

Journalism Research

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HERBERT VON HALEM VERLAG

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Editorial

The seismic shift that digitalization has brought about in the media and cultural landscape has thrown journalism into crisis - one that is transforming the way the profession has always been perceived based on its now-obsolete historic origins. As a result, the conventional concept of journalistic professionalism needs to be re-examined: What has to stay, because the role of journalism in public life remains vital for the survival of modern societies? And what has to change, or is already changing?

As it works through this crisis and renewal, professional journalism needs the support of journalism studies more than ever. Not only does this academic discipline display the intellectual breadth and bravery to produce innovation - it firmly believes that public life shaped by qualified journalism is essential if complex societies are to achieve self-regulation.

A journal of journalism studies

The English-speaking world has long enjoyed a wide range of journals for journalism studies, and even specific academic bodies for sub-topics as diverse as the history of journalism, professional ethics in journalism, and literary journalism. German-speaking countries, however, have so far failed to produce a journalism journal that brings the discipline's profile into sharper focus, so German-speaking journalism researchers are forced to rely on media studies journals with no practical relevance, or on journals on journalism practice.

It is this gap that "Journalistik" is intended to fill. The journal's launch has been made possible by funding from the Herbert von Halem-Verlag and Stiftung Presse-Haus NRZ.

Although "Journalistik" is currently intended as an online publication, it will be published on fixed dates with quotable issue numbers, just like a traditional academic journal. Together with the publisher, we are considering printing a "best of" volume once sufficient articles have been gathered.

Academic pluralism

The normative, ontological tradition of German newspaper studies meant that there was a lack of empirical, analytical research until well into the 1970s. Since the 1990s, however, the opposite has been true - a clear majority of publications in communication studies is now based on models from natural and technical sciences. On the other hand, there is also a lack of historic, hermeneutic texts shaped by a practical interest in knowledge and understanding (Jürgen Habermas) not only in society, but also in journalism and the academic study that accompanies it. Especially in the environment in which we find ourselves today, contributions like this are very important alongside empirical, analytical, variable-based research reports (Gerhard Maletzke), given the significant need

for self-understanding in professional journalism, so unsettled by the digital transformation of media and culture.

“Publisher’s principle”

Most periodicals in communication studies now use the principle of double blind reviewing. Although this selection process undoubtedly has some benefits, its hegemony is the subject of growing criticism, not least because anonymity reduces the level of care taken with appraisals and makes it unclear who is responsible for publication decisions. As a result, a journalistic insight that has been incorporated into media law – namely that named responsibility is the most effective way to ensure journalistic quality – has ceased to apply. Yet a discipline that claims to support professional journalism cannot afford to forget this doctrine. Another disadvantage of the practice is the fear that only particular friends or opponents of the person publishing have a chance of selection as external reviewers. The result is excessive care in texts that are submitted and a certain uniformity that goes against the grain of innovative academic work. In order to prevent these disadvantages from playing a role and to maintain pluralism through the decision-making processes related to academic journalism, “Journalistik” has been deliberately designed as a publisher’s journal, not linked to specific academic institutions.

Bilingualism

The vocational subject of journalism, whose relationship with communication studies is comparable with that between medicine and biology, has long been established in the English-speaking world. In German-speaking countries, however, it is newer and still relatively small. Add to this the fact that English is undoubtedly the lingua franca of science worldwide, giving German-language publications a very limited international audience, and it becomes clear that journalism studies needs a link to the English-speaking world. Research conducted in German needs to be accessible in English too in order to attract international attention, although the German-language original also needs to remain available if journalism studies is to remain part of the non-academic media world and help to prevent the erosion of cultural diversity. Our concept stipulates an English version with identical content alongside the German version in order to compensate for the lack of peer review with regard to authors’ qualification objectives.

Decision-making criteria and process

The crucial criteria for the articles chosen are relevance to professional journalism and its role in public life, and the academic qualities of innovation, inventiveness, concise questions, conclusive arguments, verifiable data, traceable sources and, last but not least, clear language. Taking this as our starting point, we aim to achieve the widest possible range of subjects and problems, perspectives and methods, theoretical approaches and practical relevance. Both empirical, analytical

and historic, hermeneutic articles and essays are welcome.

Publication decisions are made jointly by the publishers and are their responsibility. We hope that the group of publishers contains a representative mix in terms of age, gender, nationality and academic profile.

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