

EDITOR'S LETTER

10 Years and Counting

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A 10-year anniversary is a milestone and a time for reflection. In our first letter, we asked, “Why study social media?” Our answer now is almost the same as it was then — social media touches ~~almost~~ every part of our lives. From an individual’s perceptions of self on Instagram to network analyses of hashtag activism to long-term health implications from mobile technologies, social media platforms are ever-present. Social media outlets have not been “new media” for a long time. We have 20+ years on social platforms to evaluate and investigate. Articles have tackled medical, legal, philosophical, educational, psychological, technological, and societal investigations of social media. Social media research projects have necessitated interdisciplinary teams to address how social media affects and impacts us. The Journal of Social Media in Society originated from such an interdisciplinary team.

When the Journal of Social Media in Society launched 10 years ago, we were overwhelmed by the response. We hoped to give an academic home to articles about social media and mobile technologies. We have been a landing spot for more than 1,000 articles moving through our system. From our start in a small building on our campus in Stephenville, Texas, USA, the journal now receives international submissions and readers from all over, to a total of one million downloads. The journal has seen research evolve, moving from Facebook-only studies to those analyzing big data and newer platforms, all connecting how we as a society are using social media.

I never imagined how quickly the years would pass; we were simply focused on getting the next issue out. The JSMS began in 2012 as an idea incubated by Dr. Jennifer Edwards’ Texas Social Media Research Institute (TSMRI). A subcommittee with Dr. Credence Baker, myself, and a handful of students, forged ahead to create an open-access journal. Undergraduate students at the time, Maylee Carr and Hannah Ferri, were instrumental in our launch. Our nimble group grew to more than 100 dedicated reviewers in a short time. Through supportive department heads and deans, our team expanded to include additional editors. Drs. Amber Harris Bozer, Randy McCamey, Christy Tabors, and Jennifer Dias served in this capacity, Yvonne Mulhern as our inaugural book editor, and graduate students as editorial assistants. I thank them and our steadfast sponsors,

Tarleton's Colleges of Liberal and Fine Arts, Education, Business, and Graduate Studies, who make it possible to keep the journal as a free endeavor for authors.

The first years required heavy lifting from so many of our early reviewers and supporters. Some are still serving the journal and I thank them wholeheartedly: Drs. Robin Bartoletti, Kay Colley, Anthony C. Edwards, Jennifer Edwards, Mark Gammon, Yakut Gazi, Lora Helvie-Mason, Fred Hills, Charles Howard, Jimmie Manning, Mia Moody-Ramirez, Ingrid Sturgis, and Staci Taylor. Thank you to the 140 reviewers who joined the review board over the years; your service is immeasurable and has kept us going.

One of our goals has always been to focus on the “so what” of a research study regardless of methodology. We strived to be a place where research that mattered drew direct connections for readers, whether fellow academicians or industry practitioners. Stephanie L. Black, Andrew F. Johnson, and Nancy Foasberg kicked off our first issue with their articles titled “Employers' Use of Social Networking Sites in the Selection Process” and “Online Reading Communities: From Book Clubs to Book Blogs.” Our most downloaded articles include the following articles that have collectively garnered over 140,000 downloads:

- McIntyre's (2014) “The Evolution of Social Media from 1969 to 2013: A Change in Competition and a Trend Toward Complementary, Niche Sites”
- Rasmussen's (2018) “Parasocial Interaction in the Digital Age: An Examination of Relationship Building and the Effectiveness of YouTube Celebrities”
- Jones' (2015) “The Looking Glass Lens: Self-concept Changes Due to Social Media Practices”
- Pittman's (2015) “Creating, Consuming, and Connecting: Examining the Relationship Between Social Media Engagement and Loneliness”

Two special issues, a ton of regular issues, and a few extra summer editions, the JSMS has provided an open-access portal to social media research. As this research continues to develop, incorporating underrepresented disciplines should be on the agenda, as well as more historical and trend studies to track longitudinal effects. Scholars will need to resist the temptation to simply use social platforms for readily available data collection and build toward theory related to the social media activity, delving into functions, causes, effects, and correlations of social media. As we look to the future, we challenge researchers to continue asking questions leading to research that matters, research that informs our practice, our technology, our behavior, and our outlook.

References

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