

Subject: Center on Digital Culture and Society - September Newsletter

Date: Monday, September 12, 2022 at 9:10:05 AM Eastern Daylight Time

From: Center on Digital Culture and Society

To: Girginova, Katerina Vassileva

Abstract Circular Logo and text

Reimagining our common future through critical scholarship and dialogue on digital culture, technology, and society.

The Center on Digital Culture and Society at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication is pleased to announce the launch of our fall 2022 newsletter - the CDCS information hub.

This month you'll discover news about our latest publications, presentations, and upcoming events, as well as details about an exciting new initiative.

This newsletter is 1600 words, or a 12 minute read.

WHO WE ARE

CDCS is an intellectual community consisting of Postdoctoral Fellows, Doctoral Fellows, undergraduate students, core faculty members at the University of Pennsylvania, and research affiliates from across the world.

We are pleased to welcome our fourth cohort of Postdoctoral Fellows this fall: [Frances Corry, Chelsea Butkowski, and Yuval Katz!](#)

PUBLICATIONS

Articles, Chapters & Commentary

[Cienna Davis](#), CDCS Doctoral Fellow, publishes chapter titled [Digital Blackface and the Troubling Intimacies of TikTok Dance Challenges](#) in edited book on TikTok Cultures in the United States. Davis argues that on TikTok, digital blackface is characterized by predatory inclusion, cultural extraction, and fungibility. Encompassing these features, dance challenges offer a complex site to examine the racial and gender violence of platform capitalism within today's most ascendant social media platform.

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Associate Professor [Jessa Lingel](#) guest-edits [special issue on dead and dying platforms](#). Through a collection of reflection papers, the latter explores death as a metaphor for the discontinuance of various digital platforms.

[Frances Corry](#), CDCS Postdoctoral Fellow, publishes an article in the above mentioned special issue titled [Why does a platform die? Diagnosing platform death at Friendster's end](#). Corry draws on interviews with 13 former Friendster employees to explore the discursive negotiation of this platform's death and the broader utility of technological death as a lens—especially within Silicon Valley techno-cultures saturated with death discourses.

[Lin Zhang](#), Assistant Professor of Communication and Media Studies at the University of New Hampshire, publishes two new co-authored articles: *A spatiotemporal approach toward platform capitalism in China* and [The new whole state system: Reinventing the Chinese State to Promote Innovation](#). In the latter, Zhang focuses on the New Whole State System in relation to tech companies owned by Tsinghua University to analyze the actually existing state capitalism in China as a spatiotemporally specific and conjuncturally situated assemblage of discourses, policies, and practices.

Zhang also publishes a chapter titled [Moving beyond Shanzhai? Contradictions of platformized family production in planetary network of e-Commerce Labor](#) in edited collection [Digital Work in the Planetary Market](#). In this work Zhang broadens the scope and meaning of the term digital labor to demystify the much-celebrated figure of the autonomous, individualized e-commerce entrepreneur in rural China by depicting the embeddedness of e-

commerce work in a network of historically formed, gendered division of labor in the villages and in the collective social production on the Internet.

[Jeffrey Lane](#), Associate Professor of Communication, and Associate Professor [Jessa Lingel](#) co-edit a special issue on [Digital Ethnography for Sociology: Craft, Rigor, and Creativity](#). The issue gathers empirical papers that develop and employ digital ethnographic methods to answer core sociological questions related to community, culture, urban life, violence, activism, professional identity, health, and sociality.

Lane also publishes co-authored article [How Social Media Use Mitigates Urban Violence: Communication Visibility and Third-Party Intervention Processes in Digital Urban Contexts](#). Lane argues that contrary to popular imagination, social media may just as readily offer novel tools for informal social control and de-escalation. In an effort toward building an empirically grounded theory of urban violence in the digital age, the article examines a key mechanism by which social media affords communities newfound capacities to mitigate conflicts.

[Katerina Girginova](#), Postdoctoral Fellow, writes reflections on [Queen Elizabeth II's life and legacy in media events](#).

Books

[Emily Hund](#), CDCS research affiliate, has a forthcoming new book [The Influencer Industry: The Quest for Authenticity on Social Media](#). Hund presents a critical history of the social media influencer's rise to global prominence. *The Influencer Industry* tells the story of how early digital creators scrambling for work amid the Great Recession gave rise to the multibillion-dollar industry that has fundamentally reshaped culture, the flow of information, and the way we relate to ourselves and each other. Further, *The Influencer Industry* reveals how, in an increasingly fractured and profit-driven communications environment, the people we think of as "real" are merely those who have learned to exploit the industry's ever-shifting constructions of authenticity.



[Guobin Yang](#), Professor of Communication and Director of CDCS at the University of Pennsylvania, receives reviews about his latest book, [The Wuhan Lockdown](#); see them in [The Lancet Infectious Diseases](#) and [The Lancet Respiratory Medicine](#).

virtual

The Annenberg School launches a new lab: The Annenberg Virtual Reality CoLABorative!

The [Annenberg Virtual Reality CoLABorative](#) fosters critical, creative and interdisciplinary work around augmented, mixed, and virtual reality technologies (collectively known as XR). The lab hosts an array of events – see below for more information about the first event on September 15th – workshops, and research projects with the goal of creating a more nuanced understanding and theory building around XR technologies and their roles in society.

For more information contact: vr@asc.upenn.edu

COLLOQUIA & SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

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Yesterday's Future: The Centuries-Long Quest for Virtuality

[Katerina Girginova](#), CDCS Postdoctoral Fellow and co-founder of the [Annenberg Virtual Reality CoLABorative](#), moderates a talk on the histories of virtuality. The event brings into conversation Professor [John Pavlik](#) from Rutgers University, Dr. [William Hoffard](#)

from the University of Pennsylvania's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and Dr. [Rita Lauria](#) from MetaLaw US. The speakers present an array of historic examples, including ancient techniques of immersive storytelling, the 19th Century Spiritualist movement of the séances, and the technical and intellectual roots of modern day virtual reality technologies, with the goal of critically grounding today's developments and hype about virtual reality.

September 15, 2022, 3:30-5:00pm EST. [More information and registration for the event here.](#)

Creating Chaos Online: Five Frames to Uncover the Invisible

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[Asta Zelenkauskaitė](#), Associate Professor of Communication at Drexel University, will present her new book [Creating Chaos Online](#). Creating Chaos Online offers a concept of post-publics and unmasks disinformation when it attempts to pass as deliberation in the public sphere and distorts the democratic processes.

October 17, 2022, 12:15-1:30pm EST. [More information about the talk here.](#)

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Divas, Drag Queens, Aunties, and Other Academic Personas

[Kareem Khubchandani](#), Associate Professor at Tufts University, traces his trajectory across three intellectual projects—one on queer Indian nightlife, the second on drag performance, and the most recent on the figure of the aunty in South Asian public culture—to explore the co-constitutive relationships between research, teaching, and artistry.

October 19, 2022, 3:30-4:30pm EST. [More information about the virtual talk and upcoming registration link here.](#)

CDCS Mini-Symposium on Pandemic Archiving, Remembering, and Storytelling

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Associate Professor [Jessa Lingel](#), Professor [Guobin Yang](#), CDCS Postdoctoral Fellows [Frances Corry](#) and [Chelsea Butkowski](#), and CDCS Doctoral Fellow [Adetobi Moses](#) present a mini-symposium on the explosion of personal and communal documentation and storytelling through digital media during the Covid-19 pandemic. The goal of this symposium is to promote public understanding of the role of digital archiving in the collective remembering and narration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specialists from Library of Congress and Nieman Foundation's Corona Diaries project will speak about their archiving projects.

November 7, 2022, 4-7:30pm EST. Further information and registration details forthcoming.

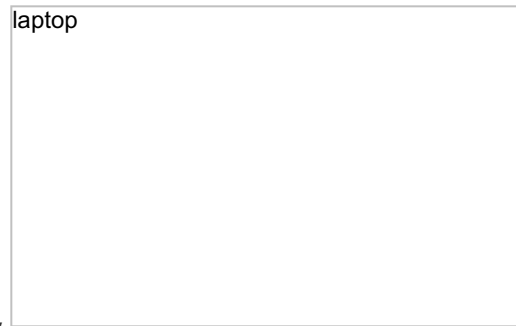
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Distributed Performance

[Abigail De Kosnik](#), Associate Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, will discuss her next monograph, provisionally titled *Minority Piracy*. Kosnik examines why and how queer users, users of color, and poor and disabled users practice media piracy. De Kosnik argues that by practicing piracy, minority users achieve a kind of ethical consensus, a critique and counterweight to capitalism, not through explicit forms of communication, but through what she calls distributed performance.

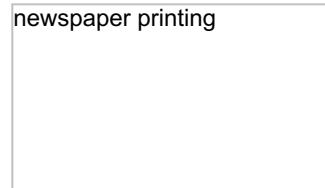
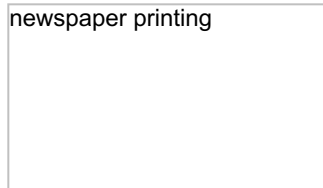
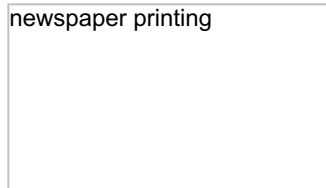
December 5, 2022, 12:15-1:30pm EST. [More information about the virtual talk and upcoming registration link here.](#)

COVID-19 Narratives: Portrayals of Risk, Embodiment and Otherness in Digital Media



[Deborah Lupton](#), Professor at the University of New South Wales, Australia, presents an analysis of discourses and rhetoric about COVID-19 appearing in digital media. Lupton discusses the socio-spatialities of risk, embodiment and contagion appearing in these media, as well as the portrayal of certain types of individuals and social groups as either as 'at risk/vulnerable' or as 'risky/posing a threat to others.' Lupton reflects on the moral judgements, conceptual boundary setting, and othering that have appeared in these narratives, identifying resonances with representations of previous epidemics and pandemics, such as the plague, HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and SARS.

December 5, 2022, 5-6:15pm EST. [More information about the virtual talk and upcoming registration link here.](#)



Presentations & Interviews

September kicks off CDCS' working group meetings for Theory Lab, led by Doctoral Fellows [Elizabeth Hallgren](#) and [Lucila Rozas](#). The hybrid meeting is taking place on September 12th from 12:15pm-1:15pm EST, in room 223 at the Annenberg School.

On September 21, 2022, [Guobin Yang](#) will give a keynote at the Digitalization of Memory in China workshop in Bonn, Germany. Yang is also a panelist, presenting work titled "New Cultural Technologies? Multicultural Perspectives on the Digitalization of Memory Practices".

In October [Woori Han](#), CDCS Postdoctoral Fellow, will present a paper titled "Global reception of Korean reality dating shows: Reimagining heterosexual romance and Asian femininity/masculinity

in the (post)MeToo era,” at the [Global Fusion conference](#).

In November [Chelsea Butkowski](#), CDCS Postdoctoral Fellow, will give three presentations at the [AoIR conference](#). Butkowski presents on Digital boundaries and disruption during the 2020 U. S. Election, usage as self-representation on lifestyle apps, and the sonic and silent memory work of TikTok sounds.

Also in November, [Woori Han](#), CDCS Postdoctoral Fellow, will present a paper titled "The rise of transgender exclusionary feminism in South Korea: (Re)constructing bodies and the self in entanglement with neoliberal developmentalism and digital technologies" at the [National Women's Studies Association conference](#).

Lin Zhang gives an [interview to Protocol](#) about how China's cities are entering the metaverse. Zhang also [speaks to BuzzFeed News](#) about how Chinese users of WeChat utilize the platform to talk about the country's Covid policies, and [Zhang appears on CGTN Global Business](#) to talk about China's international trade.

The Center on Digital Culture and Society supports critical, interdisciplinary scholarship and dialogue on all aspects of digital culture, technology, and society.

To stay up to date on CDCS news and events, follow us on [Twitter](#) and subscribe to our [mailing list](#).



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