

Proposal
ECREA-Section Communication History
August, 10, 2009

Mission Statement

The ECREA-Section Communication History intends to bring together scholars from different European countries who approach communication with a historical perspective. This includes the history of communication in general, the history of socially relevant and mass communication, memory studies, the history of ideas related to the field of communication and the methodology and theory of communication history.

Many processes in the fields of media and communication that are taking place in the present can only be understood adequately if they are analyzed in an historical perspective. So communication history can be considered as an essential part of media and communication studies.

Despite all the differences in language, culture as well as conflict-ridden and disputed histories, much of Europe now shares a common market alongside an increasing array of common political and regulatory structures, especially in the communication services sectors. Consequently, a comparative, cross-cultural or postnational perspective allows the analysis of differences and commonalities in the forms, framing and functioning of socially relevant communication. This gives an opportunity for deeper insights into modernization processes, the democratization of societies and on patterns of media use and adoption. Moreover, a comparative understanding of European communication history has to be regarded as a vital part of European history.

The ECREA-Section Communication History wants to provide a platform for exchange and comparative research. It aims to include scholars from all European regions, respecting gender balance, and supporting the work of junior scholars. The section participates in the organization of panels at the ECREA conferences and at other events. It organizes regular workshops in order to stimulate international cooperations, the exchange of ideas and the research on communication history.

Essential research areas of the ECREA-Section Communication History include:

1) History of communication, in particular of socially relevant and mass communication

This field in communication history involves research that focuses on the history of communication processes and their relevant contexts. This includes:

- History of media production (e.g., the history of media technology, media organizations, production routines, media contents and products, institutional patterns and media professions)
- History of media institutions (e.g., development of media institutions, forms, cross-media comparisons, cross-national and other kinds of comparative studies)
- Media, history and social change (e.g., mediatization, democratization, participation, media as an instrument of control, social and cultural (dis-)integration)
- History of journalism, public relations, and advertising
- New media and digital media histories (including shifts and changes in spaces of connectivity, user generated content, historical similarities to contemporary phenomena, etc.)
- History of popular culture and media
- Historical audiences and their modes of reception
- History of individual communication (interpersonal communication, group communication, relations between individual communication and group or mass communication)

2) Memory studies

This branch of communication history includes studies on the individual remembering, social memory and memory politics. The formation of communicative as well as collective memories is of interest especially with regard to the impact of mass media or other socially relevant media. Moreover other topics like the media representations of history could be analyzed.

3) History of ideas related to the field of communication

Research in this field deals with the history of theories and ideas concerning public and/or mediated communication, the history of communication as scientific discipline and with the resonances of academic discourses on communication within a society and its publics.

4) Methodology and Theory of communication history

Methods, source evaluation and theoretical perspectives shape the results of historical research and form academic discourses. Therefore the discussion of methodologies and theories is fundamental also for communication history. Considering the very different traditions, sources and national specificities in research it seems to be even more important to create a vibrant new European forum for the exchange of theories, methodologies and research practices related to communication history. Other topics include the evolving role of the media as sources and influences on history.

These research areas are closely intertwined. Links between these fields are also a matter of research of the Section.