Introduction: Futures

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Introduction for the ten-year anniversary of *communication +1* covering an overview of the journal, topics of discussion, and a provocation towards the type of time and work involved in *futures* of communication.

A decade of *futures*

When we founded this journal over ten years ago, we began with the prompt "futures," and, somehow, we have returned. Although not and never to that same place, nostalgia remains unavoidable when looking back.[1] After more than 100,000 downloads across dozens of papers, we seem to have returned to a space that is both the same and unimaginable from whence we started.[2] All we had was an idea to create a space for growth - we saw that the field of communication had become more and more *disciplined* within journals and conferences, pushing back at work we hoped to develop. As Florian Sprenger notes in this issue, the journal's name remains one that both attempt to provoke and direct. Intentionally, the +1 and lowercase *communication* both meant to signify a nod to the *whatever* of communication (beyond discipline), but also the n+1 fractal expression of boundless possibilities (the logo, a romanesco cauliflower, a natural expression of that n+1 fractal). It was both serious and silly (as many things in the academy can be), but we could not have known the impact it would have.

When we conceptualized the inaugural issue (also entitled *futures*), it indicated of the larger project we had hoped to shepherd - the n+1 continuing to expand and find ever-new beautiful ways to express this endeavor. It kept asking, "what *is communication?*" Or, what is *this (or that)* when seen through a communicative frame? Or even more possibly, what might the *coming* of this, that, or communication look like? Whether chronologically or topologically, peering into the *futures* of *whatever* within this framework remains *with communication* central to its investigative core. What we have accomplished over the past ten years reflects much of what we have gathered to explore here: discussions of disciplinary boundaries, questions of power dynamics, ways of theorizing communication and media, and reconfiguring our notions of what constitutes a communicative subject.

Unfortunately, the disciplinarity of communication-as-discipline (much like many other disciplines) seems to owe much to an obsession with metrics and the growing presence of data-driven analytics and research. Ironically, this essay begins with a citation of our metrics, evidence of our "success." Of course, it is not the quality of the methods and modes of analysis in the discipline that are of concern - many questions remain aptly posed (and responded to) in these manners. Instead, the problem lies in the framework of measuring academic "success." Problems

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[1] literally, "pain for returning home," to which one can never return

[2] all of this while maintaining platinum open access - never charging fees for author publication or access.

compound when techno capitalist logic of numbers-as-value meets the speed of data analysis (and quantity of online publishing) and data-driven measurement reigns supreme. When one can produce *quantity and quality* in one manner, the valuation of other methods (methods that might ask different questions) shrinks precipitously. This can (and does) perpetuate disciplinarity, narrowing fields across a variety of studies. What we hoped for *communication +1* was to create a space where those that ask different questions might find more space for voice - advocating, in some way, for balance, or at least value to those that (to borrow a phrase from one of our authors) *think otherwise*.

Over the years played host to many guest editors, co-editors, and fantastic ideas, pushing back against the shrinking disciplinary boundaries of the field(s). Some articles and collections seemed to act as lightning rods, sparking offshoots and new growth. Human Machine Communication (HMC), for example, grew significantly, thanks in no small part to the contributors included here. Theories and philosophies of media (often overlooked and shunned within the disciplined field) found new voices and avenues through the authors of this journal's pages. We are proud and grateful for the part we could play in this.

We hope that we have helped to gather something that honors this continuing tradition here in this collection. We invited previous authors, trusted colleagues and collaborators, and others that seemed to imbue their work with the spirit of +1. Instead of a CFP, we asked them to think about "futures of communication" and to cast off the manacles of the journal style - instead, we asked them what it would look like to *provoke* these *futures*. Instead of a blind review, we asked for a productive open review and discussion about understanding and clarity.[3] What emerged was an array of styles, lengths, and provocations. While some initially found this daunting (maybe an indicator of the disciplining of style), what emerged enlightened the grounding of our dedication. Styles varied greatly from short manifestos to storytelling to deep philosophical engagements. Lengths ranged from diminutive (in size) three-page provocations to more traditional journal-length treatises. Provocations varied wildly, but concerns remained in familiar veins.

A multitude of *futures*

Many authors of this volume (which we have divided into two issues for editorial timeliness and sanity) remained concerned with the same topics that brought us down this path. Others advocate for further inquiry into both emerging and more

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[3] Over the past ten years we have been fortunate (and thankful) for our kind, thoughtful, and helpful reviewers that ensure a productive improvement process.

established subfields and topics that promise to expand further and enrich our understanding of what communication is and could be. We thought it appropriate that Florian Sprenger begin the volume, situating precisely that which we seek to investigate here in this journal, as "Communication presupposes a difference between two elements which it seeks to transcend in the act of communication and through this act proceeds to constitute the *relata* of communication" and it also "presupposes, along these lines, a disconnection, in order that it might, in the course of being carried out, attempt to transcend this disconnection." This *relata* and disconnection form the basis for our study of communication.

Other contributors reflected on changes to "communication" within and beyond its disciplinary boundaries. As in our inaugural issue, they look forward to the futures they anticipate, hope for, and sometimes fear. Zizi Papacharissi's call aligns with the animus that gave rise to *communication +1* in the first place - that we should abandon "hard" disciplinary boundaries, both within and without communication, allowing pioneering work to flourish, unfettered by a preoccupation with territorialities. Such a call speaks to a hope/aspiration, however modest or qualified by pragmatism, to overcome the differences and divisions that build disciplinarity to achieve a better, fuller, and more robust understanding. It is an aspiration fundamental to communication itself.

Much like many over the past ten years, our contributors remained concerned about media, mediation, and the consideration of how we might engage these concepts. Bennke & Pinchevski encourage differentiation between *philosophy* of media, rather than *theory,* "media theory and media philosophy not only follow different paths, but the latter also leads to resistance against the exploitation of media and mediation by means of technological operations... [it is] an intervention— and as such, de-ontologizes both media and media theory." Along with this de-ontologization, John Durham Peters encourages a dialectical approach, reframing the notion of *medium* in an urge to curb its overuse, articulating how a medium *becomes medium* through its positionality, turning us towards "the middle voice, a grammatical in-between that is neither passive nor active, but almost reflexive" as the medium is "neither the actor nor the acted-upon." In a turn towards another type of media ontology, Patricia Pisters brings forward yet another way to consider (philosophize about) media - a Promethean turn to "elemental media studies," arguing that fire can be considered as a material medium as a resource, tool, environment, and interface that hides immaterial aspects that can be understood (through a reading of Gaston Bachelard's mythic fire complexes) in relation to the types of knowledge carried within its flames. Together, these essays build, care for, and nurture a +1 of *media.*

Beyond just *media* (but never leaving it behind), our contributors look, too, to neglected or overlooked threads and branches in the histories of communication to identify fruitful lines of future inquiry. Peter Krapp turns to histories of cryptography to inform our approach to communication. Noting "the social power of secrecy, of preserving and sharing insights into the structure of our media world, also marks a continuity of all so-called new media with the oldest stories known to humanity," Krapp convincingly argues that this overlooked (as might be its point) form of communication remains key to "breaking illusions that position that object outside discourse," a fundamental goal in many of our investigations.

Many of our authors' investigations remained concerned with questions of machines and how machines might help reconsider communicative inquiries. Andrea Guzman provokes an evolution of human-machine communication with a media archaeological turn through a historical exploration of "failures," non-use, and non-adoption, examining the "hidden" (and sometimes, potentially secret) spaces that inform HMC. In a somewhat similar vector, Christina Vagt explores the role of the impossible in creating the possible, particularly in constructing (and theorizing about) machinic technology. Noting that "a media theory of possible-impossible machines would have to take the logical and mathematical impossibilities of machines into account," Vagt notes the necessity "to ask about the fantasy of the machine," which "we can only find by attempting to write that which continuously fails to be mechanized, calculated, described, or addressed by means of machines." Towards the possible both now and the future, David Gunkel takes an ethical turn to consider the communicative effects of the machine, focusing on whether robots (and similar artifacts) should be treated as things or persons/subjects, as questions raised by robots reveal profound flaws in our moral and legal classification systems. Also employing the machinic other to engage questions of self/other, but focusing on particular senses, Jonathan Sterne inquires, "what does it mean 'to listen' and to say that machines listen?" Discussing the complexities of this as we delve deeper into machinic listening, he warns that we must also take caution as "any theory of the *listening* in machine listening needs to also be a theory of power."

Furthering questions of media, politics, connections, and *futures*, our second issue continues along similar avenues, marking different angles of approaches and vectors. Briankle Chang opens up our second issue, reflecting on what he notes as the "referential promiscuity" of *media* as it generates interest and currency across innumerarble fields. Re-shaping old notions with new engagements and understandings remains key to the +1. Sean Johnson Andrews offers us a re-thinking of cultural hegemony within a contemporary media space, offering more nuanced

ways to grok hegemonic power. Andrews notes that the "mercurial, distributed, algorithmically refracted social media environment" challenges traditional notions of cultural hegemony, and (in harmony with others here) argues that "restricting the media concept to channels or institutions is severely limiting… but it can also be limiting to make media too abstract, too primal, too metaphysical."

Articles in *communication +1* often raise questions about relationships and frameworks that foster them. Jeremy Hunsinger asks what it would be if communication studies were *playful,* invoking both the calls in this issue for brevity and provocation and the play that builds the space for meaning within these complex communicative relationships. Approaching these communication relationships from various vectors remains key to the +1. Greg Wise frames surveillance as a fundamental communicative practice and asks us to think through the lens of surveillance, particularly the power relationships - what is the nature of the relationship between surveillor and surveilled?

Other concerns relate to relationships of a political nature, both in and out of the academy. Larry Grossberg asserts that the political left needs to tell better stories, and "better stories know that ideas and thinking matter." Grossberg notes that the right has been better at telling compelling stories - leading to the political left's downfall, and stories become especially important in crises, particularly considering our current times. One can imagine Cindy Tekkobe agrees with this provocation, as she harnesses the power of storytelling to challenge the colonialist academic system, proposing ways to "indigenize" practices, calling into question the performative practices of "diversity, equity, and inclusion." Tekkobe challenges these institutional systems from a place of experience. This place asks us to consider our responsibility to the (grand) promises of the University (and the University to us). This responsibility remains multitude, as communication has always been (or at least has hoped to be) intersectional and multidisciplinary - shaped and shaping academic spaces around us. Reflecting on how communication shapes other fields, Florence Chee frames her provocation as "Communication as Conscience," questioning the disciplinarity and place of communication amongst ever-growing fields of studies. Focusing on ethics in games studies, Chee notes the importance of communication as it has played parts in these other fields and how that might reflect back on our community.

Examining "the performance art of late-stage capitalism," Li Cornfield spins together apocalyptic narratives contrasted with the ubiquitous "tech demo" form. Braiding together an investigation of modern media narratives with modern instances of this now universally recognizable form, Li questions "the emptiness of entrepreneurialism" through (and with) utopian futurism, noting the "last years" had

revealed "stores of faith in a vague but dependable future that I was embarrassed to discover I held." On the other side of re-engaging discoveries, In a call for embracing child-like (not child-ish) curiosity, Steve Jones questions why we draw a line that limits our "awe and wonder" when we engage the possibilities of our inquiry. Particularly, he notes, in a field where we often ponder the relationship between human and virtual, technological, or otherwise, can we not suspend our disbelief in the magical and fantastical?

The future of *futures*

To close, we offer a provocation (perhaps, as one of our authors surmised, a sermonic peroration) of our own, one that borrows heavily from our generous authors. The notion of *futures* here implies at least two areas of concern, one of temporal nature (the *time* of futures) and the other of attitude (how do we *create* futures).
Both of these concerns for the *futures* of communication require a +1 - interrogation of subject matter, discipline, power, methodology, and what communication might become.

        While histories of knowledge remain important, the *chronologies* of these histories may have led to binding and disciplining knowledge; when we address knowledge chronologically it appears as written into stone, inescapable to shifts and change. This temporal approach may lead to dangers from encapsulating and siloing off knowledge production. The "free knowledge" communities of the utopian Internet remain at least partially right (which is why we will always remain platinum open access), but freedom of knowledge distribution and access is just one piece of the puzzle. We must also explore other types of freedom - opening up disciplines to take a more Levinasian approach to the Other (to *otherwise*, as Gunkel has noted), enriching spaces of knowledge production with radical questioning (+1 for theories), investigation (+1 for methods), and collaboration (+1 as symbiosis). Although many remain (rightfully so) concerned with the chronological "future" of communication, we might instead turn towards other ways of considering the *time of futures*. Chronological temporality may not be the best way to orient the futures of *otherwise*, as *chronos* binds histories and egos. Instead, we might orient towards *kairos*; the *futures* of communication depend on our ability to understand the *timeliness* of knowledge production. We must ask what *kind of time*, in a way that allows us to approach *futures* when an opportunity arises - when is the time for careful questioning or investigation, and what types of ways must we collaborate, remix, and rethink?

We need a shared expansive vision of communication and its study, not limited by adherence to disciplinary boundaries or conventions, yet maintaining scholarly and ethical rigor. This approach carries with it a radical *responsibility* (as Peters notes) to these "soft disciplines" (as Papacharissi notes) - establishing and maintaining dedication without the *stiffness* implied by *rigor*.

But how does one maintain rigor without stiffness?

In a word, *Love*.

We should challenge ourselves to remember that we (as a Ph.D. implies) are philosophers, *lovers* of *wisdom*. But not just any love - φιλία (*philia*). Considered the highest form of love amongst the ancient Greeks, Aristotle's examples of *philia* in the *Nichomachean Ethics* include the relationships between lifelong friends, that of parents and children, and members of the same tribe, amongst others. Our relationship, our *love*, with wisdom should evolve, build, and change, transforming through difficult times - reshaping, strengthening, and growing deeper in understanding (but not stiff or brittle).

Is it perfect? Never! Perfection cannot grow.

The messiness is part of the beauty, and part of the strength.

Could we also say that of our academic kin - Our fellow lovers of wisdom? Are we not of the same tribe? The limits of our *philia* are not relegated to artificially imposed disciplinary boundaries.

Of course, one must *love oneself*; *philia*'s object remains, as Aristotle notes, "another oneself." This love of oneself is not egoistic, of course, but that one cannot love elsewhere before one cares for the self. We must have a proper ground(ing) for love. We suggest that *philia* must remain a *critical* love that examines, engages, grows, reshapes, and forgives. How can we say we love *wisdom* if we cannot engage and love the messiness of the self (or others)?

Instead of ending with the Beatle's simple lyrics, "All you need is love" (which may remain true), we should also consider ways of protecting it:

We should ensure that it cares for the self and others.

We should ensure its rigor does not create stiffness and is self-reflexive.

We should ensure it remains critical.

We should ensure it grows.

Let us approach *philia-sophia* (or the *philia*-whatever) in a *hermeneutic* manner, constantly re-assessing, engaging anew, and approaching it with our new understandings. This circle is akin to another type of time, *aoin* - cyclical time, unbounded and sacred. Aoinic time understands time unbounded by past, present, and future, but instead as a wheel (possibly an ouroboros, if that is helpful to visualize). Kairological and aoinic time contrasted with chronologics (that often

bind us) helps to consider an approach to the neverending work of philia-as-hermeneutics (or hermeneutics-as-philia). As feminist science fiction writer, Ursula K. Le Guin reminds us: "Love doesn't just sit there, like a stone, it has to be made, like bread; remade all the time, made new."

Let us then continue to make, remake, ferment, and feed ourselves and others - with love.

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