

AAC – SPHM INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2020

Media Trades and Professions

(18th to 21st Century)

June 4th to 6th, 2020

University of Lausanne

(Switzerland)

This third edition of the SPHM International Conference is organised by the Society for Media History (la Société pour l’histoire des Médias, <http://www.histoiredesmedias.com>) and by the Centre for the Historical Sciences of Culture of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Lausanne (le Centre des Sciences historiques de la culture de la Faculté des Lettres, <https://www.unil.ch/shc>), with the support of several research laboratories based in Switzerland, France, Luxembourg, and Québec¹, including the National Audiovisual Institute (Institut national de l’audiovisuel) and the Historical Committee of the Audiovisual and Digital Observatory (Comité d’histoire de l’Observatoire de l’audiovisuel et du numérique).

As with the two previous editions, this conference aims to bring together both junior and senior international researchers, historians, and specialists from diverse disciplines around a common field of study: media history. The selected theme, “Media Trades and Professions” is intended to be sufficiently inclusive to allow specialists in the field, regardless of their methods or approaches, to contribute to discourses of collective reflection while illuminating new areas of research that have yet to be explored by the community. The organisers are devoted to promoting multidisciplinary, transmedia, and transnational approaches, remaining particularly receptive to media and geographical zones less marked by historiographical perspectives.

1-Realms of Representation

First and foremost, this Conference strives to challenge the constructed representations of media trades and professions that have been disseminated since the end of the eighteenth century. This practice may consist of studies devoted to the methods of representation of these professionals in

¹ Le Centre des sciences historiques de la culture at Unil, l’Institut des sciences sociales at Unil, le Centre d’histoire culturelle des sociétés contemporaines at UVSQ, le LCP – IRISSE CNRS Paris Dauphine, the Centre for Contemporary and Digital History at the University of Luxembourg, Carism at Université Paris 2 Panthéon-Assas, Irmécen at Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3, CELAT (Centre de recherche et laboratoire Cultures-Arts-Société, Université Laval, Université du Québec à Montréal et Université du Québec à Chicoutimi) and le Comité d’histoire de l’audiovisuel et du numérique.

the context of various forms of cultural productions (media, literary, visual, and theatrical productions, amongst others) but also of investigations specifically related to the ways in which professionals think, perceive, and represent themselves and one another. Comparative approaches – in particular those that are transnational – are especially valuable here, as are bodies of work that are interested in examining the contrasts between the study of these representations with the material, economic, and practical conditions of their productions.

These representational approaches may revolve around different types of inquiries:

- How did shared ideologies such as values, worldviews, and political positions evolve during different historical periods within certain professional circles of the media industry?
- How do these professions develop, forge their legitimacy, and work to establish professional standards? How do certain professional circles construct, often through interactions with other disciplines, their identity, sense of belonging, or a collective memory of their own history?
- What are the tensions that arise between the prestigious status of certain professions and the economic and social fragility that often manifests as a source of frustration with one's vision of their own endeavours? From this perspective, it is essential to acknowledge various inequalities of gender, social class, race, territory, etc., considering the reality that the precarious nature of media professions affects groups and individuals in unequal ways.
- How can research in the fields of human and social sciences contribute to the development, dissemination, and evolution of different forms of political, professional, or institutional representations (local, national, and transnational associations; labour unions, lobby organisations; professional press groups...)?

2-Professional Practice Methods

Proposals may also be concerned with the study of professional practices. More specifically, with a focus on the diversity of these professions and practices. Proposals may, of course, pertain to professional sectors that have already been extensively studied within historiography (certain journalism and cinema occupations, for example). However, the organisational committee of this conference wishes to promote research on professional practices that remain of little interest to researchers or that pose difficulties in access to sources. Such trades that would deserve further attention from researchers, to name a few, include television and radio editors; set decorators; proof-readers in the printing industry; readers, agents, and designers in publishing; press correspondents; theatre prompters or leaders of applause; or even crowd-warmers or impresarios...

The study of such practices can unearth questions surrounding the nature of the limits of these professions:

- What exactly differentiates professional practices from amateur ones in these various domains?
- What are the “admission tickets” or the “barriers” associated with the practice of certain professions (for example, a press pass in journalism)?
- Which professions, of those that are not directly involved in the production of media content, are intimately linked to the history of media (for example, industrial and engineering professions, specialists from international organisations, media sociologists and historians)?
- In which ways are media professionals linked to institutions that are not directly related to the production of media (military film operators and audiovisual supervisors at schools and universities, for example)?

The study of professional practices may promote awareness and appreciation for certain locations, actors, and dynamics. The organisers will be particularly receptive to proposals that facilitate research on the international circulation of particular models, recognition of professional profiles (the roles of cultural mediators, international trajectories, the places that educate countless foreign students...), and the long-term, widespread study of the transformations or eccentricities of these professional practices. Questions surrounding the workspaces of media professionals (from offices to studios to open-air laboratories), as well as their materials (tools and objects; technological advances; devices and channels; the rise of digital technologies and their subsequent uses, their dissemination, and impacts; processes of dematerialisation...), are also welcome in the Conference programme.

Lastly, the examination of professional practice methods may stimulate questions regarding the different articulations of individual and collective practices and to distinguish prominent figures of a certain profession having, for example, an anonymous author or artist status to which it could be valuable to pay attention.

3-The Sociology of Media Professions

These proposals will have the capacity to unite various sociological or socio-historical approaches in order to demystify the mechanisms specific to the structure of certain media professions, the strategies of legitimisation and prestige within them, and the recomposition of socio-professional groups during certain historical periods. Among the questions that may be explored in this perspective:

- What role does discrimination play in access to certain occupations, and what are the obstacles related to class, gender, race, nationality, religion and/or generational inequalities?
- What are some pathways and sites of training (highlighting in some cases the weight of self-education), the nature and evolution of remuneration, the diversity of career paths emphasised by a transnational perspective, the characteristics or traditions specific to certain spheres, as well as the forms of partnership or assembly at the international level?
- How can we map the legitimisation strategies of the press and of professional associations, as well as of certain sites of sociability specific to particular professions (conferences, festivals, expositions, exhibitions, etc.)?
- What role do power dynamics play within each professional environment? What are the relationships between those who possess power, be they political authorities or economic and financial actors?

4-Relationships with Audiences and the Public Opinion

The research of media trades, professions, and professionals must also promote the study of the connections between professionals and their public(s) by investigating, for example:

- Occupations directly related to media reception analysis in a qualitative and/or quantitative perspective (long-term audience measurement analysis, implementation of surveys);
- The presentation of professional actors at the interface between the media and the public (for example, mediators in editorial offices, censorship boards, or appeal or complaint authorities that make decisions concerning ethical issues);
- The integration of audience expectations and the influence of public feedback on the production of media content (analysis of market research, public testing);
- The evolution of the public perception of these professions, particularly during significant social movements (the representation of journalists during the Revolution of 1830...up until the yellow vests).

5- Methodological and Epistemological Reflections on Research-Based Approaches

Proposals reflecting on contemporary writing regarding the history of media trades, professions, and professionals are also welcome. Particular examples in this area of research include:

- The temporalities related to media professions/professionals and how to understand them throughout history. This may take into account historical complexities and questions about the nature of temporalities encountered by media professionals in their endeavours, whether in terms of the treatment of their subject matter, recourse to historical revelations, career patterns, positions regarding programme structures, changes related to the introduction of rebroadcasting, of the digital, etc., and the presentation of historical processes that determine them. The integration of methods borrowed from other disciplines (participatory observations, fieldwork...) to develop understanding, notably experiences such as those led by John Ellis and his team within the ADAPT project (<http://www.adapttvhistory.org.uk>) of historical re-enactment of the practices of television professionals, may be presented;

- Sites of analysis, whether to propose case studies that raise awareness of international cultural circulations, places of exchange, reference and living spaces of a profession, heritage domains, or to interrogate perspectives and obstacles of comparative and circulatory research approaches;

- Challenges that researchers face in accessing and preserving the archives of media professions and professionals. Testimonials, objects, oral interviews, and many other sources and archives, as well as their presentation in narratives or exhibitions, can effectively be questioned;

- Interdisciplinary practices can be gathered – for example, approaches to media professions and professionals through a gender studies or postcolonial studies perspective. Research comparing the reciprocal issues of disciplinary approaches and studies are welcome.

- The role of the digital, whether as a tool or support for media professions and professionals or as a means by which to access sources to trace their histories. The changes in research methods by the widespread use of digital technologies in many media-related professions, as well as by the appearance of natively digital archives (for example, INA's archiving of twitter accounts belonging to audiovisual journalists, etc.), seem to be equally fruitful areas of study.

Ultimately, these three days will be dedicated to establishing a wide panorama of the diversity of contemporary modes of production of knowledge on media trades, professions, and professionals in an attempt to review the concepts, debates, and methods that have been addressed while identifying the obstacles, perspectives, and the unexpected elements fundamental to the future challenges that the historian will have to overcome.

Proposal Submissions:

Communication proposals may be individual or collective. For the latter, proposals may not have more than a maximum of three co-authors.

You also have the opportunity to submit a panel proposal (a session on a given topic) including a general description and an explanation of the individual interventions anticipated.

Proposals (a maximum of 3000 characters in Word or PDF files) must include a title, an explicit problematic, and a short bibliography. The author must attach a short bio-bibliographic record (15 lines) in a separate file.

Proposals will be subject to a double-blind peer review process.

Proposals must be sent no later than September 20th, 2019 to the following address: SPHM2020lausanne@unil.ch

Practical Information:

Registration fees (speakers and audience):

- For members of the SPHM (membership 25 euros, 13 euros for students), the Conference is free with a subscription before April 30, 2020.

- From May 1st onwards, and in-person at the event, registration for the Conference will be 40 euros (45 Swiss francs or 56 USD).

The Conference will provide free coffee and lunches for the those who are presenting. Accommodation and travel expenses are the responsibility of the presenters.

However, funding may be awarded in exceptional cases to young, unfunded researchers on the basis of a written application. This application, including proof from the affiliated academic institution confirming that it cannot provide any funding, should be attached to the communication proposal and sent to the same address: SPHM2020lausanne@unil.ch.

With a duration of 20 minutes, papers may be written and presented in either French or English. They should be accompanied by a presentation projected in the other language.

Schedule:

September 20th, 2019: Deadline for proposals

November 25th, 2019: Notification of acceptance

June 4th – 6th, 2020: Conference at the University of Lausanne Campus

Organisational Committee:

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Jean-Claude Yon (Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, CHCSC)