ABOUT THE CRC

Research is an integral part of faculty activities in the College of Communication (COM) at Boston University. Researchers at COM use the most advanced theory and methods to examine communication phenomena. Addressing both theoretical and applied problems through a range of quantitative and qualitative perspectives, faculty engage in the most cutting-edge developments in communication research that provide an extraordinarily fertile ground for innovation and science.

The Communication Research Center (CRC) was established in 1959 and reorganized in 1994. The CRC pioneered the use of television as a research tool, conducting systematic analyses on the effects of television on children and measuring political opinions and voting intentions. This early beginning led the CRC to develop a specialty in survey research methodology.

Today, the CRC has 34 research fellows who draw upon a variety of methodologies and specialize in topics including media effects, media studies, emerging media, political communication, health communication, public relations, impact of media on popular culture and adolescents, international communication, and communication law. Several research faculty also serve as editors of competitive peer-reviewed journals.

In 2009, the CRC established the Communication Research Colloquium Series consisting of monthly research presentations that highlight current and original research of faculty. This forum provides an intellectual exchange of ideas and perspectives, features scholarship in several methodological traditions, and fosters discussions among faculty and students about a variety of research topics in the field of communication.

In 2011, the Dr. Melvin L. DeFleur Distinguished Lecture Series was established. Each year two distinguished scholars from outside of the University are invited to share their outstanding scholarship, expertise, and experience with the BU community. In recognition of the pioneering and inspirational contributions of Dr. Melvin L. DeFleur to the field of mass communication research and his service as a venerable and inexhaustible member of COM’s CRC, the faculty members named this series in his honor.
LETTER FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS

The 2017-2018 academic year was off to a busy start in the CRC. First, we’ve welcomed a number of new CRC research fellows, including a new cohort of doctoral students in Emerging Media Studies – Lee Hair, Sarah Parker Ward, and Li Zhang – as well as Lindsey Decker, a new full-time lecturer in the area of Film Studies.

Additionally, this was another productive semester of onsite data collection in the CRC. Via the COM SONA System, 16 studies were conducted, recruiting participants from 18 different COM courses to participate in 1074 study sessions. The numbers are only expected to grow moving forward this Spring.

Relatedly, continuing our efforts to facilitate the research efforts of our faculty and student fellows, a new online system for streamlining the booking of CRC resources was launched. All CRC members planning to make use of the physical facilities can complete a CRC Research Request via the following form. After having a request approved, formal reservations of specific spaces and equipment can be completed via the newly implemented QReserve online system which catalogues all available CRC resources. Any CRC member can visit http://sites.bu.edu/crc/research-resources/reservations/ to create a QReserve account and complete reservation requests.

We would not have been able to successfully implement this reservation system without the ongoing efforts of our dedicated CRC lab managers, Bochao Sun (M.A. student in Emerging Media Studies) and Jackie Rocheleau (M.S. student in Science Journalism). Joining them on the CRC staff this semester was our first ever Events/Publicity Coordinator, Sarah Wells (M.S. student in Science Journalism) and our returning SONA Administrator, Minkuan Chen (M.A. student in Emerging Media Studies). We have been incredibly lucky to have them all onboard, and are thankful for their ongoing assistance in managing, coordinating, and promoting various research efforts and presentations this semester.

Again, it’s been a busy semester, one which we hope comes to a smooth close for each of you. We wish everyone a relaxing and enjoyable winter break, and look forward to all the exciting research in store this coming Spring!
This semester, the CRC transitioned to an online reservation system for the booking and approval of all facility and equipment reservations.

This system, QReserve, will allow faculty and students to complete reservations for any of the center’s reservable resources. A full, searchable listing of rooms and equipment can be found at: http://sites.bu.edu/crc/research-resources/reservations/. To use the reservation system, you will need to create a QReserve account. Instructions for account creation are accessible here.

Slack is a real-time communication tool for teams, consisting of multiple channels within a shared workspace. In many ways, it represents a refined version of old-school IRC-style chatrooms.

We have set up a Slack workspace for CRC-affiliated faculty and students, with the hope that this will be a useful resource for facilitating communication and collaboration around research projects. The CRC workspace is currently set up so that anyone with a BU.edu email address can join.

Simply go to http://bu-crc.slack.com to set up an account. By default, new users are added to the #general, #random, and #announcements channels, but you are free to join or leave any public channels once your account is set up, as well as to create new channels to meet your needs. To join an existing private channel, you must be invited by a user who is already a member of that channel.
NEW DOCTORAL STUDENTS

Lee Hair

Lee Hair is a Ph.D. student in the Division of Emerging Media Studies, having also earned his Master’s in Emerging Media Studies at BU. He received his Bachelor’s degree in Classics from Austin College, after which he taught English as a second language for two years in Okinawa, Japan. In Japan, he became interested in the effects of interactive media in an educational context, as well as the online entertainment phenomenon of video game spectatorship. His current research focuses on video game spectatorship, with a particular interest in the parasocial interactions and sense of community between video game players and their viewers. Lee also conducts research concerning crowdfunding, niche online communities, and cultural differences in the adoption of digital platforms.

Sarah Parker Ward

Sarah Parker Ward is a Ph.D. student in the Emerging Media Studies program at the College of Communication. Prior to entering the program, she received her bachelor’s degree in business administration from SUNY Potsdam and her masters in communication from Marist College. Sarah has worked in marketing for ten years as the owner of a digital agency, developing content and social media strategies for national and global brands. At Boston University, Sarah is turning her attention to the healthcare sector, examining how emerging media can be leveraged to improve patient experiences. Her research explores the intersection of behavioral science, messaging frameworks and new communication modalities to deliver healthier outcomes, particularly in maternal health. Dedicated to service leadership, Sarah has also served on nonprofit boards and committees in higher education, healthcare, and the arts. When she is not working, she can often be found with her nose in a book or enjoying the outdoors with her two daughters and two giant Saint Bernards.

Li Zhang

Li Zhang is a Ph.D. student in the Division of Emerging Media Studies. He holds a B.A. in Chinese Literature from Peking University, and an M.A. and M.Phil. in Comparative Literature from SOAS, University of London and Columbia University respectively. Broadly speaking, Li Zhang’s research interests focus on how the proliferation of emerging media technologies could be used to promote pro-social behaviors and to empower individuals. He has also become more interested in Human-Robot Interaction (from bot accounts on social media to personal assistant gadgets) for the novel opportunities it provides for studying social, political and psychological issues. Outside school, Li Zhang practices Tai Chi and likes to fish.
Computers, robots, and wearable technologies are gaining the ability to sense, recognize, and respond intelligently to human emotion. This talk highlighted several important findings made at MIT, including surprises about the “true smile of happiness,” new ways cameras (and your smartphone, even in your handbag) can compute your bio-signals without using any new sensors, and finding electrical signals on the wrist that reveal insight into deep brain activity, with implications for autism, anxiety, epilepsy, and more.

What is the grand challenge we aim to solve next?

Professor Rosalind W. Picard, Sc.D. is founder and director of the Affective Computing Research Group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Media Lab, co-director of the Media Lab’s Advancing Wellbeing Initiative, and faculty chair of MIT’s Mind+Hand+Heart Initiative. She has co-founded Empatica, Inc. creating wearable sensors and analytics to improve health, and Affectiva, Inc. delivering technology to help measure and communicate emotion.
Social Media Use in Public Relations: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

SEPTEMBER 2017

This talk reviewed the results of a twelve-year longitudinal analysis trend study involving more than 5,500 public relations practitioners. Findings have found that the use of social and other digital communication media in public relations practice has continued to increase each year. This has provided unique opportunities not only for those who practice public relations but also for a wide variety of strategic publics who have been given dynamic new communication vehicles many are using effectively with a variety of internal and external strategic audiences. Results of this 2017 study include benchmark comparisons reflecting the opinions of those who practice public relations -- and an analysis of how these opinions have changed during the past twelve years.

From Social Networks to Neural Networks: The Case of a Shrinking Earth

OCTOBER 2017

This presentation summarized a research program about the influence of social networking on users' mental representation of distances on planet earth. Dr. Elasmar reported a consistent finding in measurement across years that links social media usage with a shrinking of the cognitive distances present in the minds of social media users. He discussed a theoretical framework that might explain and predict this perceptual effect and draws implications that stem from the relationships that this effect embodies.
Branding and Identity of the Nobel Prize

DECEMBER 2017

This talk reviewed recent research conducted with the cooperation of the Nobel Foundation, encompassing interviews with a range of Nobel Prize stockholders including Nobel Foundation management, heads of the awarding entities, selection committee members and laureates. This work represents the first (and only so far) field-based research on the topic. The complexities of the Nobel organization and the management, branding, communications and reputation issues confronting “the world’s most prestigious award” were covered.
danah boyd is a Principal Researcher at Microsoft Research, the founder and president of Data & Society, and a Visiting Professor at New York University. Her research is focused on addressing social and cultural inequities by understanding the relationship between technology and society. Her most recent books - “It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens” and “Participatory Culture in a Networked Age” - examine the intersection of everyday practices and social media. She is a 2011 Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a Director of both Crisis Text Line and Social Science Research Council, and a Trustee of the National Museum of the American Indian. She received a bachelor’s degree in computer science from Brown University, a master’s degree from the MIT Media Lab, and a Ph.D in Information from the University of California, Berkeley.
**PRESENTATIONS**

**UPCOMING**


**Donegan, J.** (March, 2018). Cult Fandom Discourse on Twitter: The Room, The Disaster Artist, and the dilution of subcultural capital. To be presented at the American Culture Association/Popular Culture Association conference in Indianapolis, IN.


**RECENT**


**Amazeen, M. A.** (August, 2017). The Ethics and Efficacy of Native Advertising. Panel participant for Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in Chicago, IL.


**Cahill, T.** (November, 2017). Accidental haiku: The historical and contemporary function of text mining in the production of poetry. Presentation at the 12th Chicago Colloquium on Digital Humanities and Computer Science, Chicago, IL.


**Recent (cont.)**

**Cummings, J. J.** (May, 2017). Consumer-level virtual reality and media multitasking: Competing trends. As part of the “Examining the Impact of Virtual Reality on Behavior and Human Computer Interaction” panel conducted at the 67th Annual International Communication Association Conference, San Diego, CA. With Dr. Donna Z. Davis, Dr. Arief E. Huhn, Dr. Paul Edwin Ketelaar, Dr. Marnix Van Gisbergen, and Dr. Tanja K. Aitamurto.


**Groshek, J.** (August, 2017). The Netflix effect: How streaming television and binge-watching are shaping political attitudes, perceptions of risk, cultivation of empathy, and educational achievement. Presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Chicago, IL.


**Guo, L.** (November, 2017). WeChat as a semi-public alternative sphere: Exploring the use of WeChat among Chinese older adults. Invited talk at Fudan University, Shanghai.


Katz, J. E. (September, 2017). A lifetime of learning: My experiences in the private, public and academic sectors in my contemporary research interests. Invited speaker, School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University, Beijing, PRC.


Katz, J. E. (July, 2017). Keynote address, joint Kansai University Faculty of Sociology 50th Anniversary Celebration and 2017 Japan Society of Information and Communications Research (JSICR), Kansai, Japan.


RECENT (cont.)


Vigil, T. R. (November, 2017). Womentoring: Can I Talk About That In the Classroom? Panel member at the National Communication Association annual conference in Dallas, TX.


MEDIA APPEARANCES


**MEDIA APPEARANCES (cont.)**


**JOURNAL ARTICLES, BOOKS & BOOK CHAPTERS**

**IN PRESS**


2017 (cont.)


UPCOMING


HONORS & AWARDS


Minkuan Chen
COM SONA Administrator
Minkuan is a M.A. student in the Division of Emerging Media Studies. Research interests include intercultural communication and social networks, inspirational and civic media, and psychological and social effects of emerging communication technologies.

Jackie Rocheleau
CRC Lab Manager
Jackie is a M.S. student in Science Journalism. Research interests include neuroscience, psychology, and health, particularly in the contexts of journalism and communicating the science of these disciplines to the public.

Bochao Sun
CRC Lab Manager
Bochao is a M.A. student in Emerging Media Studies. Research interests include data analysis and visualization, interactive and user experience, and commercial use of virtual reality.

Sarah Wells
CRC Events/Publicity Coordinator
Sarah is a M.S. student in Science Journalism. Research interests include communication of science, particularly physics, computer science, and mathematics.