common understandings of innovation may be applicable within the media industries brings forward a number of important conceptual deficits – and thereby provides the springboard for their developing their own conceptualization of media innovation. Specifically, they offer a typology of media innovation that provide a more fine-grained map of and guide to innovation – one that nicely complements Bruns' broader overview and perspective; at the same time, we will see below that Leyla Dogruel likewise offers a carefully articulate definition of innovation, one that largely reinforces and complements both Bruns and Bleyen et al. The

conceptualization developed here by Bleyen et al, finally, is interrogated through a series of interviews with media professionals and practitioners, thereby giving it a very strong foundation in everyday practices and aims of media industries.

Especially these interviews expand upon and richly illustrate the thread introduced by Bruns – namely, that innovation within media industries is comparatively less developed and, to no small degree, driven by innovation in the ICT industries. We will see this point reiterated by Jennes et al, and then made most concretely in our *Research Brief*, as it describes a “Reader Radar” as a specific example journalistic media design: most simply, “old habits die hard” (Jennes et al) with regard to our media consumption and production – a point that may be considered an inhibitor of innovation as such, but may also work to sustain important continuities with earlier practices, traditions, and norms. In all events, Bleyen et al end with a call for the development of better measures of innovation – in part as a better understanding of media innovation is needed for the development and refinement of national and international policies aimed at fostering innovation.

In “What is so special about media innovations? A characterization of the field,” Leyla Dogruel first complements the literatures reviewed by Bleyen et al – taking us, in fact, back to the work of Schumpeter (1934) as foundational for the field(s) of media innovations. Dogruel shares with Bleyen et al a focus on media economics – but further draws on media management and media history. She builds on this work to develop a list of eight characteristics of media innovations as such – first of all, with the aim of helping to more sharply define “media innovation” as distinct from innovation in related industries and domains; thereby, her article aims at nothing less than justifying “the necessity to establish a distinct field of research on media innovation.” Moreover, Dogruel reinforces the sense of media innovation as referring to both products and processes – where the latter, as Bruns’ overview emphasized, are interwoven with larger societal processes as well: hence, as Dogruel makes clear, specific media organizations and institutions will have less control over these processes as they might like (or need).

The upshot is a fine-grained account of what characterizes and demarcates media innovations – and thus how future research on media innovation may most fruitfully proceed. Along the way, Dogruel provides a particular insight into why innovation in the media industries may be viewed as less aggressive in comparison, say, with ICT industries: simply put, there is less risk to companies and investors in producing media content that draws on previous successes as, for example, movies based on strongly successful books (e.g., Harry Potter) or even videogames (*Tomb Raider*).

Dogruel further points out that innovation processes are best understood not as somehow linear, but rather as demanding “feedback and recursive moments” – a point concretely illustrated in both the following article by Lars Nyre and Jan Bierhoff and Sander Kruitwagen’s *Research Brief*. At the same time, Dogruel

highlights a key point introduced by Bruns: media innovations is often crucially dependent on the active involvement and interaction with users.

And, as noted above, Dogruel further identifies multiple ways in which media innovations (perhaps inevitably) depend on older media. Dogruel reinforces Bruns' point as she notes that research in media innovations thus "has to apply a holistic perspective when studying media innovations and has to take into account their consequences with respect to changes in the existing media landscape." In particular, she notes that this "includes the study of intermedia effects between online and print journalism." This study would include our Research Brief, for example; we will further explore these "intermedia effects" in our second issue, as focused on innovation and journalism.

In their "User Empowerment and Audience Commodification in a Commercial Television Context," Iris Jennes, Jo Pierson, and Wendy Van den Broeck first review the multiple and wildly ambiguous uses of 'empowerment,' in order to parse out a more precise understanding of 'audience empowerment' – one that highlights "the active roles of media and television users," specifically as they generate social difference shaped in part by the affordances of particular technologies. Jennes et al then contrast such empowerment with both classic and contemporary analyses of the audience as commodity, drawing especially on the political economy tradition represented by Dallas Smythe (1977) and Christian Fuchs (2012). Such commodification, as they put it, "leaves little room for user agency"; hence they develop a more inclusive approach that conjoins the two together in a research focus aimed at uncovering linkages between micro-level user behavior and meso-level practices and interests of media industries. This framework leads to their central, perhaps somewhat counterintuitive finding that both increasing audience autonomy and commodification are "interacting processes that *support* innovation within the commercial television industry" (emphasis added, CE).

Jennes and her colleagues establish this finding through a series of expert interviews with professionals working within the Flemish commercial television industry. Their interviews make sharply clear the intensely competitive pressures driving media industries. This competition first of all provides a specific example of the larger point made by several of our contributors: such competition results in the effort among commercial broadcasters to *restrain* innovations by other industry actors (such as network providers), as such innovations would threaten their current business model, (relative) control over users – and thus their current income. In this example, specifically, we see a vested industry interest directly opposed to greater user agency or empowerment.

On the other hand, Jennes and her co-authors further uncover efforts by commercial broadcasters to enhance their commodification of audiences by way of strategies resting on *increasing* audience empowerment through so-called "Second Screen" devices such as smart phones and tablets used in conjunction with television viewing. These and additional examples then make their larger case that user empowerment and audience commodification are dynamically

interlinked processes that can either hinder or foster innovation in media industries.

In his “Media design method: Combining media studies with design science to make new media,” Lars Nyre enjoins media researchers to *construct* our own media. On the one hand, this call for us, in my terms, to get our hands dirty with design processes and the work of building real prototypes – in Nyre’s terms, to “experiment *directly* with the materiality of new media” (emphasis in the original). Building on a helpful overview of relevant design history and literatures, Nyre proposes a six-step design method as defined by articulated notions of both ‘design’ and ‘innovation.’ ‘Design’ in this instance draws heavily on traditions within information science. At the same time, Nyre draws freely on other literatures throughout his article, including the strongly humanistic literatures of hermeneutics and phenomenology, for example. Nyre thus contributes in this way to our larger thematic effort to map out what innovation may mean vis-à-vis media and media industries. In particular, this project is driven by nothing less than a strongly *normative* insistence that such media design should be driven by how the resulting prototypes and products contribute to an enhanced communicative ability squarely oriented towards “the public interest of the many,” a communicative interest defined specifically in terms of Habermas’s conception of the public sphere ([1962] 1990).

Nyre begins by distinguishing between innovation and design, offering a number of important empirical examples to help illustrate and support his definitions – examples drawn from both media industries such as journalism and the design fields of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI). His account of the method itself offers especially newcomers to design something of a mini-handbook and guide – one that is both well-anchored in the relevant literatures and richly illustrated with examples drawn from his own extensive experience.

Nyre’s proposed method concretely exemplifies the point we’ve seen previously – namely, that design for innovation is an open-ended, recursive, and thereby expensive and difficult process to manage. At the same time, Nyre reiterates for us what has thus emerged as a central thematic of this issue – that innovation is often restrained by institutional factors, including (perfectly understandable) interests in retaining familiar practices and one’s professional standing (not to mention, accustomed incomes). This point enjoys a name – Brian Winston’s “law of suppression of radical potential” (1988). This repression, moreover, is one that academics and other stakeholders can likewise contribute to.

For better and for worse, we will see this law of repression at work in a last way in the next section.

Research Brief

This is, in effect, an innovation in our journal of media innovations - namely, an article that is somewhere between a shorter, more industry-oriented article and a more traditional academic research article of the sort offered in the previous section. As we have already seen, the Research Brief strongly complements several of our articles, beginning with Lars Nyre's account of design for innovation. Specifically, Jan Bierhoff and Sander Kruitwagen carefully document how the innovative possibilities of new media technologies both build on and challenge traditional journalistic assumptions and practices – those of both the producers and distributors of journalistic content and their readers / consumers / users. In this direction, the brief functions as a case-study that documents in an empirical way the large theme introduced from the outset – namely, that media innovation entails an inextricable connection between, on the one hand, media industries and media technologies, especially as these are often driven by innovation in the ICT industries; and, on the other hand, media practices of media consumers (including the more active “prosumers” foregrounded by Bruns). This conjunction further entails an intractable tension between the innovation push for the new vis-à-vis established practices and habits that, as we have seen, “die hard” – both among the journalists and their production and distribution practices, on the one hand, and their audiences, on the other hand.

Arguably, this tension is both inevitable and salutary: the continuities between older media and newer media are likely essential – as the examples offered by Dogruel suggest, not simply for the sake of reducing financial risk, but, still more fundamentally, for making new media accessible in the first place to entire generations whose media literacies and practices have been shaped in their foundations by earlier media. At the same time, however, in this case, this tension resulted yet again in a brake on media innovation - but not from the standpoint of test users and thereby potential customers who reacted in largely very positive ways to the innovations introduced in the Reading Radar. Rather, the partner company co-sponsoring the research project ultimately decided that the innovations required for journalists and their editorial team to produce such Reading Radars “ would be too complicated ... to work with it on a permanent basis. This shows that vested media companies have trouble integrating a service based on principles which do not match their existing production routines.” Again, this reinforces Dogruel's observations regarding industries' (understandable) interest in reducing financial risk.

Finally, readers will want to turn to the Book Review section, beginning with its introduction by the Book Review Editor, Arne Krumsvik.

In sum – and as hoped – we trust that readers who delve into this first issue will emerge first of all with a more comprehensive, fine-grained, and coherent

overview of much of the literatures, basic issues, and industry practices that constitute the field of media innovations. These basic issues include central tensions between innovations that foster user empowerment – and, perhaps, more broadly, human autonomy and our shared public lives as essentially made up of communicative practices now inextricably interdependent upon media technologies; and, on the other hand, the various pressures on media industries that can both constrain and enhance such innovations. To say it another way: for all of our enthusiasm for innovation – beware of Winston’s law of “suppression of radical potential” (1988).

This overview further makes clear the necessity for more comprehensive, holistic (Bruns), and intermedia (Dogruel) approaches in our methodologies, research, and practices. This should include design practices – in Nyre’s example, as coupled with hermeneutics, phenomenology, and explicitly *normative* notions of the public good in order to more accurately document and thus understand the often radically extensive diverse factors and considerations that play into media innovations. Moreover, these broader approaches must take on board as fully as possible the perspectives, insights, and practices of media professionals and practitioners, as exemplified here in research articles by Bleyen et al, Jennes et al, and Nyre, as well as in the Research Brief by Bierhoff and Kruitwagen.

To be sure, to cross the disciplinary divides – unfortunately often accurately conceptualized as disciplinary silos – with the academy, much less the still larger boundaries that usually hold between the academy and industry, is no small task. But as we believe this inaugural issue makes clear, it is only through such holistic boundary crossings that media innovations will be best researched and critically understood. These demanding parameters for our research are required not only for the sake of academic and scientific (*videnskapelig*) quality and to more effectively address industry interests in fostering innovation: still more broadly, as Bleyen et al point out, the resulting research findings and insights are essential for developing sound policy for media innovation at national and international levels. But of even greater, if not ultimate importance: such boundary crossing is essential if media innovation and innovation research are to be shaped not simply by academic and industry interests – but finally by nothing less than the *normative* values and goals defined by our shared humanistic interests in utilizing new technologies to foster both public goods and individual autonomy.

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dialogues and collaborations needed to foster media innovation development and research faced no small number of well-known and daunting challenges. Their success in doing so laid the foundations for our new *Journal*. A thousand thanks, and a thousand thanks more!

We are equally grateful for the many authors who offered candidate contributions to this first issue – and for the many more colleagues around the globe who consistently provided critical but supportive reviews. Many of these reviewers were drawn from our Editorial Board, whose broader support has likewise been essential.

Among these, Terje Colbjørnsen deserves particular thanks for his work not only as a reviewer, but also as a colleague whose familiarity with media industries and the literatures of media innovations proved essential to our development of the *Research Brief* section of the *Journal*. Especially as he helpfully raised a number of critical questions in the course of our deliberations, Terje contributed to our articulation of the functions and reviewing criteria for this new section. In doing so, he helped in a major way to make this section as a distinctive and still integral component of the *Journal*, one that sustains and contributes to its overall quality and substance.

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Profound thanks likewise goes to our layout editor, Anders Fagerjord. His own research and scholarly contributions to the field of media innovations have helped shape the intellectual foundations of the *Journal*. And as layout editor, Anders has brought an exceptionally high level of professionalism, expertise, and commitment to the *Journal* that will be immediately obvious to its readers.

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