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Call for papers

Annual conference of the Swiss Association of Communication and Media Research (SACM),
26 - 27 March 2010 at Lucerne School of Business

Online communication: Current tendencies and dynamics

The Internet, i.e. the World Wide Web illustrates how quickly and directly a medium can change the way a society communicates. The rapid development and differentiation of this medium is mirrored in the structural change in communications that can be observed both in the public and private sphere. The Internet in its current form constitutes an interactive social network whose content is partially determined by its users, who now have the opportunity to participate actively in the public discourse.

As a global and glocal network, the Internet has created a communication infrastructure that opens up new possibilities – while raising a range of questions the same time. The conference specifically addresses issues relating to online communication and digital media. Besides focussing on the disciplinary and interdisciplinary challenges encountered in methodology, it also provides a discussion forum for examining critically the changes as seen from both a theoretical and an applied perspective.

The conference primarily addresses the following topics:

Change in society: The Internet and the digitalisation of the media are changing the way we communicate. An increasing number of people rely on the Internet for obtaining information and exchanging views. How does online communication influence society, and how does society in turn shape online communication? What has changed in specific fields, such as business, politics and science, as a result? What common challenges can be identified in this regard? What differences exist? To what extent do digital media facilitate open access to information, and/or to what extent do they aggravate the "digital divide" within society and beyond?

Change in media: Online communication has caused much irritation as well as debate about the role and future of mass media. Traditional media (print, radio, TV/film) are no longer the sole conveyors of the public discourse. What changes can be observed in the current public responsibility of the media in shaping opinion? How does this affect the media landscape and markets, media structures and forms, and the profession of journalism itself? What specific developments and solutions, as well as alternative approaches, can we observe today and in the future? What changes can we observe in the business models of online content providers, especially those of publishers and media companies?

Change in organisational communications: The fragmentation of public opinion is affecting not only media companies but is leaving its mark on the way organisations in general seek to gain acceptance by the public. Due to the changing requirements in communications, organisations are experiencing mounting pressure from the public, as shown in a series of recent examples. Organisations are thus facing the challenge of living up to the responsibilities (e.g. corporate social responsibility) that lie in their own and interest and in that of the public. What specific opportunities and risks lie in store for organisations due to the growing significance of digital media and the resulting changes in user behaviour? What challenges are connected with the deployment of digital media? How can these be put to use in organisational communications (public relations, marketing communication, internal communication)? How can their success and impact be measured? To what extent does online communication impact our communication models? What learning processes, ideas and methods can be expected as a result of these shifts?

Transformation in media use and interaction: Together with the breakthroughs in online communication – in particular as regards social software (Weblogs, Wikipedia, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Xing, etc.), changes can be observed in the way that media and communications are being used: These platforms are replacing traditional one-to-many forms of communication with information exchanges that rely on networks. Networking and participation constitute the basic elements in communications on the "social web", whereby the modes of communication can alternate (push and pull medium) and the role of communicator and recipient can be reversed. The trend is shifting toward visual communications, an enhanced virtualisation of worlds (Second Life) and a rise in the consumption of mobile media. What challenges lie in store for society as a result? What consequences (in terms of communication, society, language, education) are connected to these trends? What dynamics and tendencies are likely to distinguish the future?

Submissions

There are three possibilities for submitting papers:

1. Thematic panel: Those interested can submit an abstract of their current research project on online communications with a view to giving a presentation.

2. Open panel: There is also the possibility of submitting topics on current communications and media research that do not fall directly under conference theme.

The following applies for submissions to the Thematic panel and the Open panel: Abstract (800-1,000 words) must be submitted as a Word file to Margarethe Dopf by e-mail (margarethe.dopf@hslu.ch) by **30 October 2009**. The abstract must lay out the research topic, theoretical basis, methodology and findings.

The abstract must also include a cover sheet with the title, author's name, institution and address (e-mail). The abstracts will be reviewed anonymously, whereby particular attention will be paid to the focus of the topic and the originality and quality of the work.

Decisions on acceptance of a 20-minute presentation will be made at the latest by **15 December 2009**. The presentation must be held in one of the national languages (German, French, Italian) or in English. In addition, authors must prepare accompanying materials, such as a handout, summary or PowerPoint presentation in a language other than that of their presentation. A discussion of approximately 10 minutes is scheduled at the end of each presentation. Please note that SACM membership is not required for giving a presentation.

New: For the first time, outstanding submissions and presentations will be recognised with the **Best Paper Award** at the SACM Conference 2010. The winner will be chosen based on both the abstract and the presentation.

3. Panels of specialists: Groups of SACM specialists are free to form their own panel. For this, they would need to send a summary on the topic to Margarethe Dopf (margarethe.dopf@hslu.ch) by **30 October 2009** at the latest.

Detailed information on the finalised programme will be available at the beginning of March 2010.

Publication: In connection with the conference, *Studies in Communication Sciences (ScomS)*, a media journal, is planning a special edition. Conference participants thus have the possibility of getting their articles published. The editors of ScomS will post further details on the call for papers at a later time.

Important dates:

Deadline for submitting abstracts: 30 October 2009

Reply sent to authors: 15 December 2009

Distribution of programme: Beginning of March 2010

Conference: 26 – 27 March 2010

Conference location: Lucerne School of Business

Website: www.sgkm2010.ch

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