Media in Transition 8: *public media, private media*

International Conference

Conference dates: May 3-5, 2013 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA.

Conference website: web.mit.edu/comm-forum/mit8 (watch for updates).

CALL FOR PAPERS

Submissions accepted on a rolling basis until Friday, March 1, 2013 (evaluations begin in November). Please see the end of this call for papers for submission instructions.

The distinction between public and private – where the line is drawn and how it is sometimes inverted, the ways that it is embraced or contested – says much about a culture. Media have been used to enable, define and police the shifting line between the two, so it is not surprising that the history of media change to some extent maps the history of these domains. Media in Transition 8 takes up the question of the shifting nature of the public and private at a moment of unparalleled connectivity, enabling new notions of the socially mediated public and unequalled levels of data extraction thanks to the quiet demands of our Kindles, iPhones, televisions and computers. While this forces us to think in new ways about these long established categories, in fact the underlying concerns are rooted in deep historical practice. MiT8 considers the ways in which specific media challenge or reinforce certain notions of the public or the private and especially the ways in which specific "texts" dramatize or imagine the public, the private and the boundary between them. It takes as its foci three broad domains: personal identity, the civic (the public sphere) and intellectual property.

Reality television and confessional journalism have done much to invert the relations between private and public. But the borders have long been malleable. Historically, we know that camera-armed Kodakers and telephone party lines threatened the status quo of the private; that the media were complicit in keeping from the public FDR's disability and the foibles of the ruling elite; and that paparazzi and celebrities are strategically intertwined in the game of publicity. How have the various media played these roles (and represented them), and how is the issue changing at a moment when most of our mediated transactions leave data traces that not only redefine the borders of the private, but that serve as commodities in their own right?

The public, too, is a contested space. Edmund Burke's late 18th century invocation of the fourth estate linked information flow and political order, anticipating aspects of Habermas's public sphere. From this perspective, trends such as a siege on public service broadcasting, a press in decline, and media fragmentation on the rise, all ring alarm bells. Yet WikiLeaks and innovative civic uses of media suggest a sharp countertrend. What are the fault lines in this struggle? How have they been represented in media texts, enacted through participants and given form in media policy? And what are we to make of the fate of a public culture in a world whose media representations are increasingly on-demand, personalized and algorithmically-designed to please?

Finally, MiT8 is also concerned with the private-public rift that appears most frequently in struggles over intellectual property (IP). Ever-longer terms of IP protection combined with a shift from media artifacts (like paper books) to services (like e-journals) threaten long-standing practices such as book lending (libraries) and raise thorny questions about cultural access. Social media sites, powered by users, often remain the private property of corporations, akin to the public square's replacement by the mall, and once-public media texts, like certain photographic and film collections, have been re-privatized by an array of institutions. These undulations in the private and public have implications for our texts (remix culture), our access to them, and our activities as audiences; but they also have a rich history of contestation, evidenced

in the copybook and scrapbook, compilation film, popular song and the open source and creative commons movement.

MiT8 encourages a broad approach to these issues, with specific attention to textual practice, users, policy and cultural implications. As usual, we encourage work from across media forms and across historical periods and cultural regions.

Possible topics include:

- Media traces: cookies, GPS data, TiVo and Kindle tracking

- The paradoxes of celebrity and the public persona

- Representing the anxieties of the private in film, television, literature

- MMORPGs / identities / virtual publics

- The spatial turn in media: private consumption in public places

- Historical media panics regarding the private-public divide

- When cookies shape content, what happens to the public?

- Creative commons and the new public sphere

- Big data and privacy

- Party lines and two-way radio: amplifying the private

- The fate of public libraries in the era of digital services

- Methodologies of internet and privacy studies

- Creative commons, free software, and the new public sphere

- Public and civic WiFi access to the internet

- Surveillance, monitoring and their (dis)contents

Submit an Abstract and Short Bio

Short abstracts for papers should be about 250 words in a PDF or Word format and should be sent as email attachments to mit8@mit.edu no later than Friday, March 1, 2013. Please include a short (75 words or fewer) biographical statement.

We will be evaluating submissions on a rolling basis beginning in November and will respond to every proposal.

Include a Short Bibliography

For this year's conference, we recommend that you include a brief bibliography of no more than one page in length with your abstract and bio.

Proposals for Full Panels

Proposals for full panels of three or four speakers should include a panel title and separate abstracts and bios for each speaker. Anyone proposing a full panel should recruit a moderator.

Submit a Full Paper

In order to be considered for inclusion in a conference anthology, you must submit a full version of your paper prior to the beginning of the conference.

If you have any questions about the eighth Media in Transition conference, please contact Brad Seawell at seawell@mit.edu.