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Editorial

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Editorial

We are very pleased to present the first issue of a new e-journal in the field of European media history: the *Journal of European Television History and Culture*. It is to be the first peer-reviewed, multi-media and open access e-journal in the field of television studies. The aim of this e-journal is to provide an international platform for outstanding academic research and archival reflection on television as an important part of our European cultural heritage.

In the past few years national broadcasting archives and audiovisual libraries have taken important steps in the digitisation of their sources. Consequently, some of their material has already become available online. But as access to television material online across national borders remains fractured and scattered, European funded projects such as *Video Active* (2006-2009) and *EUscreen* (2009-2012) try to tackle some of the main problems with transnational access:

- the lack of interoperability between archival data-bases both at the level of metadata and semantics;
- the non-existence of proven scenarios for the use of audiovisual material at a European level;
- the complexity of rights issues and the lack of contextualisation of digitised sources.

At the FIAT/IFTA conference in Paris in 2004, the *European Television History Network* (ETHN) was launched, aiming at promoting the need for a transnational perspective on the history and culture of television in Europe. The archival situation and the accessibility for researchers vary considerably in the different European countries. That is why ETHN acknowledged the necessity of cooperation between archives and academics on a European scale in order to bridge academic research and archival initiatives. The *Journal of European Television History and Culture* builds on these initiatives and is closely related to *EUscreen* of which the e-journal is an important feature.

The transnational perspective is reflected in the composition of the editorial board, listing leading television academics and archivists from across Europe and Israel. Moreover the e-journal features a dual structure with a balanced attention for scholarly work (presented in longer reflected essays of about 4.000 words) and archival issues showcased in the “discovery”-section (presented in shorter pieces of about 2.500 words).

The *Journal of European Television History and Culture* has the ambition to speak to both the academic and the professional community but will address a larger audience interested in television as a cultural phenomenon too. Broadcast historians, media studies scholars, audiovisual archivists, television professionals as well as the large group of enthusiastic fans of “old” television will have the opportunity to dive into the history and presence of European television by means of multi-media texts.

At this point we need to emphasise that this first issue is just a prototype. This basic version still misses important technical functionalities that will turn it into a true multimedia platform for online storytelling. From the second issue on (to be expected by the end of September 2012) the e-journal will have a user-friendly design facilitating the easy production of multi-media articles. It will integrate various functionalities, such as: the editing of footnotes and literature references; the embedding of both stills (photographs) and video material and their online montage; the possibility of adding links and online references. This first issue deals with a crucial topic in our field and is entitled “Making sense of digital sources”. Following up on the central theme of the first international EUscreen conference held in Rome in October 2010, most of the articles reunited in this first issue explicitly address the challenges of contextualising television material online and touch upon such a broad variety of questions as:

- What is the ontological status of a digitised source?
- Do we have tools for analysing and interpreting them?
- How do we find the sources we are looking for?
- Will online access to audiovisual sources affect historical storytelling?
- How to make television history in the age of abundance?
- Can we use television sources for reminiscence therapy?
- Does the “archival turn” shape a new historical consciousness for our European cultural heritage?

We hope that we could trigger your curiosity and wish you a pleasant and informative reading!

Andreas Fickers and Sonja de Leeuw

Biography

Andreas Fickers (a.fickers@maastrichtuniversity.nl) is Associate Professor for Comparative Media History at Maastricht University.

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