

questions
de communication

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21 | 2012

10 ans déjà, 10 questions de communication

10 Years on – and 10 Questions for the Future

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Translator: Inist



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/questionsdecommunication/8887>

DOI: 10.4000/questionsdecommunication.8887

ISSN: 2259-8901

Publisher

Presses universitaires de Lorraine

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 September 2012

ISBN: 978-2-8143-0120-7

ISSN: 1633-5961

Electronic reference

Béatrice Fleury and Jacques Walter, « 10 Years on – and 10 Questions for the Future », *Questions de communication* [Online], 21 | 2012, Online since 01 February 2014, connection on 01 May 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/questionsdecommunication/8887> ; DOI : 10.4000/questionsdecommunication.8887

This text was automatically generated on 1 May 2019.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This English translation has not been published in printed form/Cette traduction anglaise n'a pas été publiée sous forme imprimée.

*For the Editorial Committee,
Béatrice Fleury and Jacques Walter*

- 1 Ten years of existence is certainly worth celebrating but, more importantly, it's a time to look back at some of the milestones we've encountered along the way, and to explain the choices we've made for this anniversary edition. But first of all, *Questions de communication* would never have carved out a significant role in the landscape of information and communication studies, and in the humanities and social sciences more generally, without the energy and encouragement of a whole community, whether locally – from the members of the editorial board, the partner universities and the Lorraine regional authority – or nationally and even internationally, from a scientific community of researchers in different disciplines, including those involved in sister publications.

2002: Year 1 in a collaborative venture

- 2 2002: *Questions de communication* comes into existence thanks to the enthusiasm of a small team of researchers in the information and communication sciences at two nearby universities (Metz and Nancy 2), who now work within a single laboratory – the Centre for mediation studies – at the University of Lorraine and who at the time were already looking to develop relationships based on productive collaboration. Rejecting the

temptations of self-publication in favour of promoting a high-quality journal that would champion a particular conception of research in their field, the team worked for a year to develop its editorial programme and, as a tribute rather than a mark of allegiance, chose a title echoing Pierre Bourdieu's *Questions de sociologie*. The team was backed by an advisory committee of researchers working for French universities and a network of correspondents abroad.

- 3 And so to the first issue – of just 142 pages! – which quite naturally followed the editorial line of a journal intended for a broad readership: a special feature – with a contemporary focus on “Media and conflict in the former Yugoslavia: debates, theories and methods”; an “Exchanges” section, which in the first issue comprised just one text compiled from a debate organised at the Inathèque de France on “Justice, images and memory”; notes from research on the World Wide Web at the local scale [*Le Net au local*] and 13 reading notes. What was behind these choices? We wanted to give a voice both to collective scientific advances in a particular area (in the special feature) and to researchers focusing on theoretical and/or methodological concerns (in the research notes). We also wanted to renew the tradition of debate or controversy through the “Exchanges” which would deliberately eschew the polemical approach to contrast with the self-indulgent polemics of high-profile media intellectuals. Finally, we felt it was important to disseminate knowledge by increasing the numbers of reading notes from contributors. Although we sometimes wondered whether we had really made the best choice for the journal's structure, we never went back on it because, from our point of view, it has been the best way of sustaining a chorus of scientific voices, thanks to the diversity of all those who have contributed to this publishing adventure and to the profiles of the different sections.
- 4 Over ten years and twenty issues, *Questions de communication* has grown in volume (350 to 450 pages in each issue), with six or seven articles in each special feature, four or five contributions to the Research Notes and Exchanges sections, and thirty to fifty Reading Notes. Also, we decided early on to be flexible over the length of contributions, because we believe, and maintain, that research needs space as well as time. The articles we publish may be up to 50000 signs in length, and the reading notes are not just glorified blurbs: researchers can expand on their thinking and readers have six months to put their discoveries to good use. They can also keep up with the “Exchanges” from one issue to the next as the author of the initial article replies to all those taking part. In short, our publication has found its bearings and accumulated experience. In doing so, it has been able to count on a faithful group of researchers – who we need not name here – and on a steady influx of new contributors, young and old and experienced or not. In ten years, over 500 contributors and nearly 200 experts have helped *Questions de communication* to succeed: from the CNRS and other research organisations, the main French universities and many others elsewhere (Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Costa Rica, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Morocco, the Netherlands, Spain, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, the United Kingdom and the United States have all been represented in our pages), all these researchers have enabled *Questions de communication* to rise to the challenges of time and the demand for quality, with every contribution anonymously peer-reviewed by two referees external to the editorial committee.

The scientific journal, a vital link in the chain of knowledge?

- 5 While the most widely-recognised researchers in the field of information and communication have contributed articles to *Questions de communication*, younger researchers have also brought advances in thinking on a wide variety of topics ranging from culture to experimental methods, from disciplinary boundaries to health and from social crises to the ICTs. All have brought legitimacy and recognition to our field, by addressing it not only from the angle of the discipline to which the members of the editorial committee belong (the information and communication sciences), but also from the point of view of related disciplines, such as anthropology, aesthetics, ethnology, history, linguistics, literature, management sciences, philosophy, psychology, political science or sociology.
- 6 It is undeniable that a scientific journal has an important role in giving visibility to ongoing studies on topics that are central to issues of contemporary or recurrent concern. As François Heinderyckx, Margaux Hardy and Marc Vanholsbeeck write in the special feature that follows, “A scientific journal offers a specific framework for learned conversation and a space for developing, consolidating and legitimising a discipline”. An observation that prompts a question from *Questions de communication* on its own account, as it looks to the future: is it possible to dispense with the editorial column of a journal that builds links between theoretical and methodological concerns and scientific discussions? Now that *Questions de communication* is available on line through revues.org, the editorial team wishes to reassert its aims and the journal’s founding values and ambitions: to avoid complacency and the easy solution of counting only on high-profile by-lines to secure recognition; to raise debates on the most topical issues without courting controversy; to bring state-of-the-art knowledge to the widest possible readership by sharing ongoing studies; to encourage discussions across borders, both geographical and disciplinary; to keep alert to the best of contemporary research; to avoid sectarianism in any form by opening our pages to all the different currents of thought in the social sciences and humanities. In short, openness of mind – and this is what you will find in the issue you are now reading.

2012: Going international

- 7 Producing an anniversary issue was an obvious choice, but we then had two options: we could review the past, or we could look to the future. In opting for the latter, the idea was also to bring out fundamental trends and objects in our field to consider how they may be changing. With one priority: the international dimension – not so much because it is in the air, but because our journal’s birthplace, the Lorraine region, straddles two different countries. So for this issue, all the contributors, except one who works in tandem with an American colleague, are from abroad, although several are French-speakers and recognised for their work in France. Far be it from us to claim we have covered all the diversity and complexity of the field, but we wanted, nevertheless, to connect developments in the last ten years with what might emerge in the decade(s) to come. We’ve done so through a series of 10 questions – as a glance at the article titles will show

– that bring in not only topics and objects of previous, and renewed, enquiry, but also others less frequently addressed – at least for the moment.

- 8 Among the topics that have seen renewed interest in recent years are those that relate to Aristotelian rhetoric, which, as Emmanuelle Danblon explains, is more than ever relevant to understanding public debates (“Does Aristotle still have something to tell us in the 21st century?”). The same is true, up to a point, for Critical Theory, which, as Olivier Voirol shows in his historical analysis, reveals an extraordinary capacity for renewal among the researchers who embody it (“Does Critical Theory have a future?”). Another example is media narrative, a concept developed some twenty years ago by the Media Narratives Observatory at Louvain-la-Neuve: here, Marc Lits unfolds the constants and the new directions of the theory in a time of rapid change in the media, especially as new technologies come into use (“What does the future hold for media narrative?”).
- 9 But the future in question is addressed here not as an object of fascination, but in terms that link it fundamentally to a particular research tradition. Modernity is addressed, of course, but in terms of how it leads us to consider its effects on, and appropriation by, different groups. Daniel Peraya, for example, investigates how private and professional factors, in particular, percolate into the use of ICTs (“Impacts of technology on knowledge production and dissemination”), while Nicolas Ducheneaut and Nicolas Yee, describing a survey among on-line video gamers, show the persistence of certain personality traits in the appropriation of gaming behaviour (“On-line video games as a mirror of cybernaut personalities”). Peter Dahlgren’s paper details the ambivalent substrate of the Web’s democratic role, explaining why researchers need to diversify their analytical frameworks (“Political involvement through the Web: promises and fallacies”). In doing so, he concurs in part with Magda Fusaro’s demonstration of the way information and communication technologies can perpetuate social divisions (“ICTs as a test of communication: towards new forms of digital exclusion?”).
- 10 The transformations we are seeing clearly intersect with social and technical conditions, but in particular, they are leading researchers to consider what they observe as inherently complex phenomena. Martin W. Bauer, for example, in his discussion of paradigm shifts in scientific communication, explains that scientific communication today means telling people about innovations, but in a way that makes them perceive the benefits as private individuals (“A paradigm shift in scientific communication: towards a critical audience for commercialised science?”). Although the community at large is central to the innovations presented, they have to demonstrate that they are capable of singularity to ensure recognition of their value. Alec Hargreaves and Tristan Mattelart, in their article describing an international study on media reception in a northern Mediterranean context, draw the same conclusions as they report on the differences between countries and immigrant groups (“Media and migration in the Mediterranean Basin: is knowledge becoming internationalised?”). These two researchers reveal a hiatus between political projects and actual usage, in both traditional and modern media.
- 11 Finally, in a different vein but related nonetheless to our 10-year anniversary, François Heinderyckx, Margaux Hardy and Marc Vanholsbeeck, in reviewing the position of information and communication journals, look into the question of change through the recent turmoil in scientific publishing (“Scientific journals on information and communication: an age of change?”). In two of the aspects they discuss, interdisciplinarity and the scientific vernacular, it is clear that the issues are by no means resolved. Where will we – the French-language journals in the field – be in 10 years’ time?

We hope to discuss this with our readers in 2022 – but until then, we will be glad to publish your contributions and we hope you will continue to read this journal, and pass it on to others. In print or online through revues.org, what is important is the service we want to keep providing to all those who share our belief that communication is more about asking questions than giving answers to the many kinds of problems that contemporary societies around the world have to deal with.

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