

Talking “Big Data” with CM&M Guest Editor Wouter van Atteveldt

Even as recently as 10 years ago, the idea of downloading and analyzing millions of data points from the Web would have seemed daunting, if not impossible, for most communication researchers. But thanks to the proliferation of powerful, open-source software, computational methods for communication research are more accessible than ever before.

Communication Methods & Measures recently announced a special issue on computational methods (see the special paper call on pg. 4), and *CT&M Concepts* asked guest editor Wouter van Atteveldt, Associate Professor at VU University Amsterdam, for his thoughts on computational methods, the special issue, and advice for young scholars.

What are computational methods?

“In the broad sense, they are more computationally intensive than other methods, and they aren’t just something you do after data are collected. They are part of the data collection process.”

“It is easier than it used to be. Years ago this would not have been something that a lot of social scientists could have done. But now, the basic R skills that you need can easily be learned during your Ph.D. training.”

Are computational methods disruptive for the field of communication?

“Maybe they are disruptive, but I see them more as a complementary set of methods. With these methods, you can get a much more individualized idea of what someone is reading, what people in their social neighborhood are

reading, how they talk about it, and how that influences their thoughts and behavior.”

“I think you could do the same with journalism from the production side. All the production happens digitally these days, and it would great if you could actually track that process. You could find out how a story develops, what kind of choices are made, what is the influence of the editor, what is the influence of the journalist, what is the influence of the sources, and so on. And again, we don’t have that data, but we could potentially get that data at some point.”

Can we catalog and analyze the whole world of news? In the digital humanities, they are cataloging and analyzing the world’s greatest novels. Can we do something on that scale with media content?

“The data are there. In the Netherlands, I work with the Royal Library, which digitized the complete archive of some of our national newspapers. So we have 6-7 million newspaper articles archived since the second world war. The Cline Center for Democracy has a fantastic collection of digital material, as well. I think the Sunshine Project has also archived a lot of materials.

By **MATTHEW BARNIDGE**
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA
NEWSLETTER EDITOR



Wouter van Atteveldt offers insights and advice on computational methods in communication research. Photo courtesy of Wouter van Atteveldt.

Continued on page 4

INSIDE CONCEPTS

CT&M PROGRAM: AEJMC 2017	PAGE 2	CM&M SPECIAL CALL	PAGE 4
SUBMISSION SUMMARY: AEJMC 2017	PAGE 3	TALKING “BIG DATA,” CONTINUED	PAGE 4
CALL FOR BARROW AWARD APPLICATIONS	PAGE 3	CT&M 2016-17 OFFICERS	PAGE 5

CT&M Program in Chicago

*MELISSA GOTLIEB
COLLEGE OF MEDIA &
COMMUNICATION
TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
PROGRAM CHAIR*



Thanks to the hard work and dedication among our chairs and the AEJMC staff, CT&M has an exceptional program lined up for Chicago. We will kick off the conference by continuing our long-running tradition of partnering with PCIG to offer a preconference workshop focused on advanced methodology. This year, we will offer a workshop on the theory and practice of meta-analysis led by Mike Allen (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).

Our PF&R and teaching chairs--Jennifer Hoewe and Kristen Landreville--have helped to organize an exciting set of co-sponsored panels. Our first PF&R panel, co-sponsored with MMEE, will focus on methodological issues and best practices for collecting data using online and mobile technologies. Our second PF&R panel, co-sponsored with MC&S, will bring together former and current journal editors to discuss ways to improve the quality of empirical research in our field.

Our first teaching panel, co-sponsored with CTEC, will highlight strategies and tactics for teaching media literacy in the areas of communication, politics, and technology. Our second teaching panel, co-sponsored with VISC, will discuss the importance of teaching data and visual storytelling skills in the classroom. Also, we will once again partner with CTEC to bring you a co-sponsored research panel focused on social media and the election. Last year's panel in Minneapolis was a success, and this is sure to be another exciting one!

Don't forget to check out all of our refereed research sessions, including our "Best of" panel on Friday evening, which will be followed by our member's meeting.

I look forward to seeing you in Chicago!

Time	Session Type	Description
Tuesday, August 8, 2017 1:00 to 5:00 pm	Preconference Workshop with PCIG	Introduction to Meta-Analysis
Wednesday, August 9, 2017 1:30 to 3:00 pm	Refereed Paper Panel	
Wednesday, August 9, 2017 5:00 to 6:30 pm	Teaching Panel with CTEC	Active Learning Strategies for Teaching Media Literacy at the Intersection of Communication, Politics, and Technology
Thursday, August 10, 2017 11:45 am to 1:00 pm	PF&R Panel with MMEE	Issues and Best Practices for Conducting Online and Mobile Research
Thursday, August 10, 2017 1:30 to 3:00 pm	Scholar-to-Scholar Session	
Friday, August 11, 2017 8:15 to 9:45 am	Refereed Paper HD	
Friday, August 11, 2017 12:15 to 1:30 pm	Research Panel with CTEC	Social Media and Voters: Challenges and Opportunities for Political and Civic Engagement
Friday, August 11, 2017 12:15 to 1:30 pm	Scholar-to-Scholar Session	
Friday, August 11, 2017 1:45 to 3:15 pm	PF&R Panel with MCSD	Bad Science, Good Science: Improving Research in our Field
Friday, August 11, 2017 5:15 to 6:45 pm	Refereed Paper Panel	Best of CT&M
Friday, August 11, 2017 7:00 to 8:30 pm	Member's Meeting	
Saturday, August 12, 2017 9:15 to 10:45 am	Teaching Panel with VISC	Teaching Data Journalism: What to Do and How to Start
Saturday, August 12, 2017 11:00 am to 12:30 pm	Refereed Paper Panel	

AEJMC 2017 Submissions Summary

ELIZABETH STOYCHEFF
DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNICATION
WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH CHAIR



Now that the 2017 AEJMC submission deadline has passed, we are excited to announce that we received 72 submissions to the division this year.

Our rigorous review process is currently underway, and we will notify authors of the status of their submissions via email in mid-May. This year, we are awarding four CT&M awards: Top Paper, Top Student Paper, Top Theory Paper, and Top Methods Paper. All four awards will be presented at our business meeting in August.

The majority of submissions (50 manuscripts) were submitted to the open competition, and 22 manuscripts were submitted to the student competition. This submission total is on par with previous years, which is encouraging that we are maintaining our numbers in such a heavily political year when the Political Communication Interest Group is petitioning to form its own

AEJMC division. We're glad to see both groups thriving.

The following breakdown shows our submissions compared to other divisions. In total, 1,586 manuscripts were submitted across all divisions in 2017.

	2014	2015	2016	2017
CT&M	79	99	72	72
CTEC	105	135	98	114
MC&S	134	157	134	97
PR	219	166	112	105

Best of luck on your submissions, and we hope to see you in Chicago!

2017 Barrow Minority Scholarship

BY BRETT SHERRICK
DEPARTMENT OF
JOURNALISM & CREATIVE MEDIA
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
MEMBERSHIP CHAIR



Applications are now being accepted for the 2017 Barrow Minority Doctoral Student Scholarship. The scholarship includes a cash award and a free one-year membership in the Communication Theory and Methodology Division (CT&M) of AEJMC.

The scholarship honors the late Professor Lionel C. Barrow, Jr., of Howard University, in recognition of his pioneering efforts in support of minority education in journalism and mass communication. Reflections on Dr. Barrow from previous scholarship winners are available in the spring editions of CT&M Concepts, available at <http://aejmc.us/ctm/newsletter/>. The award is designed to aid doctoral students in journalism or mass communication programs to complete their dissertation research and academic studies. The student's work does not need to address issues of race or ethnicity.

The award is sponsored by the CT&M Division and is made possible in part through contributions from the Minorities and Communication Division, the Commission on the Status of Minorities, the Mass Communication and Society Division, and personal donations. Racial or ethnic minority students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents and are enrolled in a Ph.D. program in journalism or mass communication are encouraged to apply. Applicants need not be members of AEJMC or the CT&M Division.

Applications will be evaluated on the basis of each candidate's capacity for making significant contributions to communication theory and methodology. To be considered for this scholarship, please provide the following: (1) a letter outlining research interests and career plans, (2) a curriculum vitae, and (3) two letters of recommendation. The letter and CV should be sent via email to Dr. Brett Sherrick, Membership Chair, to bisherrick@ua.edu. The letters of recommendation should be sent directly by the recommender to the same email address. Letters of recommendation may also be sent via regular mail to Dr. Brett Sherrick, CT&M Membership Chair, Box 870172, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487.

Submissions must be emailed (or postmarked) no later than May 1, 2017. Questions may be addressed to Dr. Sherrick at the email listed above. The scholarship will be awarded at the CT&M business meeting at the 2017 AEJMC conference in Chicago, August 9-12.

CM&M Special Paper Call

JÖRG MATTHES CT&M's journal, *Communication Methods & Measures*, invites submissions for a special issue on computational methods.
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
 UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA
 DIVISION HEAD



For this special issue, we invite submissions that further the understanding, development, and application of computational methods in communication research. Computational methods include (but are not limited to) methods such as textual analysis, topic modeling, social/semantic network analysis, online experiments, machine learning, and agent-based modeling and simulations.

In particular, we welcome submissions on: innovative ways to use computational methods for communication research; the evaluation and validation of computational approaches to studying communication research; and the application of

computational methods in communication research and their link with theory. The special issue may also include a "teacher's corner" article with brief descriptions of useful software packages and tools for studying communication. Authors interested in this format are encouraged to contact special issue co-editor Wouter van Atteveldt prior to submission.

The deadline for submission is July 1, 2017. Submitters should include a statement in the cover letter that the manuscript is being submitted for the special issue on computational methods. Articles will be peer reviewed and a decision rendered within 60 days, with a target publication date of March 2018. Instructions for authors and a description of the online submission process can be found on the journal's home page at <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/HCMS>.

Talking "Big Data"

Continued from page 1

What is the goal of the special issue?

"The goal of the special issue is to hopefully gain a bit of momentum with computational methods. There is a lot of uncertainty. What are computational methods? Who is doing what? Where can we get the tools? Do I need to be a tool developer myself or is it okay if I just apply a tool? So we thought that with the special issue, we can bring together some of the best research that is currently happening in the field, and hopefully start a more concrete community around these methods."

What kind of research do you want to see submitted, as guest editor?

"We are looking for papers that actively develop new methods, as well as papers that apply existing tools to get a new view or new perspective on social scientific problems in communication."

What are some practical steps that CT&M members can take to expand their research profiles into computational methods? How would you get started, if you were starting out today?

"I would probably come to our ICA (International Communication Association) pre-conference. If you are interested in social media, I would invest in tutorials on how to scrape

Twitter or Facebook using R. Finally, a number of us have been giving workshops around different universities aimed not just at students but also faculty members. There are a lot of opportunities to learn about these methods."

What packages do you use in R?

"For generally scraping websites, I use `httr()` and `rvest()`. For scraping social media sites, there are packages like `twitteR()` and `RFacebook()` geared towards those specific APIs. We've also been developing some tools specifically for textual analysis, particularly packages `corpustools()`, `RNewsflow()`, and `Rsyntax()`. Another very popular package at the moment is `quanteda()`."

What advice would you give to a first-year Ph.D. student who is interested in computational methods?

"You don't have to become a programmer, but you should definitely include some computational methods in your toolbox. Learn R and some of these packages, or alternatively learn Python and some of the modules that do the same work.

It is easier than it used to be. Years ago this would not have been something that a lot of social scientists could have done. But now, the basic R skills that you need can easily be learned as part of your Ph.D. training."

2016-2017 CT&M OFFICERS

**Division Head,
Editor-in-Chief,
Communication Methods and
Measures, &
Editorial Board Liaison**

Jörg Matthes
Department of Communication
University of Vienna
Währinger Straße 29
1090 Vienna, Austria
Phone: 011-43-1-4277-49307
E-mail: joerg.matthes@univie.ac.at

**Vice-Head &
Program Chair**

Melissa Gotlieb
College of Media & Communication
Texas Tech University
P.O. Box 43082
Lubbock, TX 79404
Phone: 806-834-2998
E-mail: melissa.gotlieb@ttu.edu

Research Chair

Elizabeth Stoycheff
Department of Communication
Wayne State University
563 Manoogian Hall
Detroit, MI 48202
Phone: 313-577-4572
E-mail: elizabeth.stoycheff@wayne.edu

Teaching Committee Chair

Kristen Landreville
Department of Communication &
Journalism
University of Wyoming
425 Ross Hall
1000 E. University Ave.
Laramie, WY 82071
Phone: 307-314-9090
E-mail: klandrev@uwyo.edu

**Professional Freedom &
Responsibility Chair**

Jennifer Hoewe
Department of Journalism & Creative
Media
University of Alabama
Box 870172
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
Phone: 205-348-9760
E-mail: jehoewe@ua.edu

**Membership Chair &
Webmaster**

Brett Sherrick
Department of Journalism & Creative
Media
University of Alabama
Box 870172
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
Phone: 205-348-7570
E-mail: bisherrick@ua.edu

Newsletter Editor

Matthew Barnidge
Department of Communication
University of Vienna
Althanstraße 14 (UZA II)
1090 Vienna, Austria
Phone: 011-43-1-4277-49344
E-mail: matthew.barnidge@univie.ac.at

Social Media Coordinator

Magdalena Saldaña
College of Media & Communication
Texas Tech University
P.O. Box 43082
Lubbock, TX 79404
Phone: 806-834-5044
E-mail: magdalena.saldana@ttu.edu

Graduate Student Liaison

Trevor Diehl
Department of Communication
University of Vienna
Althanstraße 14 (UZA II)
1090 Vienna, Austria
Phone: 011-43-1-4277-48321
E-mail: trevor.diehl@univie.ac.at

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