

CFP special issue on Convergence:

Gamifying News: Playful approaches to public engagement

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Gamified and playful output that interacts with users (no longer audiences) is used pervasively to engage publics with the news agenda. Much of what is now communicated at a societal level has been subverted by the mechanics of social interaction and game-play, challenging legacy publishers and broadcasters to engage anew with their audiences, especially millennials, a generation accustomed to digital interactivity. The quality of public discourse needs to be scrutinised in the context of the take-up of these new technologies and new formats of journalistic distribution. Digital and AI (artificial intelligence) has the power to reinvent engagement with the public sphere through playful, social and immersive encounters, with the potential to both enhance and to diminish the importance of the content. As such, ‘newsgames’, classified as a broad body of work produced at the intersection of videogames and journalism [1], present possibilities and limitations as they emerge as a more prominent platform. This special issue seeks to interrogate these trends by examining the growth of ‘newsgames’ and playful approaches to journalism.

As a natural continuation of the long-term trend of seeing ‘news as entertainment’, playful content, distributed virally, can easily influence political discourse and election outcomes, marginalising conventional gatekeepers. In addition, news consumers, in a post-trust age, are less likely to adhere to a traditional understanding of journalistic quality, struggling with the difference between algorithmic and editorial content. This special issue aims to further explore and investigate these and other interrelated factors, and how they relate to a ‘fractured’ public sphere. An increase in online sources and commentary; the diminished status of the ‘expert’; the prevalence of self-affirming online communities slaved to the algorithmic logic of social media, alongside increased scepticism of established news media, all contribute to a shift in the way the public engages with news.

The editors welcome submissions exploring these areas but not limited to:

- Playful perspectives on journalism
- Game mechanics, interactive newscasting, and playful affordances
- The growing influence of viral newsgames and their role of reinforcing public opinion
- Challenges to journalistic ‘professionalism’ and ethical considerations regarding the gamification of news
- Trust in content that has been authenticated through the social sphere bypassing traditional news media
- Growth of news personalisation and the dramatisation of journalism
- Innovations in performance and modes of address to drive political engagement
- Factual storytelling in immersive virtual environments (IVEs)
- Attraction to news as spectacle and entertainment
- Affective and emotional journalism, and what that might mean for news reception
- The playful public sphere and (re)conceptualizations of publics
- Historical analyses of gamified and playful journalism
- Cultural components of play and journalism
- Critical approaches to gamifying the news
- News and artificial intelligence
- Fake news and information pollution as ‘dark play’

Please send proposals of no more than 500 words to gamifyingnews@gmail.com by September 7, 2018. Authors of selected abstracts will be notified by October 8, 2018 and invited to submit full manuscripts by April 2, 2019.