HANDBOOKS IN COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA

The Handbook of European Communication History

Edited by Klaus Arnold, Paschal Preston, and Susanne Kinnebrock

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The Handbook of European Communication History

Handbooks in Communication and Media

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Preface

It takes time, an international array of scholars and, last but not least, a creative vision to compile a handbook on Europe's Communication History. The plan for this Handbook developed shortly after the foundation of the Communication History Section within the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) in 2009. And right from the beginning, it was the founding chair of the ECREA Communication History Section, Klaus Arnold, who pushed forward the Handbook as the section's first joint project. The Handbook was driven by a firm belief in the value and benefits of a common European communication history despite Europe's diversity. Consequently, significant themes of common interest were identified and diverse teams worked together to author the chapters which follow in this Handbook. In the end, almost 80 authors from the fields of communication, history, media and journalism studies volunteered and contributed to its production. The resulting text delivers on the original vision and aim: to illuminate important moments and aspects in European communication history from different national and cultural perspectives.

The planning and authoring work on the Handbook took almost seven years as the original starting point can be dated back to a workshop in Dublin in September 2011. Thus, the editors regard the successful outcome and final completion of this major collaborative effort with great pleasure. At the same time, however, our hearts are saddened because three of our contributors will not be able to see the results of their efforts: Svennik Høyer (1931–2017), the Norwegian-born and highly-regarded international expert on political communication, press history, and journalism, passed away shortly after completing his contribution; so too did Walery Pisarek (1931–2017), a pioneer and mentor of media studies in Poland who has been fondly remembered for his significant academic achievements in media research in Poland and other countries.

Third, we note and mourn the death of Klaus Arnold (1968–2017), the original initiator and highly active editor of this Handbook until he became seriously ill. Being aware of his fatal illness and imminent death, Klaus made very brave and diligent plans to smooth the hand over of relevant roles and tasks to his two fellow editors. Indeed, Klaus came to regard the Handbook as his academic and professional legacy. The two remaining editors readily concur that this pioneering Handbook be treated as an important part

of Klaus's legacy, especially with respect to the community of those scholars who include a historical perspective as central to their analyses of communication in Europe. The remaining editors are confident that the Handbook will make a significant contribution toward internationalizing communication history.

We extend a big "thank you" to all our contributors for their crucial roles in furthering the exciting project of a distinctive "European" Communication History Handbook. And, last but not least, our special thanks go to Mandy Tröger for her truly excellent work in sub-editing, and generally assisting the editors, in finalizing the text of all the chapters which follow.

Susanne Kinnebrock and Paschal Preston,
October 2018

Introduction
European Communication History: A Challenging if Timely Project

Paschal Preston, Klaus Arnold, and Susanne Kinnebrock

A Re-Turn to the History of Mediated Communication?

Historical approaches to communication and media matters have become quite fashionable as we proceed through the second decade of the twenty-first century. Indeed, we are currently witnessing a surprising "turn," or rather re-turn, to historical analyses after a long phase of neglect within the mainstream of academic studies of communication and media.

There has long been an interest in historical approaches and understandings of mediated communication among members of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), the oldest and most genuinely international professional association in this field. A similar interest has rapidly grown within the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA), the much younger association for communication scholars in Europe.

But recent years have also witnessed a dynamic new interest group focused on historical themes and issues within the largely USA-based International Communication Association (ICA) – a body previously marked by tendencies toward social scientific and somewhat a-historical approaches to research. In sum, we can point to a real surge and intensification of interest in historical aspects of mediated communication in more recent years.

Of course, both history and European perspectives had been central to many of the pioneering attempts to theorize and make sense of the rise of the distinctly "modern" social, economic, and political transformations in the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth centuries. For example, David Hume's (1741) political essays, including that on "The Liberty of The Press," were animated by a historical and distinctly European imaginary – in keeping with the fact that a substantial share of his royalty earnings were derived from readers based on the continent. At the same time, we observe that Hume's accounts of the distinctive forms and role of political "liberties," press freedom and

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public opinion in different societies prove to be no less ethno-centric and celebratory of the British model than many later efforts at comparative communication research:

> *Nothing is more apt to surprise a foreigner, than the extreme liberty, which we enjoy in this country, of communicating whatever we please to the public, and of openly censuring every measure, entered into by the king or his ministers [….]. As this liberty is not indulged in any other government, either republican or monarchial; in Holland and Venice, more than in France or Spain; it may very naturally give occasion to the question, How it happens that Great Britain alone enjoys this privilege? […][In Britain] the republican part of government prevails, although with a great mixture of monarchy, it is obliged to maintain a watchful jealousy over the magistrates, to remove all discretionary powers, and to secure everyone's life and fortune by general and inflexible laws. […]. There is as much liberty, and even perhaps, licentiousness in Britain, as there were formerly slavery and tyranny in Rome* (David Hume, 1994[1741] "On the Liberty of the Press," p. 1).

In keeping with the rather restricted notions of democracy prevailing among his readers in the "polite society" of Europe during his own lifetime, Hume was wary of any absolute principle of a free press. Indeed, in the same essay, he declared that "the unbounded liberty of the press" comprised a potential threat, indeed "one of the evils" facing precisely "those mixt forms of government" which combined both republican and more traditional, monarchical elements – the blend which he favored so much along with most of his readers in the merchant, manufacturing, professional, and other middle-class elites of western and northern Europe in the period prior to the French Revolution. Yet rather similar historical and European orientations can be found in several subsequent nineteenth-century studies engaging with cross-national and comparative analyses of the evolving forms and practices of "democracy," "public opinion" and the press or (print) media. Among those, we may briefly consider the example of Sir Thomas Erskine May's (1878) two-volume work on *Democracy in Europe – A History*. In typical fashion, Sir Thomas Erskine May underlines how the scientific discoveries and technological innovations and inventions of late nineteenth-century Europe should be seen as closely linked to the rise of distinctly "modern" and more liberal political institutions, including the (limited) forms of political democracy and "public opinion" then prevailing.

Indeed, May's (1878) multi-country study also declared that no prior period of European history can be compared to the last half century, "for scientific discoveries and inventions, for bold speculations in philosophy, for historical research, and original thought"; he further argued that most of Europe had by then "attained that degree of advancement, that a large measure of political freedom" had become essential to its well-being (May's 1878, pp. lii and liv). May's work sets out to survey and map the historical development of tendencies and trends toward "democracy" and related issues of public opinion and the role of the press across much of Europe. Much like Hume more than a century before, May's (1878) survey of the European scene emphasized the virtues of gradual political change, as he clearly favored the "re-casting" rather than abolition of old medieval institutions. Indeed, May (1878, p. lvii) cites Comte to the effect that "the English aristocracy is ablest patriciate the world has seen since the Roman Senate."

A marked orientation toward historical perspectives had been central to several subsequent pioneering attempts to systemically theorize and make sense of the rise of truly mass media from the end of the nineteenth century and the diffusion of the first multi-media wave in the early decades of the twentieth century (e.g. as noted in prior surveys by Hardt 1992, 2001; Williams 1965, 1983). For example, Karl Bücher (1901), an institutional economist and one of the founding fathers of media and journalism studies,