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Editorial: Special 20th anniversary issue – the challenges facing journalism today

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This is a special time for *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism* as we celebrate our 20th anniversary. When the first issue came out in 2000, we envisaged that the journal would provide an opportunity for an expanding community of established scholars who did not yet have a home for their work and for new academics who were looking for one. We hope we have come some way toward fulfilling that vision over the last twenty years. We like to think that some measure of that is our increase from 3 issues a year to our current 12 issues a year and *Journalism*'s high impact factor.

In the first issue of *Journalism* (2000), our concern was to focus on the relatively new field, prompting the question “What is journalism studies?”. Prominent scholars in the field provided a series of insightful essays exploring both the past and the future of journalism studies.

Our 10th anniversary issue in 2009 looked ahead by asking “What is the future of journalism?”. At the time, we noted that ‘journalism [was] expected to wither in an age of financial volatility, decreased revenues, porous borders, layoffs and buyouts, chipped prestige, diminished audiences, concerns about physical safety and variable content. Conversely, it [was also] expected to flourish: information abounds and is more accessible than ever before, the varieties of content and form are unequalled in history, and more people are involved than at any other point in time as both journalism’s producers and its consumers. The task of auguring the future [came] against these conflicting sets of expectations about journalism’s next stage of development.” In response, some scholars focussed on contexts, either geographic – US journalism, Australian news – or content-driven – science journalism, alternative journalism, working-class journalism. Others sought to highlight globalization, changing business pressures, internationalizing journalism education, diminished work conditions and definitional ambiguity. Still others offered new ways of configuring journalism’s operation – the second person effect, offsetting disintermediation, the three step flow. And finally, other scholars pinpointed how

journalism had changed or might yet change further: Was European news leading the way of the journalistic project? Could multi-platform journalists alter the landscape of news-work? Would India emerge as a new venue in which to think about all things journalistic? Would journalism save itself by reorienting towards workers rather than consumers? Because prediction is a difficult business, heightened when technology, politics, and culture are in such a sea of flux, the essays varied widely in the responses they offered.

For this 20th anniversary (2019) issue of *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*, we changed our tack. Rather than asking members of the editorial board to be modern day Nostradamuses, we have requested that they ‘Name the single biggest challenge facing journalism today and how its impact could be resolved and/or minimized’. Our reasoning was simple: with so many simultaneous provocations and questions currently cluttering the news environment, would it be possible to isolate just one so as to better articulate possible modes of resistance to it? *Journalism*’s editorial board rose to the task in thoughtful and creative ways. Though many found it easier to identify challenges than outline how to minimize or resolve them, the challenges named by the authors in this special issue inhabit the full spectrum of journalistic values, beliefs, norms and practices. They touch upon questions of identity, with particular attention to evolving modes of occupational and professional identity. They draw out issues of trust, autonomy and legitimacy, all under siege on today’s journalistic landscape. They point to the relevance of safety, of a physical, gendered and/or informational nature. They query both longstanding and emergent models of practice and funding. They foreground issues of technology and attributes of institutional environments. And finally, they probe journalism’s representativeness—geographic, thematic, and topical.

What strikes us is how many of the contributors concentrate on issues which are not new arrivals in the news environment. Rather, many have concerned communication and journalism scholars throughout the 20th and 21st century. These include problems associated with normative values and democracy; the political economy of the news media; the relevance of audiences and public trust; definitions of journalism itself; and the salience of old and new forms of professional ideology. It is fitting and useful

that a number of contributors deal with resonant challenges and threats that figure prominently in our current political climate, such as authoritarianism, populism and fake news, but it is worth remembering that many of these provocations draw from age-old problems now contextualized in a 2019 setting.

As we celebrate 20 years of the journal and look forward at the same time, we would like to acknowledge and thank a number of people who have made *Journalism* possible. We thank the members past and present of our editorial board for their support throughout the project; our guest editors, our army of reviewers; and of course our many authors. There are also a number of particular individuals who were crucial to *Journalism*'s success: First, Michael Bromley who was with us at the birth, incubation and early years of the *Journalism* project; Briony Fane, the journal's chief editorial assistant for many years until we moved over to Manuscript Central; Taru Narula, our peer review associate; Glenda Cooper, our current book review editor; and Jennifer Henrichsen, our editorial coordinator for this special issue. We also extend thanks to Matt Carlson, Carolyn Kitch, Kevin Williams and Jean Chalaby, previous book review editors; to David Conrad, Samantha Oliver, Lyndsey Beutin, Sandra Ristovska, Nora Draper, Piotr Szpunar, Matt Carlson, Lokman Tsui, Keren Tenenboim- Weinblatt, and Michael Serazio, for their editorial assistance in the US office; to our publisher SAGE – in particular Julia Hall who initiated and developed the idea with us and Jane Price who saw the production into reality; to Mila Steele and Caroline Sparrow, who took over from Julia and Jane; to our previous publishing editors Mark Stanton, Lauren Ashby, and currently James Skelding Tattle; and assistant editors Chantal Stilwell, Laura Birrell, and currently Hannah Settle. Finally a big thanks to all the production staff past and present in India. We salute you all with twenty years of gratitude.