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## **Introduction: Mobile Media Research — State of the Art**

Gerard Goggin and Larissa Hjorth

### **Mobilizing the Medium**

It is commonplace to remark on the extraordinary development and diffusion of the mobile phone and associated technologies. From its commercial introduction in the last 1970s and early 1980s, mobile phone subscriptions will have exceeded seven billion at the time of publishing this book. While its global impact is undeniable, in each location we see how the mobile phone shapes, and is shaped by, the everyday. In other words, as global as the mobile phone, it is also local upon every level. Far from even in its uptake, the mobile phone reflects and amplifies existing inequalities while also providing new avenues for expression and agency. Like many cultural goods, its access, use, and significance is conditioned by social stratification, disparity of wealth and income, and entrenched dynamics of inequality. Yet mobiles have found their way into the hands, pockets, purses, bags, clothes, bags, and lives of a wide range of societies, ages, cultures, and places.

From a mere extension of the landline telephone into a device converging social and locative media, mobile media has grown into an important and unavoidable part of contemporary culture practice. In locations like China and Japan, the mobile phone has been the dominant, if not for many, the only, context for accessing the online. And in the uneven evolution to smartphones, mobile media have brought a series of new questions to disciplines such as Internet, games, cultural and media studies. Whether as an artifact, a set of practices across material and immaterial forms of personalization, or as a researcher's tool, mobile media has been an active

participant in the dismantling of many boundaries such as public and private, work and leisure, here and there, online and offline, embodied and disembodied.

Despite its initially slow start, rich scholarship has blossomed, investigating the mobile phone from diverse perspectives, disciplines, and intellectual traditions. An important body of work has taken mobile communication as its central problematic — because, especially in the first two decades of the career of the mobile phone, questions of communication were perhaps most salient and pressing. How did different locations shape, and were shaped by, the mobile phone? How did the mobile phone change habits of communication, in comparison to its predecessor — the telephone? What were the implications of the mobile phone, its improvisatory possibilities in the redrawing of the public and private spheres, its support for new kinds of intimacies, friendship, and relationship, and its new affordances? What were the meanings attached to mobile phones in different places, with their particular power relations, social dynamics, and particular histories? How did the mobile phone reshape places and publics? And how much did existing rituals shape mobile phone practices? Matters of mobile communication have now become entwined with a distinct, if often related, set of vitally important questions — to do with mobiles as media. From understanding mobile media as a set of *practices* and *cultural artefacts* to more recently using mobile media as part of the *researchers' tool kit*, mobile media is an integral part of contemporary culture.

As various scholars — and countless developers, promoters, policymakers, and users of mobiles — have discussed since the late 1990s, the mobile phone has

been at the centre of great transformations in global media. Not only have mobiles, in their various elements and distinctive guises, established themselves as media forms in their own right, mobiles have been combined with other kinds of media, to be at the forefront of digital convergent media. Once dubbed this century's Swiss Army Knife in terms of convergence, mobile media has grown to encompass many forms of remediated and emergent practices — from camera phones and smartphone apps like Instagram that romanticize the analogue, through creating new temporal spatialities through geo-tagging, to the explosion of divergent forms of mobile gaming.

In other words, mobile media reminds us of new media debates whereby the “new” is often a remixing of existing media practices within a different context. This highlights what Bolter and Grusin called “remediation:”<sup>1</sup> that is, the mediation of older forms through the lens of the new. Or as Lev Manovich observes, newer media is composed by the ghosts and spectres of older media.<sup>2</sup> Manovich takes the example of how analogue photography haunts digital, through the way that apps like Photoshop and Final Cut are conceived and function. This is even more striking in the case of smartphone apps like Instagram and Hipstamatic, with their aesthetics of nostalgia. As old media reinvent themselves to retain their reach, relevance, and potency in the face of new media forms, mobiles are more often than not in the mix; whether in cross-platform services, transmedia innovation, discourses about media, or in everyday appropriation and domestication of combinations of old and new mobile media. While mobile media combine and remediate older media (and indeed play a leading form in the reinvention of enduring forms such as the press or broadcasting), we also see that mobile media brings new affordances, as intimate as they are compressed like social media.

Take, for example, the rise of mobile internet. For many first world western contexts, the first decade of mass Internet in the 1990s revolved around the personal computer (PC) as the taken-for-granted default setting. However, in places like Japan and China, mobiles have long been the dominant context for accessing, surfing and participating in the online. Thus the need to take seriously, research, and theorize the experience of mobile internet has brought new challenges to disciplines such as internet studies. Indeed as mobiles increasingly become a pivotal and unavoidable reality in everyday social practices, as well as the site for platform, context and media convergence, numerous disciplines have had to turn to the field of mobile communication and media for understanding.

### **The Mobile Media Companion: Context and Conception**

It is as a guide to the research, ideas, structures, and practices of this emerging area of mobile media that this Companion has its purpose. There is certainly now an important body of emerging work on mobile media, widely cited in the contributions to this volume. Much of the literature across mobile communication and mobile media had been published in important collections, which served the function of bringing together research. Otherwise, research was dispersed across a very wide range of existing journals. A new journal of *Mobile Media and Communication* was established in 2013, which promises to fill the gap by consolidating the multiple interdisciplinary conversations that only tend to converge at conferences such as the *International Communication Association (ICA) mobile preconference*. However,

there remains a need for an authoritative reference work to chart the research in mobile media, in particular — and so we are excited to present this volume.

We feel that this Companion has something important and distinctive to offer, because it focusses squarely and comprehensively on mobile media. In doing so, our Companion complements a handful of important reference works covering cognate areas: James E. Katz's important 2008 *Handbook of Mobile Communication Studies*;<sup>3</sup> and new books covering specific facets of mobiles, including the *Handbook of Mobile Learning*,<sup>4</sup> the *Routledge Handbook of Mobilities*,<sup>5</sup> and the *Oxford Handbook of Mobile Music Studies*.<sup>6</sup>

We are seeking to connect conversations and debates through and outside of mobile communication fields. Acknowledging that the field is interdisciplinary, we seek to bring the multiple debates from sociology, media studies, internet studies, cultural studies, game studies, media and communication, visual studies and new media to reconsider the mobile media as a lens for understanding contemporary media practices. As we have outlined, this is a book about mobile *media* — rather than *communication* or *technology* (although these categories are clearly inter-related). So many of the approaches being used to frame, approach, and study mobile media, do come from media studies — as well as the cognate disciplines of cultural studies, communication, and sociology. Interestingly, concepts of mobile as media are still really being forged and tested. Moreover, the process of theorizing mobile as media is still only in the early stages of being integrated into, taking advantage of, and enriching and complicating, the heritage and traditions of studying media. So we still

discern a “disconnect” between mobile studies, on the one hand, and media studies, on the other hand. Just as much work in media studies is blissfully aware (even still) of the state-of-the-art in, say, Internet studies. The same might be said of cultural studies, which, ironically perhaps given its remit and self-identities, has been relatively slow to engage with mobile media. These disciplinary formations have left their impress on the area of mobile media and communication studies, and help explain the contours of the available research and debates — as well as casting in stark relief the many landscapes left relatively unexamined.

In conceptualizing this Companion, we have sought to take the broadest possible view of mobile media. Thus, we have started from the accepted, and somewhat known universe of cellular mobile telephony, and expanded, as the medium itself has, across a range of other mediascapes. So we have sought to cover as many different kinds of mobile media as possible. Even with the expansive coverage of a large reference volume, there are still many gaps indeed. While there is much on mobile images (still and moving), photography, and visualities in general, there is little on mobile music, sound, or auditory. Tactility of mobile media is one other sense that is often touched upon here, but much more needs to be investigated about this, let alone research in relation to other sensory modes and extension. As scholars such as Ingrid Richardson have noted, the haptic economy of mobile media has been central in its adoption within everyday life.

With the smartphone heralding a further convergence between locative, social and mobile media, there is a need for more studies that acknowledge the particular

affordances of this media convergence. There is also more work needed in the area of mobile media platform politics and how the “egalitarian” notion of platforms is compromised through social mobile media commercialization.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, smartphones can be seen as overlaying the over-abundance of information with full-time intimacies.<sup>8</sup>

As an embedded part of everyday life, mobile media are also seen as both the alibi and witness to changing categories around work/life balance and notions of public and private space. The important work of Judy Wajcman<sup>9</sup> and Leopoldina Fortunati<sup>10</sup> has been pivotal in addressing how these shifts can be understood within broader societal labor and shifts.<sup>11</sup> These shifts — whether coined under the affect, intimate or mobile turn — can be seen to manifest within mobile media practices. Here, mobile media provides a powerful lens onto social, generational and economic inequalities.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, with the professionalization of amateur media, while much has been conducted around the impact of mobile media and user created content on journalism in what has been called an “intimate turn”<sup>13</sup>, there still needs to be research around “vernacular creativity” in the visual arts.<sup>14</sup>

In terms of social categories, there are many areas where we might have included contributions, or where work needs to be done. We were fortunate to be able to commission several chapters touching on women or feminist approaches to mobiles, but able to include only one chapter on masculinity (Evers’ chapter) — highlighting the need for more critical work in this area. Similarly, various contributions touch upon sexuality and intimacy, but there are many important areas



that feature more prominently in, say, internet studies literature — than it does in mobile media.

In terms of geographical and geopolitical coverage of mobiles, we have sought to be as cosmopolitan and international as possible. Just as mobile media is one of the most ubiquitous media globally, its affordances and accessibilities are limited by its location. We have attempted to address some of the multiple ways in which location informs mobile media as part of cultural practice. However, the limitations of our knowledge and networks, as well as the conditions of global knowledge production (with distinctive concentration of work in different places, with particular approaches, biases, and preoccupations) means that we have much coverage of mobiles across some regions and countries — but few contributions and contributors from many important centers of contemporary mobile media diffusion and innovation, including Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. Given we have been in the vanguard of scholars calling for internationalization of mobile and internet studies,<sup>15</sup> we are happy to be hoist on our own petard. There are multiple factors at all in shaping the international contours and regimes of international research and publishing, especially in English. So this remains a critical and barely commenced project to promote, circulate, and engage with research on mobile media, across the many languages, settings, and cultures in which it is actually taking place now.

### **Navigating the *Companion*: A Reader's Guide**

In order to conceptualize this interdisciplinary and rapidly changing area, we devised a series of subthemes under Parts in this Companion. It should be noted that these Parts are not claiming separate discourses but rather should be understood as part of moving, interrelated realms and subthemes. They have been created for simplicity sake and to provide readers with some of the many key areas shaped, and shaped by, mobile media. Our first Part is entitled “Fields of Mobile Media, ” and it seeks to outline some of the key questions, past, present and for the future, within the burgeoning and dynamic field of mobile media. We begin with Ilpo Koskinen, one of the key experts and innovators around mobile camera phone studies, who reflects upon the use of ethnomethodology in his early studies to account for the messiness of mobile media’s multimedia dimensions. Koskinen is followed by key feminist and mobile communication scholar, Leopoldina Fortunati, who uses mobile media as a lens in which to understand changing models between media and society. After Fortunati is leading mobiles sociologist, Rich Ling, who theorizes the role mobile communication within the “intimate sphere.” Filipino Anthropologist Raul Pertierra’s chapter reflects upon the localizing dimensions of mobile media. And lastly, key mobile communications scholar James E Katz, with Chih-Hui Lai, discusses the shift of mobile media into a vehicle for locative and social media use — and what this portends.

In Part II we turn to “Infrastructures, Economies, and Policies”, which aims to provide an introduction to the fundamentals of this area. The section opens with Peter Curwen and Jason Whalley’s comprehensive survey of mobile telecommunications markets through their definitive mapping of operators. Next is Claudio Feijóo’s clear and comprehensive overview of the technical aspects of next generation networks and

their implications for the future of mobile media. Catherine Middleton continues this inquiry, by focussing on the crucial element of broadband policies and construction of markets that dictate the kind of access and services users actually can obtain. The policy dimension of mobile media markets is further explored through Judith Mariscal, Lucia Gamboa, and Cesar Rentería's chapter on the "democratization" of Internet access through mobile broadband in Latin America. This section closes with Ramon Lobato and Julian Thomas's chapter that tackles the new and vitally important area of informal and unofficial (a.k.a pirate) economies surrounding mobile media.

The focus in Part III, "New and Old Media and Entertainment," is upon mobile media as a convergent vehicle for old, remediated, and novel media and entertainment. In this section contributors reflect upon we can see the mobile media developing from a much wider range of technologies, practices, and histories. We begin with Noah Arceneaux chapter, tracing the rise of the transistor radio as part of broader forms of mobile privatization. Oscar Westlund offers an authoritative assessment of the impact of mobile media on the production and consumption of news. Gerard Goggin provides an overview of the development, consumption, and circulation of mobile video, while Max Schleser contemplates a decade of creative mobile media moving making. Ben Goldsmith squarely addresses the characteristics and parameters of the global smartphone app ecology. Finally, Juan Miguel Aguado and Inmaculada J. Martínez offer a comprehensive account of entertainment in mobile media.

Part IV, “Arts of Mobile Media,” tackles the artistic and literacy dimensions of mobile media, spanning mobile media art and reading through to games. We begin with leading mobilities expert Mimi Sheller, who theorizes mobile arts. This theme is pursued by Fernanda Duarte and Adriana de Souza e Silva, in their contribution studying the emergence of mobile art in Brazil. With Kyoung-Hwa Yonnie Kim, we turn to a consideration of mobile phones novels in Japan as forming part of broader epistolary traditions such as the postcard. Naomi Baron analyzes e-readers, and the impact mobile screens have on reading practices and the modes of engagement which they entail. Fumitoshi Kato shifts our focus to literacy and education, and asks us to consider mobile media as part of the fieldwork tool kit of researchers and students. Daniel Palmer helps make sense of contemporary camera phone photography, comparing this to earlier modes of photography while also highlighting how it dramatically departs from this history. Ingrid Richardson and Larissa Hjorth reflect upon the changing role of mobile gaming through the rise of smartphones, a theme continued with Brendan Keogh’s detailed analysis of the mobile game, *Angry Birds*, and how it represents a new kind of embodied play.

Part V, “New Social Categories, Identities, and Practices”, considers the dual relationship between mobile media as both shaping and being shaped by, a variety of socio-cultural factors and dynamics. The opening chapter by Barbara Crow and Kim Sawchuk provides a comprehensive account of the neglected topic of ageing. Larissa Hjorth, Jack Qiu, Zhou Baohua, and Ding Wei reflect upon on of the oldest forms of social mobile media in China, QQ, as a way in which to understand changing cross-generational media literacies in that country and beyond. Drawing from the well-known, multi-country, European Union-funded *Kids Online* project, Leslie Haddon

and Kjartan Ólafsson consider the relationship between children and mobile Internet. Following this, Jane Vincent and Leopoldina Fortunati's chapter takes up the significant question of emotion and mobile media — a focus taken up in a different way in Lynn Schofield Clark's "Mobile Media and the Emotion Work of the Household." From home to work and back again, Justine Humphry studies the ways in which mobile media blur boundaries between work and home.

Judith A. Nicholson offers an account of race and mobile media, theorized from a historically informed mobilities perspective. The gendered dimensions of mobile media is explored by the two following chapters, respectively by Sun Sun Lim, and Katie Cumiskey. From different perspectives, both Lim and Cumiskey argue that little has shifted for women despite the potential for agency and change that mobile media promise. With Clif Evers' case study of surfing, we turn to the regulation and reinforcement of constructions of masculinity in mobiles. Jaz Choi explores the role of well-being and food in the context of mobile media apps. The final chapter is Amparo Lasén's detailed exploration of mobile media as a tool for intimacy between couples.

Part VI, "Culture and Politics" offers a set of important perspectives on these two highly significant and closely joined logics of mobile media. We begin with Scott W. Campbell and Nojin Kwak's analysis of mobile communication within civic life, and their discussion of what this entails for notions of private and public use. We move to Hong Kong for Patrick Law's case study of the political communication via a study of the multi-platform *Passion Times* media outlet and community. Next we

travel to Spain in Arnau Monterde and John Postill's discussion of account of these classic topics of dissent and protest with the celebrated Spanish *indignados* movement. Greig De Peuter, Enda Brophy, and Nicole S. Cohen take up the important theme of labor and mobile media. We then journey to South Africa for Marion Walton's case study of the distinctive politics and cultures of mobile media in this setting. This section concludes with Erin B. Taylor and Heather A. Horst study, drawing attention to the aesthetics of the prosaic yet, for many, indispensable, aspect of mobile money – here in Haiti.

The Companion, part VII, is organized around the “Geographies of Mobile Social Media”, with authors considering how the uneven rise, dispersal, and implementation of mobile social media creates new ways in which to represent and experience place and co-presence. Ichiyo Habuchi reflect upon her fieldwork in Turkana, Kenya and what role mobile media plays in existing cultural practices, strongly rooted in this place. Sarah Pink and Larissa Hjorth consider the how the overlay between location media and camera phone is creating new ways for movement through places and locations, and how we conceptualize this. Hjorth and Jean Burgess's “Intimate Banalities” discusses the role of camera phone affect is explored through the Queensland Flood Disaster of 2011 and its most popular (read: retweeted) images. Rowan Wilken offers a concise summation of the intersections between mobile media, place, and location. Jason Farman brings the volume to its finish, with a vivid evocation of how mobile media storytelling unfolds at the crossroads of site-specificity, content, and materiality.

As is evident, these various topics and sections are not intended to be definitive. Given the contemporaneity of mobile media we have sought to provide a series of different contexts: historical, disciplinary, and socio-cultural to name a few. Each chapter provides a broader context for the addressed case study or theme so that readers can further explore related material. In the way of a reference work, the contributions provide authoritative accounts of key aspects of mobile media, underpinned by expert and adventurous research, laced with fresh and provocative thinking. Hopefully in this way, each chapter will provide its own guide, signposts, and itineraries to orient and encourage the reader to further explore the burgeoning and expansive field of mobile media.

### **Conclusion: Challenges for the future of Mobile media**

As an interdisciplinary field, mobile media has previously run the risk of being diluted as its move across Internet, game human computer interaction (HCI), cultural, communication and media studies, sociology, anthropology, and history not to mention many other disciplines and fields. Conversations and arguments run the risk of getting lost across a variety of circuits and modes of address, transmission and re-transmission, translation, appropriation, and refashioning. This is why we how this reference work will play a useful role in the endeavour to consolidate the interdisciplinary and international nature of the field of mobile media research. And yet there are multiple challenges in such an aim.

A prosaic issue we and other editors face is securing contributors, when many acknowledged that their current academic publishing and reward systems discounted,

or were reluctant to admit, the worth of a reference work or edited volume book chapter. Transmission and dissemination of findings has been rationalized of late by university deliverables that convert the reality of knowledge formation and circulation into a hierarchy of accountable outcomes. Edited volumes have been a central, crucial forum for research, exchange, and debate in mobile communication and media as it has evolved as a field. This remains the case, and reference works, such as these, are especially important, given it is such a nascent area. Yet the bias in many regimes of academic research, especially the “quality” regimes prominent around the world, tend to encourage and reward scholars for publishing in “top-tier” journals, rather than authoring book chapters. This is a particularly difficult challenge for early career scholars to confront. Reference works have become a special case also, because of their vogue with publishers at the present time — where trends continue towards specialization of knowledge and the attractiveness of reference works for the coveted, still intact (if only just) university library market.

So we naturally appreciate these pressures, and even more are grateful to authors, such as those represented in this volume, who believe in the importance of edited books, and reference works. We are fortunate to include here pioneers in mobile studies, such as James Katz, Leopoldina Fortunati, Rich Ling, Leslie Haddon, Raul Pertierra, and Ilpo Koskinen, who, interestingly, have been in the forefront of efforts to understand mobiles as media as well as communication. We are also excited to feature new voices in mobile media, not unexpectedly given that, in a fast-moving, dynamic area, it is often the rising scholars that are charting and critiquing the emergent media. So we warmly commend this Companion to you, and hope it will



provide resources, inspiration, and provocation for the next exciting wave of research to come forth.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).
- <sup>2</sup> Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).
- <sup>3</sup> James E. Katz (Ed.), *Handbook of Mobile Communication Studies* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).
- <sup>4</sup> Zane L. Berge and Lin Muilenberg, eds., *Handbook of Mobile Learning* (New York: Routledge, 2013).
- <sup>5</sup> Peter Adey, David Bissell, Kevin Hannam, Peter Merriman, and Mimi Sheller (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities* (New York: Routledge, 2014).
- <sup>6</sup> Sumanth Gopinath and Jason Stanyek (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Mobile Music Studies* (2 vols; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- <sup>7</sup> Jean E. Burgess, 'The iPhone Moment, the Apple Brand, and the Creative Consumer: From "Hackability and Usability" to Cultural Generativity', in *Studying Mobile Media*, ed. Larissa Hjorth, Jean Burgess, and Ingrid Richardson (London: Routledge, 2012), 28-42; Tarleston Gillespie, "The Politics of 'Platforms,'" *New Media & Society*, 12, no. 3 (2010): 350.
- <sup>8</sup> Mark Andrejevic, *Infoglut* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Melissa Gregg, *Work's Intimacy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011).
- <sup>9</sup> Judy Wajcman, Michael Bittman, and Jude Brown, "Intimate Connections: The Impact of the Mobile phone on Work Life Boundaries," *Mobile Technologies*, ed. Gerard Goggin and Lariss Hjorth (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 9-22.
- <sup>10</sup> Leopoldina Fortunati, "Gender and the Mobile Phone," In *Mobile Technologies: From Telecommunications to Media*, ed. Gerard Goggin and Larissa Hjorth (London: Routledge, 2009), 23-34.
- <sup>11</sup> Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Outsourced Self* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012); Rachel Crowe and Catherine Middleton, "Women, Smartphones and the Workplace: Pragmatic Realities and Performative Identities," *Feminist Media Studies* 12, no. 4 (2013): 560-569.
- <sup>12</sup> Jack Qiu, "The Wireless Leash: MMS as a Means of Control," *International Journal Of Communication* 1 (2007): 74-91; Larissa Hjorth, "Still Mobile: A Case Study on Mobility, Home and Being Away in Shanghai," in *Mobile Technologies and Place*, ed. Rowan Wilken and Gerard Goggin (New York: Routledge, 2012), 140-156.
- <sup>13</sup> Gerard Goggin, "The Intimate Turn of Mobile News," in *News Online: Transformations and Continuities*, ed. Graham Meikle and Guy Redden (London: Palgrave, 2010), 99-114.
- <sup>14</sup> Sam Hinton and Larissa Hjorth, *Understanding Social Media* (London: Sage, 2013).
- <sup>15</sup> See, for instance: Gerard Goggin and Mark McLelland, eds., *Internationalizing Internet Studies: Beyond Anglophone Paradigms* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Daya Kishan Thussu, ed., *Internationalizing Media Studies* (New York: Routledge,

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2009); Ackbar Abbas and John Nguyet Erni, eds., *Internationalizing Cultural Studies: An Anthology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005); Graeme Turner, *What's Become of Cultural Studies?* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2012).