Editorial: Introduction to Communities, Publics, and Communication

Kelly Bacon

McMaster University

Editorial: Introduction to Communities, Publics, and Communication

Kelly Bacon

Abstract

The editorial for the 2011 McMaster Journal of Communication issue on communities, publics and communication. The editorial presents the five articles contained in the issue ("Redefining Gatekeeping Theory for a Digital Generation." Lianne Chin-Fook and Heather Simmonds*; "'That Worries Me': Affective and Rhetorical Framing in News Programming of The O'Reilly Factor"*, Joey Brooke Jakob; *"Public sphere, alternative media and social involvement in Belarus: The role of an individual in history"*, Nataliya Lesnikova; *"The Politics of Transparency"*, Robyn Lew; *"Creating Cellular Vision: Cell Phone Photography and the (Shifting) Photographic Eye"*, Robert Vitulano) and acknowledges the help of the editorial committee members, Alyssa Lai and Christine Larabie; as well as that of faculty editor, Dr. Alex Sévigny.

Keywords: Media, Communities, Publics, Communication

The McMaster Journal of Communication
2011
Volume 8 ISSN 1710-257X

Editorial: Introduction to Communities, Publics, and Communication

Kelly Bacon
McMaster University

Welcome to the 8th issue of the McMaster Journal of Communication. This issue features the theme of "Communities, Publics, and Communication." One of the aims of this volume is to broaden the dialogue surrounding the complicated and often challenging relationship of an organization or an individual with its publics. In the broadest terms, a public is a group of people with whom an organization has built a relationship and a reputation. In traditional public relations theory, this process is ideally symmetrical, transparent and built upon trust. Social media has introduced a new set of parameters on how organizations, individuals, publics and communities interact. We invited submissions that examined the relationships between communities, publics and communication with organizations and individuals, from either a traditional media or social media perspective (or both combined).

The following five essays were selected for their unique reflections on this year's theme, and the wide breath of communication theories and analyses.

Our issue begins with the co-authored article, "Redefining Gatekeeping Theory for a Digital Generation." Lianne Chin-Fook and Heather Simmonds outline how the flow of information online is not longer unidirectional, where they are transmitted from newsmakers or institutions to everyday individuals. As such, they propose that the flow of information has become complicated by the emergence of social media technology such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The flow of information is now multidirectional –everyday individuals have as much opportunity to define what is considered "newsworthy" as media professionals and experts.

In, "'That Worries Me': Affective and Rhetorical Framing in News Programming of *The O'Reilly Factor*", Joey Brooke Jakob examines an interview between Bill O'Reilly and Donald Rumsfeld on *The O'Reilly Factor* to illustrate how affective rhetoric is used to reinforce the value of coercive interrogation. Drawing on a methodology of affective and rhetorical framing, the language used during the interview – both verbal and bodily – is analyzed for goals, techniques, and effectiveness.

Nataliya Lesnikova's "Public sphere, alternative media and social involvement in Belarus: The role of an individual in history" discusses the utmost importance of the formation and the active development of what Jürgen Habermas refers to as "the public sphere" in totalitarian societies. Lesnikova sets out to prove that active public participation in the political process is a necessary element of initializing a sociopolitical reform within totalitarian societies, as the creation of radical media plays a vital role in promoting media literacy and acting as a catalyst to forming social identities among people.

In "The Politics of Transparency", Robyn Lew examines society's increasing obsession with transparency through the medium of photography and WikiLeaks. She suggests that Julian Assange's fixation on exposure as a means to reveal the truth about government systems is reflective of the processes of an ideology of publicity that also works in a society governed through processes of the spectacle. Robyn also investigates the ways in which the increased desire for transparency has accorded itself with the right to visibility, which is ultimately linked to a desire for truth.

In our final piece, "Creating Cellular Vision: Cell Phone Photography and the (Shifting) Photographic Eye", Robert Vitulano addresses the relatively new phenomenon of camera phone technology, focusing on the (re)construction of the shifting photographic vision, practice and gaze that this technology has created. He examines the rearticulation of photography in terms of its temporality as the primary (photographic) concern by placing camera phones in parallel to their analog counterpoints, and considers how camera phone practices involve fervent social sharing and contemplates whether these images create a new form of memory.