

2011 Mass Communication and Society Division Survey: Who Are We?

The survey described below tackled the topic of “who we are” as a division. Using the closed-ended and open-ended questions, division members were asked how they would define the Mass Communication and Society division. Members were also asked for their thoughts about special theme calls as a conference programming strategy. Results are highlighted in the Spring/Summer 2011 newsletter and will be discussed at the division business meeting in St. Louis. Thank you to all who participated!

Summary

For the most part, it appears that our division members view Mass Communication and Society as a broad division that encompasses a wide range of theories and methodologies. This general consensus is qualified by some members’ views that methods more often seen in MCS papers are quantitative rather than qualitative in nature. There is less consensus about whether the theories often seen in MCS papers necessarily deal with the intersection between mass media and society. Perhaps for this reason, opinions appear to be split as to whether our division is a “catch-all” division.

Regarding the idea of special research paper calls, members are favorable toward the idea (though not overwhelmingly favorable). Comments about this idea suggest it might be better to create themed sessions around already-submitted papers rather than reserving valuable session space for a special call in exchange for accepting more general submission papers. Some fantastic ideas emerged for special calls, however, which we might incorporate as teaching panels, PF&R (Professional Freedom & Responsibility) panels, or in a general research paper call that softly encourages, but does not mandate, paper submissions of certain themes. Each of these options would preserve our ability to accept as many papers as we have been able to in the past.

Below are the results of the survey, closed-ended response results followed by open-ended responses. Please especially read the open-ended responses, as there are many great ideas and wonderful insights that our peers have provided to us.

Closed-ended Responses

Closed-ended Items	Number of Responses					Overall Scores		
	Strongly disagree (=1)	Disagree (=2)	Neutral (=3)	Agree (=4)	Strongly agree (=5)	Total N	Mean Score	Std Deviation
1. How much do you agree or disagree that the Mass Communication and Society division accepts/encompasses	3	5	9	38	18	73	3.86	1.00

a wide range of methodologies?									
2. How much do you agree or disagree that Mass Communication and Society focuses on a small handful of theories/theoretical frameworks?	15	33	12	11	1	72	2.31	1.02	
3. How much do you agree or disagree that Mass Communication and Society only deals with research that directly addresses or measures a social phenomenon or effect (for example, speaking about the general public rather than the individual)?	7	20	26	15	4	72	2.85	1.04	
4. How much would you agree or disagree that our division is a catch-all division?	4	24	8	27	8	71	3.15	1.18	
5. How much would you agree or disagree that the previous questions were easy to answer?	1	19	15	28	9	72	3.35	1.05	
8. Regarding conference programming, how much would you agree or disagree that we should try to have special calls for research papers that fit a specific topic or theme?	3	16	14	23	15	71	3.44	1.18	
9. How much would you agree or disagree that the majority of our research panels should be centered around a particular theme? (This means that filling these panels with theme-relevant conference papers would be a priority, in addition to accepting the top-rated submissions.)	11	25	5	23	6	70	2.83	1.29	

Open-ended Responses

6. Please provide a short description of the division as you would define us to AEJMC members who are curious about who we are.

It addresses all things mass media, all theoretical perspectives and methodological perspectives, as long as mass media is key to the study.

division deals with issues related to mass media's impact on society.

We do research about how the media affect society.

Mass Communication & Society deals with the societal implications of media in all aspects of our lives.

A group of scholars who dedicate to research, teaching, and outreach regarding the roles of mass communications in our society

A division that explores media and communication processes, influences, and effects on people individually and collectively.

The MC&S division focuses on media behaviors and media institutions with attention to the societal level.

I would point them to a CFP.

A rather broad division focused on the study of mass communication from a variety of methodological and theoretical perspectives. That's both a strength and also a weakness.

The MC&S division is interested in the influence of media on society, the content of media as it relates to portrayals of groups, and the ways in which groups have access to and use different kinds of media. This includes topics such as media and politics, portrayals of women/African Americans/ Muslims/[insert group here] on television, and the uses of social networking sites by various demographic groups. These are just examples.

A community of scholars who embrace the overarching view of the importance of the mass media on our society.

The division is interested in a wide range of ideas dealing with mass communication and society.

A division in the mass communication (as opposed to media studies or journalism studies) traditions, whose members use primarily quantitative methods to test so-called effects of media on society.

MCS emphasizes the relationship between aspects of society and mass media

MC&S should be dealing with all sorts media as social phenomena and discuss the social implications of media effects and processes. Macro level theorizing is critical in scientific development since it is where policy relevant research is likely to be developed.

Focus on social aspects of media (i.e., rather than on individual effects).

a collection of teachers and scholars exploring the interaction of media and society, examining both the impact of media on society as well as the impact of society on media

MC&S encompasses all types of typical mass media research, particularly related to social issues and the influence of media on society or members of society.

it examines the relationship between media and society, including media uses, influences and effects.

Mass media effects is how I think of the division.

Interested in the effects of mass communication and causality of these effects.

Interested in anything that connects mass media (broadly understood) to culture, "society" or groups within it, includes macro-level analysis, policy implications and occasionally interactions of media and society through individuals or small groups

Conduct, present and discuss research based on original data (not essays) that encompasses social-psychological approaches and methodologies. Can be qualitative but generally quantitative.

Explores the relationship of media and society.

Focusing strongly on media effects, with a bias toward quantitative methodology.

A tireless and intellectually stimulating division that deal with important academic and professional issues in Mass Communication and Society.

MC&S focuses more on messages in the mass media and their impact, and less on specific delivery systems.

Primarily media-effects approach to issues associated with mass communication research. Open to all levels and types of analysis.

Mostly media effects but from multiple perspectives.

These are macrolevel perspectives of the role of media within society

Don't know

More of a macro-level division examining the relationships between media and society.

MC&S primarily covers research on media effects and media sociology (social influences on media content). The division is open to all research methodologies, though not much of the research is rhetorical analysis.

As its name implies, this division focuses on the interrelationship of mass or public communication and the larger society, broadly defined. Thus all research that deals with the impact of society on mass communication, or mass communication on society, or both, is of interest to this division.

It is a division that deals with all the ramifications of issues that have to do with the relationships between the mass media, in their entirety, and the processes of communication within the context of the dynamics of society.

I would say the division is encompassing of many different areas, and pushes forward a lot of effects research that deal with the major mass communication theories.

Since Mass Communications is literally communications to/of the masses, virtually all non-personal information exchange fall within the category. It therefore is the study of the areas of commonality shared by each discipline - the concept that there are theories and methods that are relevant to all forms of Mass Media. This division looks at ways to define, study, research and instruct these principles.

focuses on issues of media and society with particular attention to areas such as media and family; media sociology; effects; public communications; etc.

We deal with the mass media and mediated interpersonal communication and their effect on individuals and society.

It brings together progressive thinkers to discuss the relationships between different forms of media on a variety of segments of society. Eclectic.

MC&S focuses on scholarship spotlighting the influence mass communication holds on the individual and society as a whole.

We can/should have a narrow core focus (mass comm & society), but since that's always changing, we have to be open to almost any kind of related research. Remember when (video)games were not considered the kind of thing we studied or discussed? When telephony was better addressed by engineering? Anything with celebrities was better for pop culture? If we keep the net wide as possible we can adapt and stay relevant because society & mass comm will continue to adapt.

7. Please provide a short description of the division as you would define us to conference paper submitters who have not yet decided where to submit their manuscripts.

It addresses all things mass media, all theoretical perspectives and methodological perspectives, as long as mass media is key to the study.

We welcome research about how any form of mass media affect society. One way to define it is we study media effects on the audience directly or indirectly.

If your paper deals with the societal implications of media, we're your choice!

A group of scholars who dedicate to research, teaching, and outreach regarding the roles of mass communications in our society

If it deals with mediated communication, then it's applicable. If it doesn't, then I'd seek a more appropriate division to which to send your paper.

I would point them to a CFP.

It can be seen as something of a catch-all for papers that deal with mass communication effects and processes of all kinds. And, generally, it leans quantitative rather than qualitative.

The MC&S division is interested in the influence of media on society, the content of media as it relates to portrayals of groups, and the ways in which groups have access to and use different kinds of media. This includes topics such as media and politics, portrayals of women/African Americans/ Muslims/[insert group here] on television, and the uses of social networking sites by various demographic groups. These are just examples. (I guess the same.)

MCS is open minded about many appropriate research foci. It is very competitive, however; so it is difficult to have a paper accepted.

A division in the mass communication (as opposed to media studies or journalism studies) traditions, whose members use primarily quantitative methods to test so-called effects of media on society. Social science orientation. This isn't the best place for a qualitative paper or one that uses humanities-style interpretive methods.

MCS accepts papers that analyze how media and its messages affect or are influenced by some element of society

Research on macro-social communication activities, processes and effects, including policy relevant research is welcome. I think you want to cast the widest possible net for quality

research that relates to the overall domain. Special topics can be enunciated to emphasize interest in particular themes, but not to replace a more general call for relevant papers.

Ditto

The Mass Communication division welcomes a wide range of theoretical and methodological perspectives, encouraging multidisciplinary and multilevel methodological innovation.

Huge division. A lot of papers could fit here.

If a paper pertains to societal/macro questions and cannot be submitted to a thematic division, then they should try the Mass Comm and Society division.

same as #6

Pretty much the same as above -- but emphasize open to studies dealing with all kinds of media , using any academically recognized methodology.

Research based on original data (not essays) that encompasses social-psychological approaches and methodologies. Can be qualitative but generally quantitative.

Explores the relationship of media and society employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

As above.

Effective and transparent in providing feedback on academic and professional conference papers.

--not sure--

Same as above

same as above -- if less theory or methods than CT&M requires, I'd recommend MC&S

Papers that look at how media influence and/or function in society.

Don't know

Tends to be empirically focused.

MC&S primarily covers research on media effects and media sociology (social influences on media content). The division is open to all research methodologies, though not much of the research is rhetorical analysis.

All research that focuses on the impact of society on mass communication, or mass communication on society, or both, is of interest to this division.

A division that accommodates papers on areas of application of the communication processes to the dynamics of social interactions with a view to finding solutions to existing social problems and defining emerging social areas of concern

I would say the division would be a good fit if a) their paper used one of the major mass communication theories, and b) it didn't fit well in another division.

Since Mass Communications is literally communications to/of the masses, virtually all non-personal information exchange falls within the category. It therefore is the study of the areas of commonality shared by each discipline - the concept that there are theories and methods that are relevant to all forms of Mass Media. This division looks at ways to define, study, research and instruct these principles.

Anything to do with communication transmitted to a larger than interpersonal audience, via a mediated channel, and how such messages are received and perceived.

Same as above.

Papers usually focus on how mass communication influences people. While we accept any methodology and theoretical framework, the majority of the work I'm familiar with is more quantitative than qualitative.

Essentially "must address at least one aspect of mass communication and one aspect of society. But all research forms and approaches will be considered."

10. Finally, if you had to choose one theme/topic, what theme/topic would you choose to have our division feature in the next annual conference?

The intersection of mass media and interpersonal communication. I think this is a fascinating area that does not get enough attention in our field and it doesn't "fit" traditionally anywhere. But, I'm interested in understanding how people communicate interpersonally about mass media.

How the media affect civic participation.

Changing definitions of mass communication

1. Media at multiple levels (micro/meso/macro): e.g., community structure and roles of news media/journalism
2. Social media and social movements/protests
3. Citizen media and democracy

I'd first like to clarify my responses to the latter two questions. I know from being a former research chair and vice head that special calls often result in few submissions, which can compromise quality. I think we should have special calls for the JOURNAL, and provide enough time to allow for quality scholarship and review; however, I think it's in our members' best interest to be more inclusive of topics and not dictate a special call, which takes up valuable programming space. Also, in the past, we have developed themes, when possible, but only AFTER the best papers were accepted--not the other way around! Again, to do otherwise, limits the quality and diversity of our research, which should be our top priority and our responsibility to dues-paying members. Thanks for doing another division-wide survey!

mass communication in the public service

"Innovations in methods for studying mass comm and society;" "Toward a general theory of mass comm and society." Anything that would strengthen theory and/or methods

A reconsideration of "mass" communication (how is that changing?) and the effects paradigm as a whole.

Not sure

public sphere

Can't think of one.

The vastness of raw data: Wikileaks, digitized records, and information overload

Media Effects and Public Policy

Communication and social equality

None.

The Impact of society on media (e.g., community structure model); or Testing the Intersection of Two Theories (e.g., agenda-setting and community structure theories).

I hear all the time that we are drowning in a wealth of media channels and information, yet we're not any smarter; and if you agree with some recent studies of college students, we are dumber. What are the societal implications of an uninformed society and what role do media play in rectifying the situation or aiding and abetting the situation?

Audience uses and gratifications of social media.

Not sure. Thanks for doing this.

fyi, Each division head usually picks a theme. Social Media and its effect on other media.

the place of media in fostering a civil society

State of uses & grats versus competing perspectives

Social media.

Critical perspectives on media and society.

1. Government-media relations in developed and developing societies
2. Uses and Abuses of new media (social media) in developed and developing societies
3. Teaching Mass Communication and Society at the undergraduate level: New Approaches.

can't decide on a theme... but please do not include the words "Social Media" soooo overdone.

I don't think a theme is necessary, and can limit the amount of creativity and types of submissions.

new media

Media literacy broadly defined

None right now.

Unsure.

Narrative communication

Pushing the envelope of agenda-setting theory: Applying the theory in new ways (to media forms other than hard news)

Agenda setting between social and traditional news media.

Discussing the relevance of traditional media theories as applied to new media technologies.

In our ever-changing culture and our ever-changing industry, what principles do not (or should not) change and which must be fluid.

Media Ecology

evolution of the concept of 'mass' communication

Environmental communication and/or community effects

The political economy of media and the changes given the continued conglomeration and corporatization of the media industries.

how new media is broadening the field and making it more interdisciplinary.

Just a comment on the previous questions; panel/themes help the division coalesce around certain topics but there must be room to deviate. Whatever the theme is deemed to be, something to focus on what's happened in Egypt and the Arab world has got to be featured (social media in non-US systems).