

## **Editor's Reflection: Diversity in Magazine Research**

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I had an embarrassing bad-English moment as a teenager in Sofia, Bulgaria. An American tourist asked me for directions, and I told him to go past the Central Universal Magazine. What I actually meant was the downtown mall. The reason for my faux pas was that the word “magazine” translates as “store” in Bulgarian (магазин) as well as in French (magasin), Russian (магазин), and several other languages.

Etymologically speaking, a magazine is not a medium. The word literally means a variety of things put in the same place. Little wonder that there were no easy answers to the questions we were asking at the most recent meeting of the Magazine Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. What is a magazine? What is magazine research? Precise, academic definitions elude us because magazines are about so many things—including, but not limited to, readers’ interpretive communities, lifestyles, leisure, and long-form journalism.

It was fitting that our 2014 meeting was in Montreal, one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. Its history museum proclaims that the city “owes much of its vitality to its multicultural and mixophone character.” (You can count on these folks to use a creative word like “mixophone,” which is not even in the dictionary.) Not only do most Montrealers switch effortlessly between French and English (despite the underlying political tensions in Quebec), but the city itself has also integrated its many facets at a cellular level. Examples of Montreal’s hybridity were countless. The city’s street bands played a mind-boggling repertoire, ranging from Southern rock and jazz to the famous Russian romance “Ochi Chyornie.” Once the paper-making capital of the world, Montreal is now a global center of the video game industry, symbolizing the city’s graceful blending of “old” and “new” media. Even Montreal’s famous Catholic Notre-Dame Basilica turned out to have been designed by a Protestant architect—and nobody blinked an eye at this.

Magazine research is like Montreal—diverse on many levels, including methodologically, theoretically, and thematically. This diversity is reflected in the current issue of the *Journal of Magazine & New Media Research*. In the in-depth research section, Amanda Hinnant and Elizabeth Meyers Hendrickson use focus group analysis to show that celebrity health narratives shape how ordinary women construct their own health narratives and choices. Sally Ann Cruikshank analyzes how news magazines framed the conflict in South Sudan (associated in many people’s minds with the Pulitzer Prize-winning picture of a starving one-year-old crawling under a vulture’s gaze) and failed to see it as the genocide that it was. Catherine A. Luther and D. Renee Smith offer a fascinating investigation of gendered visual framing in several Japanese fashion magazines, which suggest both blurring of the masculinity-femininity boundaries and resistance to women’s increasing social status in

Japan. Finally, Lindsey Conlin and Kim Bissell give us a snapshot of the content of several beauty/fashion and health/fitness magazines, reaching the unfortunate conclusion that the two genres hardly differ in their adherence to the thin ideal and the standards of glamorous femininity.

The reports and essays section is just as rich, investigating from several angles how magazines are adapting to digital environments. Jeff Inman and Jill Van Wyke offer a fascinating update on the progress of magazine tablet editions, concluding that—so far, at least—the iPad and its competitors have failed to significantly transform the magazine industry. Sheila Webb eloquently explores the paradigm shift in journalism ushered in by the online tabloid magazine *Gawker*, which has relied heavily on readers' comments for its success. To conclude on a positive note, Maria Lassila-Merisalo outlines how narrative long-form journalism is thriving internationally, thanks in part to the use of multimedia elements that enhance storytelling.

I hope we embrace the mixophony of our professional field and of our research. The Central Universal Magazine it is.