

EDITORIAL

Open Literacy: Games, Social Responsibility and Social Innovation: Editorial Introduction to the Special Issue of *Cultural Science Journal*

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This is the Editorial Introduction to the special collection of articles on Open Literacy: Games, Social Responsibility and Social Innovation, which will be published across volumes 11 and 12 of the Journal. The Editorial includes information on the research symposium where these papers were first presented, and biographical details for the contributors.

Keywords: Editorial; Cultural Science; Open Literacy

Publication of this special issue of *Cultural Science Journal* is generously supported by **Tencent Research** (China). Editorial work was undertaken by members of the **Centre for Culture and Technology** (CCAT, Curtin University). The special issue is co-edited by **John Hartley** (editor of *Cultural Science Journal*), **Katie Ellis** (Director of CCAT) and **Tama Leaver** (discipline lead of Curtin Internet Studies). In addition to supporting this publication, Tencent provided bursaries, scholarships and travel grants to assist presenters to attend the **research symposium** from which the papers derive.

We are immensely grateful to Tencent Research, especially Director Ms **Xiaobing Wang** and Researcher Ms **Jie Liu**, and to our colleague Dr **Henry Li**, Dean for China at the Curtin International Office and longstanding member of CCAT, who facilitated our relationship with Tencent. We would like to stress that Tencent's involvement in the project was entirely research-oriented, and that at no point did they intervene in intellectual or editorial matters. It has been a pleasure and privilege to work with them on this important topic.

This special issue derives from a specially convened international research symposium on **'Open Literacy'**. It brings international and local experts together to report on cutting-edge research, linking games, play, social innovation and social responsibility. Papers consider a counter-narrative to the rhetoric of behavioural harm and social danger, looking at digital media and games as affordances for community-building and the emancipation of knowledge. The papers examine contemporary digital literacy across many different platforms and cultures, as well as offline forms of play and the spaces in which fans and cyborgs, cities and nations, pursue adventures of identity and hazards of chance.

Inevitably, views will differ on the extent to which playing and games, formal and informal, online and off, can be thought of as a form of literacy. Even if it does enhance popular interpretive skills and agility, the question of balance between 'social responsibility' (accepting regulation) and 'social innovation' (transgressing limits) is often unresolved in practice. This symposium compares the experience of 'open literacy' in different countries, and contrasting trends of scholarship across the continents, in the expectation that cross-disciplinary and cross-border communication will offer new insights to both sides.

Open Literacy refers to the cultural uses of digital and media literacy:

- to create new groups and meanings, extending knowledge by means of informal entertainment and narrative, dramatic or game formats;
- to experiment with new technologies, extending both play (informal, anthropological, purposeless) and games (elaborate, competitive, high-skill) as part of the innovation system for digital culture;
- to improve the social networks, teamwork, conflict management skills and recognition difference needed in heterogenous public/media environments;
- to advance knowledge and communication by digital means, and to link future-facing digital culture with traditional archives and forms;
- to encourage user-led social innovation in times of uncertainty and change, across demographic borders, at global scale;
- to build new social groups—‘knowledge clubs’ and ‘knowledge commons’—for knowledge innovation.

Open literacy is user-centred and system-wide, ‘bottom-up’ rather than ‘top down’, producing unforeseen network effects that in turn change the rules of the game. Navigating ‘newness’ (not just novelty but transformational change) raises new questions:

- How does Open Literacy intersect with other ‘open’ initiatives: open source; open access; open science; open campus?
- Given that Open Literacy is cultural and informal, not institutional and disciplinary, what should policymakers, educators, arts/literature agencies, sport/exercise bodies and commercial entertainment/leisure providers do to nurture it?
- Responsibility includes corporate and individual:
 - Corporate: what are the social responsibilities of games developers and publishers? What are they doing right or wrong, according to whose criteria?
 - Individual: What are rights and duties of players and gamers themselves; how can parents and young people achieve and maintain social responsibility through play?
- Responsibility and control:
 - How do games work in the production of what Michele Willson (2019) calls ‘the ideal child’?
 - How can games and other online changes be historicised meaningfully, against the background of political, moral, religious, authoritarian crackdowns on games/popular media?

Open Literacy links the domain of digital popular culture and entertainment, including video and online games, with that of formal knowledge, academic disciplines and education. At a time when there is increasing tension between large-scale, global connectivity on the one hand, and populations marked by division, difference and asymmetries of access on the other, it is more urgent than ever to extend participation in knowledge and social responsibility—science and civics—beyond exclusive institutions and restricted professions. Recent developments in ‘open access’ scholarship, ‘open science’ initiatives and



Figure 1: Participants in the Open Literacy Research Symposium gather in Fremantle and at Curtin University, September–October 2019.

'open source' software offer new ways to update Karl Popper's (1945) vision of 'the open society' for the connected age.

Focusing on the extension of digital capabilities among a broad global population via smart devices, apps and digital entertainment to smart users, groups and enterprises, we need to explore how opening digital knowledge systems to popular participation may boost innovation and social inclusion and responsibility.

Many media scholars are sceptical of the 'mass media effects' tradition of research, inherited from anxiety about earlier forms of popular media, from print to broadcasting (Przybylski, 2016). At the same time they are mindful that public debate about this topic still depends on outmoded industrial and individualist theories. We need to go beyond that paradigm, to understand the challenges of digital, online media and the possibilities for renewing knowledge systems and social groups in times of technological change and geopolitical uncertainty. In short, what do entertainment systems and knowledge systems—and their users—have in common?

Competing Interests

The editors are members of the Editorial Board of *Cultural Science Journal*.

References

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- Przybylski, A.** 2016. 'Mischievous responding in Internet Gaming Disorder research'. *PeerJ*, 4(9). <https://peerj.com/articles/2401/>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.2401>
- Willson, M.** 2019. 'Raising the ideal child? Algorithms, quantification and prediction.' *Media, Culture & Society*, 41(5): 620–636. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443718798901>

Contents

**We plan to publish selected papers from the symposium as they are completed, over two volumes of Cultural Science Journal. These papers are as follows:*

1. **John Hartley:** Open Literacy: Helen of Troy, Richard Hoggart, Phonic Wars, Greta Thunberg.
2. **Henry Jenkins:** "Art Happens not in Isolation, But in Community": The Collective Literacies of Media Fandom.
3. **Bu Wei:** Policy Design: from Paternalism to Empowerment: Games, Social Responsibility, and Digital Literacy within the Framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
4. **Sonia Livingstone** and **Alicia Blum-Ross:** Parents' Role in Supporting, Brokering or Impeding Their Children's Connected Learning and Media Literacy.
5. **Antranig Sarian:** Ethical Self-Reflection in *Papers, Please*.
6. **Liam Miller:** *Minecraft* and Dewey: A Model Open Source Community.
7. **Luke Webster:** Marvel, *Star Wars* and the Cosmic Quest for Peace: Commercial Transmedia and Emerging Social Responsibilities.
8. **Katie Ellis** and **Kai-Ti Kao:** Who Gets to Play? Dis/ability, Innovation, Gaming.
9. **Huan Wu:** Video Games and Applications: A Disruption, or Disruptive Innovation?
10. **Tama Leaver:** Closed Literacies and the Gamification of Infancy.
11. **Samantha Owen:** Restricting Diversity to Promote Democracy: Community Literacies and Playing Across Spaces.
12. **Madison Magladry** and **Michele Willson:** Playing the Game, or Not: Reframing Understandings of Children's Digital Play.
13. **Crystal Abidin:** Knowledges on Douyin vs TikTok: Platforms, Populism, and Performance.
14. **Eleanor Sandry** and **Gwyneth Peaty:** Learning to Play Well with Others: Robots, Cyborgs and Humans.
15. **Yu Shan:** Virtual Reality in China: Is There a Sustainable Business Model for Virtual Reality Content Enterprises?
16. **Lucy Montgomery, Cameron Neylon, Alkim Ozaygen, Katie Wilson** and **Chun-Kai (Karl) Huang:** Who Puts the 'Open' in Open Knowledge?
17. **Sky Croeser:** Teaching Open Literacies.

This special issue comprises papers drawn from the participants in a specially convened research symposium, held in Fremantle and at Curtin University in September–October 2019. Presenters ranged from guest international experts (from China, Australia, the US and Europe) to local PhD students, each with a unique perspective that allowed the symposium to develop a line of thought from literacy and its uses, through fandom and media in society, to games, play, and policy questions in a global context.

The ‘live’ event featured presentations of papers that are not included here, mostly because they are destined for publication elsewhere, including work by Brendan Keogh (post-doc researcher, QUT), Kathryn Locke (PhD student, Curtin), Jatinder Singh (researcher, University of Cambridge UK), Chen Guo (PhD student, Curtin), and Rui Zhang (Masters student, Western Sydney University). Abstracts for these presentations can be found here: <https://ccat.curtin.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2019/09/Final-Program-Open-Literacy.pdf>.

We also invited Professor Sonia Livingstone (London School of Economics and Political Science, UK), a global expert on children and media in the digital age. She was unable to attend but with her colleague Alicia Blum-Ross she is contributing a new paper to *Cultural Science Journal* on the symposium topic.

All papers have been peer reviewed in accordance with the Journal's protocols. In order to compress the timeframe for reviewing, we instituted an experimental form of refereeing, where two (anonymous) colleagues and guests at the symposium reviewed papers as delivered, which made the subsequent revision process more manageable in terms of timing. The three co-editors (Hartley, Ellis and Leaver) were allocated an equal number of papers to take through the editing process, which was handled in such a way that their own contributions were assessed and edited anonymously.

URLs for the event

Announcement: <https://ccat.curtin.edu.au/events-and-conferences/open-literacy-digital-games-social-responsibility-social-innovation/>

Program: <https://ccat.curtin.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2019/09/Final-Program-Open-Literacy.pdf>

Videos of symposium presentations: <https://ccat.curtin.edu.au/events-and-conferences/openliteracy-digital-games-social-responsibility-social-innovation/videos-symposiumpresentations/>

Contributors

Because of time constraints caused by the end-of-year holiday season, necessitating an early deadline set by Ubiquity Press for uploading papers for production and publication in 2019, we are publishing the special issue in two batches. The first is published herewith; the second batch will be released in 2020. The full list of authors and co-authors for both batches is as follows.

Crystal Abidin is a socio-cultural anthropologist of vernacular internet cultures, particularly young people's relationships with internet celebrity, self-curation, and vulnerability. She is Senior Research Fellow & ARC DECRA Fellow in Internet Studies at Curtin University, and Affiliate Researcher with the Media Management and Transformation Centre at Jönköping University. Crystal has published over 50 articles and chapters on various aspects of youth internet cultures. She works closely with the industry, and is the chief or co-investigator on projects funded by the Australian Research Council (Australia), Facebook (USA), Handelsrådet (Sweden), National Heritage Board (Singapore), and Tencent (China). Reach her at wishcrys.com. Her books include:

- *Internet Celebrity: Understanding Fame Online* (2018),
- *Microcelebrity Around the Globe: Approaches to Cultures of Internet Fame* (co-editor Brown, 2018),
- *Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures* (co-authors Leaver & Highfield, 2019),
- *Mediated Interfaces: The Body on Social Media* (co-editors Warfield & Cambre 2020).

Matthew Allen was Australia's first Professor of Internet Studies, founding the Department of Internet Studies at Curtin University in 1999. He was Head of the School of the School of Communication and

Creative Arts at Deakin University (2013–19). Matthew is a Fellow of the Australian Teaching and Learning Committee, winner of an Australian Award for University Teaching, former president of the international Association of Internet Research and a leading analyst of the rise and fall of Web 2.0. He has published more than 50 academic papers. His current research includes the history of Internet regulation in Australia, engagement with the Chinese Internet, and assessing the impact of the National Broadband Network in Tasmania, a decade on from its first deployment.

Alicia Blum-Ross is currently the Public Policy Lead for Kids & Families at Google where she helps develop products, policies and outreach for children and their families. Prior to joining Google she was a Research Officer in Media and Communications at the London School of Economics and Political Science where she worked on a MacArthur Foundation funded project to study families and technology. She is the co-author (with Sonia Livingstone) of *Parenting for a Digital Future: How Hopes and Fears about Technology Shape Our Children's Lives* (Oxford University Press) and the co-editor of *Enhancing Digital Literacy and Creativity: Makerspaces in the Early Years* (Routledge, 2019). She has worked with a range of organizations – from the British Film Institute to the ICT Coalition for Children Online – to build programs that foster children and young people's digital literacy and resilience online, and understand the risks and opportunities for children as they navigate life in the digital age. She has a BA from the University of Pennsylvania and an MPhil and PhD from the University of Oxford, where she studied youth media creators.

Bu Wei is professor in the Institute of Journalism and Communication at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing, and director of the Research Centre for Children and Media. She mainly researches critical communication studies for sustainable development and social change. Since 1990, she has published over 10 books and 200 articles on ICT/communication for development, children/youth's use of media/ICTs and their sub-culture, media empowerment for marginal groups, feminist media studies, media literacy education, NGOs' communication activisms, art activism for social changes, working-class cultural studies, children's rights and communication research methodology. Since 1999, she has worked for UNICEF China as a consultant on the Communication and Children's Participation program, and has led surveys on violence against children, overseas and domestic trafficking of children, HIV/AIDS and youth, and girls' development in China.

Sky Croeser is a lecturer in Internet Studies at Curtin University. Her first book, *Global Justice and the Politics of Information*, was published in 2015. Her current research focuses on how people use and change the technologies of everyday life. Her writing ranges widely, with recent work looking at using queer parenting praxis to improve our approaches to developing artificial intelligence; intersectional perspectives on understanding freedom of speech online; how Tunisian activists are approaching Internet reform in the wake of the revolution; and Greek anti-fascist activism. Her teaching and research are tightly interwoven. See skycroeser.net/publications.

Katie Ellis is Associate Professor in Internet Studies and Director of the Centre for Culture and Technology at Curtin University. Her research is located at the intersection of media access and representation and engages with government, industry and community to ensure actual benefits for real people with disability. She has authored and edited 17 books and numerous articles on the topic of disability and the media, including most recently the monograph *Disability and Digital Television Cultures* (Routledge, 2019).

John Hartley was John Curtin Distinguished Professor and Professor of Cultural Science at Curtin University (2012–19). Previously, he was ARC Federation Fellow and research director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation at QUT, where he founded the Creative Industries Faculty (2000–2012). He was inaugural head of the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies at Cardiff University in Wales (1995–2000). He is a Member of the Order of Australia, and elected Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales, Australian Academy of Humanities, International Communication Association (USA) and Royal Society of Arts (UK). In China he was awarded the Individual Creative Industries Prize (2009). Since the 1970s Hartley has published many books, chapters and articles in media, culture, communication, journalism, creative industries and cultural science (translated into over a dozen languages), including:

- *The Uses of Digital Literacy*,
- *Digital Futures for Cultural and Media Studies*,
- *Cultural Science* (with Jason Potts),
- *Creative Economy and Culture* (with Henry Li and Wen Wen),
- *Re-Oriented* (ed. with Weiguo Qu),
- *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies: The Key Concepts 5th edn*,
- *How We Use Stories and Why That Matters*.

Chun-Kai (Karl) Huang is Research Fellow in the Centre for Culture and Technology, at Curtin University. He has a PhD in mathematical statistics and has twelve years of lecturing experience. Karl is a researcher for the Curtin Open Knowledge Initiative project which advocates for universities to be open knowledge institutions. His current work looks into identifying and developing statistical tools for analysing data revolved around the open science landscape. Karl's research interests include open knowledge, open science, scientometrics, probability theory, statistical modelling, data science, and financial risk modelling. ORCID: 0000-0002-9656-5932.

Henry Jenkins is the Provost Professor of Communication, Journalism, Cinematic Arts and Education at the University of Southern California. He is the principal investigator for *The Civic Imagination Project*, funded by the MacArthur Foundation, to explore ways to inspire creative collaborations within communities as they work together to identify shared values and visions for the future. He is also the Chief Advisor to the Annenberg Innovation Lab. Jenkins serves on the jury that selects the Peabody Awards, which recognizes 'stories that matter' from radio, television, and the web. He is the author and/or editor of seventeen books on various aspects of media and popular culture, including:

- *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*,
- *Hop on Pop: The Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture*,
- *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games*,
- *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*,
- *Spreadable Media: Creating Meaning and Value in a Networked Culture*,
- *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism*.

Kai-Ti Kao is a Research Assistant with the Centre for Culture and Technology at Curtin University. Her research interests lie in social engagement with digital media, particularly in relation to power, representation and inequality. She has previously published on a range of these topics including policy framing of Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D), digital engagement and mental health, and issues of representation in the popular videogame *Overwatch*. Her current research focuses on investigating the collaborative learning experiences for students with disabilities in higher education.

Tama Leaver is Associate Professor of Internet Studies at Curtin University, and Vice President of the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR). He is @tamaleaver on Twitter, and his web presence is www.tamaleaver.net. His books include:

- *Artificial Culture: Identity, Technology and Bodies* (Routledge, 2012);
- *An Education in Facebook? Higher Education and the World's Largest Social Network* (Routledge, 2014, co-edited with Mike Kent);
- *Social, Casual and Mobile Games: The Changing Gaming Landscape* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2016 co-edited with Michele Willson);
- *Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures* (Polity, 2020, co-authored with Tim Highfield and Crystal Abidin).

Sonia Livingstone DPhil (Oxon), FBA, FBPS, FAcSS, FRSA, OBE is a professor in the Department of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She researches media audiences, especially children's and young people's risks and opportunities, media literacy, and rights in the digital environment, and has published 20 books including *The Class: Living and Learning in the Digital Age* (New York University Press, with Julian Sefton-Green). Her forthcoming book is *Parenting for a Digital Future*:

How hopes and fears about technology shape children's lives (Oxford University Press, with Alicia Blum-Ross. She currently directs the projects "Children's Data and Privacy Online," "Global Kids Online" (with UNICEF) and "Parenting for a Digital Future", and she is Deputy Director of the UKRI-funded "Nurture Network." Since founding the 33 country EU Kids Online research network, Sonia has advised the UK government, European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Europe, OECD and UNICEF, among others, on children's internet risks, safety, media literacy and rights in digital environments. She blogs at www.parenting.digital. See www.sonialivingstone.net and [@Livingstone_S](https://twitter.com/Livingstone_S).

Madison Magladry is a sessional academic and early career researcher at Curtin University in the school of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry. Their doctoral dissertation focused on women's fitness culture as a postfeminist and neoliberal project of the self. Dr Magladry's main fields of interest include studies of femininity, feminism and postfeminism, physical cultures, digital media and queer studies.

Liam Miller is a lecturer and researcher in the School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry at the University of Queensland. Dr Miller's work focuses on the philosophy of play, video games, education, pop culture, critical reasoning, and ethics. His current research involves looking at motivation and the reasons for action, as well as why we engage and interact with fictional worlds and characters.

Lucy Montgomery leads the Innovation in Knowledge Communication research program at the Centre for Culture and Technology at Curtin University. She is co-lead of the Curtin Open Knowledge Initiative: a major strategic research project exploring how big-data can help universities to understand their performance as Open Knowledge Institutions. A/Prof Montgomery's research focuses on the ways in which open access and open knowledge are transforming landscapes of knowledge production, sharing and use, including in China. Her most recent, collaboratively authored, book *Open Knowledge Institutions: Reinventing Universities* is now open for community review MIT Press.

Cameron Neylon is Professor of Research Communication at the Centre for Culture and Technology at Curtin University and a well-known agitator for opening up the process of research. His current work focusses on how the cultures of research affect and effect change in research communications. He speaks regularly on issues of Open Science including Open Access publication, Open Data, and Open Source, as well as the wider technical and social issues of applying the opportunities the internet brings to the practice of science. He was named as a SPARC Innovator for work on the Panton Principles and was a co-author of the Altmetrics manifesto and the Principles for Open Scholarly Infrastructures. He is a proud recipient of the Blue Obelisk for contributions to open data. He writes regularly at his blog, *Science in the Open*.

Samantha Owen is a historian, an Early Career Researcher and a Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) lecturer in the School of Education at Curtin University. Her research considers the relationship between nationalism and education. She studies the role of education in the formation and operation of civil society and how education and educational policies become vehicles for communicating social, cultural, economic, institutional and political norms. Samantha holds a BA (First Class Honours) in History from the University of Western Australia, a MA (History) from University of Pittsburgh and a PhD (History) from University of Reading. Samantha is a National Convenor for the Australian Women's History Network (AWHN), a member of the History Council WA Executive and an invited member of the United Nations Education Reference Group.

Alkim Ozaygen is a Research Associate at Curtin University's Centre for Culture and Technology, where he submitted his PhD exploring the uses of open access books. He has a background in physics and computer science. He is working for the Curtin Open Knowledge Initiative (COKI) project, investigating data relating to discoverability, dissemination, usage and engagement related to scholarly books to increase the effectiveness of scholarly communication. Earlier he has worked in European Research Infrastructure for the development of open scholarly communication in the social sciences and humanities project (OPERAS-D), and Australian Research Council funded Tracking Infrastructure for Social Media Analysis (TrISMA) project as a data analysis tool developer. He is also a technical advisor to Knowledge Unlatched Research. ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6813-8362.

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Eleanor Sandry, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer in Internet Studies at Curtin University and previously a Fellow of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation at the Curtin Centre for Culture and Technology. Her research is focused on developing an ethical and pragmatic recognition of, and respect for, otherness and difference in communication, drawing on examples from science and technology, science fiction and creative arts. She is particularly interested in exploring the communicative and collaborative possibilities of human interactions with robots. Her book, *Robots and Communication*, was published in 2015 by Palgrave Macmillan.

Antranig Sarian is a PhD Candidate in Game Studies at the Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne. His PhD dissertation explores the expressive qualities of algorithms and multiple endings in contemporary interactive narratives. Prior to this he completed a Master's thesis on interactive narrative titled *Choices Matter: The Mechanics of Choice in Interactive Narrative*. The conclusions of his master's thesis have been published in *Games and Culture* under the title 'Paradox and Pedagogy in The Stanley Parable' as well as in *Eludamos* under the title "'No Going Back": The Telltale Model as Thought Experiment'.

Yu Shan is a xPhD candidate at the Digital Media Research Centre, Queensland University of Technology. She is also a research assistant at the Institute for Cultural Industries, Shenzhen University. Her research interests include digital creative economy, immersive media, and content production in Asia.

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Michele Willson is Professor, Internet Studies, and Dean of Research–Humanities, at Curtin University, Western Australia. She is author of numerous articles on social games and the everyday, and on the digital child and technology. Her publications include the co-edited book (with T. Leaver) *Social, Casual and Mobile Games: The Changing Gaming Landscape*. Michele's research interests include social casual games and gamers; digital childhood; algorithms and the everyday; and considerations of techno-sociality more broadly.

Katie Wilson is Research Fellow in the Centre for Culture and Technology, Faculty of Humanities, Curtin University. She currently investigates institutional diversity and open access to information with the Curtin Open Knowledge Initiative (COKI). Her research background is in indigenous education and with children and young people, and her doctoral research explored cultural learning experiences of Australian Indigenous primary and secondary school students, and has undertaken research relating to indigenous education in Australian schools and universities. She has held positions in academic libraries in Australia and New Zealand and as a library software training consultant. Her ORCID ID is 0000-0001-8705-1027.

Huan Wu is a research associate working for Digital China Lab and Curtin Tencent Research Centre at Curtin University. She worked as an associate professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University for five years and studied at the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation (QUT) as an Endeavour Cheung Kong Fellow. Her research interests include creative industries of China and the interaction between new media and disadvantaged people.

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