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EDITORIAL

PETROS IOSIFIDIS

Welcome to the second issue of 2014. While the content of the previous issue was largely Europe-oriented, with a variety of theoretical articles and a special feature entitled 'Private Television in Europe', contributions in this issue cover themes of a more 'practical' nature from across the globe. This reflects the revised aims of the Journal: to address the social and cultural questions surrounding the future of television beyond switchover and to offer a mixture of critical work on technological, industry and regulatory convergence; and, to bring together, and share, the work of academics, policymakers and practitioners, offering lessons from one another's experience. Central to most contributions of the current issue is an assessment of the extent to which new media developments trigger changes both in business practices and in media consumption patterns.

In the past decades rapid technological advances have been made in the field of television and video. TV and video displays have evolved over the past eighty years or so from crude circular cathode ray tubes in the 1930s to very large 60 to 70-inch LCD models which are now ubiquitous. Also, the majority of motion picture theatres in the United States (with screens that range in width from 30 to 90 feet) now feature digital video projection systems. A more recent television development has been the creation of '4K' Ultra-High-Definition Television (UHDTV) displays that feature more than 4,000 pixels in screen width. Meanwhile, in 2013, the Japan Broadcasting Company NHK demonstrated a Super High-Vision (SHV) '8K' camera and a linked 8K LCD display at the National Association of Broadcasters trade show that, as our contributor Pete Seel reports. In his article, the first in this issue, entitled 'Telepresence and Immersion with High-Definition Digital Displays: Background and Future Directions for Research' Seel argues that what these widely diverse display technologies have in common is the *potential* for creating a greater sense of viewer immersion in program content. Seel's contribution reviews the evolution of wide-screen images for film and television technologies, analyzes the recent development of wide-angle HMD and 'ultra' 4K and 'super' 8K high-definition display systems, critically assesses the implications for greater viewer immersion in digital video and television content, and suggests possible focal areas for future telepresence research. As these display technologies decline in price, Seel concludes, the barrier to their use as research tools will likely be only the imagination and creativity of researchers in designing projects that shed new light on the visceral effects of telepresence and immersion for televised and projected content.

Cheryl Campanella Bracken's article 'Investigating the impact of television advertisement image quality of on telepresence, attitude toward brands, and purchase intentions' carries on the discussion of audience experience and telepresence. While in most countries people are now watching digital television regardless of the platform, not everyone is watching television content in High Definition (HD). Audiences are watching the same content in differing image quality. But how important is watching content in high image quality for the advertising sector? In her article, Bracken discusses the implications of an experiment manipulating the image quality of television advertisements in which 127 participants watched television commercials in either high or low image quality. The main finding was that participants who viewed the ads in higher image quality reported more positive attitudes towards the brands, and higher levels of telepresence. This contemporary and practical study identifies the connections between differing image quality and audience responses to the brands featured in the advertisement including their purchase intentions.

The third main article 'Television White Spaces: Learning from Cases of Recent Trials' makes a valuable contribution on a rather understudied yet highly current and important topic: television white space (TVWS), which refers to the unused radio spectrum that is reserved for avoiding

analogue channel signal interference, especially between TV channels. Since digital TV signal transition is interference free, TV channels can be allocated adjacent to each other, and thus create more white space radio spectrum. Since most countries have now completed the digital switchover (DSO) process, there is scepticism as to how best to use TVWS for new services and applications like Super Wi-Fi, a longer-distance wireless Internet access technology. This co-authored piece by Chu et al presents the development of Super Wi-Fi technology commencing in 2011, and reviews TVWS trials that have been conducted in the USA, the UK, Singapore and other developed countries. The authors discuss the applicable spectrum band and examine regulatory issues and types of policy applications with regard to TVWS technology. In many trials, Chu et al argue, Microsoft and Google have played a significant role, and, the authors contend, both Google and Microsoft in using TVWS have helped narrow the digital divide between African countries and developed world.

The issue features two commentaries. Felicia Pelagalli, Paola Liberace, Simone Pozzi and Sebastiano Bagnara contributed 'User-centered design and the new TV: New paradigms in the use of TV', which analyses the rapidly changing way users interact with television. They argue that new connected devices like Smart TVs, set-top-boxes and decoders render the traditional programme guide a complex menu to navigate by allowing access to linear channels, but also to non-linear services (on demand content, web streaming and *catch-up* TV). The authors contend that the design new TV interfaces and contents should adapt a user-centered approach, in order to take into account the users' characteristics, their specific culture, their familiarity with technology, their patterns of use, and the different contexts in which they use technology.

The second commentary that I wrote acknowledges that digital convergence blurs the boundaries between previously distinct sectors such as broadcasting, telecommunications and computing, but it raises a tone of caution, for the market perspective may not go hand in hand with patterns of media usage, meaning that the market may be heading towards convergence, but without paying close attention to audience habits. My commentary addresses this issue by referring to the differences between using a PC and a TV. Users purchase a PC with the purpose of being able to fulfill their college coursework, surf the Internet, communicate via e-mail, engage in on-line chats and deal with electronic commerce. With the television people sit back and enjoy, whereas a PC screen is used by sitting close, lean forward and interacting. Therefore, the TV and the PC seem to serve different purposes and apparently function in different markets, the former in the *entertainment world* and the latter in the *learning world*, so, despite the rhetoric about convergence, most people do not want a television that functions as a PC; what they want is better TV. The popularity of the medium of television remains strong. According to a European Broadcasting Union report (EBU, 2014), there is no sign of decline in linear TV viewing.

Issue 5.2 also includes three Book Reviews which were organized by our Book Reviews Editor Tom Evens. The first review concerns former Journal Editor Michael Starks' book *The Digital Television Revolution: Origins to Outcomes* and was written by a member of our Editorial Board, Gregory Taylor. In his flattering, yet fair review, Greg says that *The Digital Television Revolution* is about more than television, for it elaborates the contemporary upheavals in information infrastructure, the wider implications for democracy, and is a key study of emerging mass media in the 21st Century. I share Greg's wish that policy makers consider Starks' thoughtful and informed book as a foundational document when grappling with the numerous regulatory challenges posed by media digitalization. In the second book review, Karen Donders reviews Benedetta Brevini's book *Public Service Broadcasting Online: A Comparative European Policy Study of PSB 2.0*. As Karen puts it, the volume 'adds to the considerable school of thought on 'Public Service Media', by analyzing how public broadcasters in the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy and Denmark have entered the online realm. The third and final review was written by Stijn Joye and concerns Anne Geniets' book *The Global News Challenge*, which tackles in a critical manner timely topics in the field of

international communication, such as global flows of communication, international news dissemination, and the structuring patterns of power imbalances.

In addition, the issue features two conferences. Tom Evens covers the June 2013 annual conference of the European Media Management Education Association (EMMA), which took place in Bournemouth, England. David Geerts covers the EUROITV 2013 conference held on the shores of lake Como in Italy, which consisted of researchers from both industry and academia.

Finally, I would like to finish this Editorial with expressing my gratitude to the following people: the authors of the pieces included in this issue for responding to my call and submitting work that provoke fresh thinking, understanding and inquiry; the anonymous reviewers of the manuscripts and for their constructive comments and suggestions; our Editorial Board members for useful ideas regarding the future direction of the Journal; most of all, I would like to thank our Assistant Editor Sally for working tirelessly yet effectively in order to bring every issue into production on time.

EBU (2014) Vision 2020: Annex 2: Media Consumption Trends, Media Intelligence Service (MIS), February (Geneva).