

EDITORIAL

MUCH MORE THAN PAPER: THE MAGAZINE AS A UNIVERSAL COMMUNICATION PLATFORM

CARLA RODRIGUES CARDOSO

CICANT/ LUSÓFONA UNIVERSITY (PORTUGAL)

ANA FIGUEIRAS

CICANT/ LUSÓFONA UNIVERSITY (PORTUGAL)

ILO ALEXANDRE

CICANT/ LUSÓFONA UNIVERSITY (PORTUGAL)

Carla Rodrigues Cardoso holds a PhD in Communication Sciences by NOVA University Lisbon. Associate Professor at Lusófona University, she is an integrated researcher at CICANT, where she founded MagLab–Magazine Media Lab, the first international Lab on Magazine Studies. Carla is also the head of the biannual international conference “The Future of Magazine”, which was held for the first time in 2023. She has researched and published in Journalism and Magazine Studies for over two decades.
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0790-6924>

Ana Figueiras is an Assistant Professor at Universidade Lusófona and a researcher at CICANT, where she serves as the assistant scientific coordinator of MagLab–Magazine Media Lab. She earned her PhD in Digital Media by NOVA University Lisbon (UT Austin Program | Portugal) in 2016, and since then her primary research area has been information visualisation, focusing on visual storytelling.
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7233-9968>

Ilo Alexandre is an Assistant Professor at Lusófona University. He holds a PhD in Digital Media by NOVA University Lisbon (UT Austin Program | Portugal). He is a researcher at CICANT, where he serves as the head of communication of MagLab–Magazine Media Lab. Alexandre was editor-in- chief at G1 Ceará and has worked as web editor and social media editor for political campaigns and advertising.
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1256-6613>

Corresponding author

Carla Rodrigues Cardoso
carla.cardoso@ulusofona.pt
CICANT, Lusófona University
Campo Grande, 376
1749-024 Lisboa
Portugal

Let's look at the journals published by Taylor & Francis, which defines itself as "one of the world's leading academic publishers—and one of its most enduring."¹ And let's think about these five: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, *Journal of Gender Studies*, *History of Education*, *Asian Studies Review*, *World Leisure Journal*. What do they have in common? They all published articles connected to magazine studies during the first semester of 2025. And all those articles, as well as most of the around 700 found on 30 different Taylor & Francis journals with "magazine" as one of the keywords, could have been published in a journal focused on Magazine Studies.

This demonstrates that research on magazines is flourishing worldwide, despite being dispersed across the most diverse areas of knowledge. Nevertheless, the consolidation of the field of Magazine Studies has been shaped by both progress and setbacks, leading many scholars to distance themselves from the field due to the pressure to publish imposed by the current quantitative logic of academia.

For several decades, Magazine Studies has grappled with a diverse array of challenges. These issues include an overemphasis on historical approaches (Peterson, 1956, p. viii), a chronic lack of funding for research in this domain (Johnson, 2007), persistent misconceptions that the field is confined to women's magazines and even "academic snobbery" (Holmes & Nice, 2012, p. 159).

The underlying issue, however, may lie elsewhere. In prevailing discourse, the term "magazine" continues to evoke the notion of a tangible object. In French, the designation "presse magazine" (press magazine) inherently confines the term to its physical, paper-based medium. Indeed, many scholars within Magazine Studies, whether explicitly or implicitly, also adhere to the notion that magazines are delimited by their physical embodiment. This approach appears to be gaining

renewed relevance in light of the recent print media revival. Some publishers even predict a printed-magazine renaissance, akin to the vinyl revival, which saw its highest sales in four decades in 2022 (Sweeney, 2023).

However, magazines are not confined to print, as evidenced by digitally-born publications. In terms of format, magazines also exist in other media, such as radio and television, highlighting its adaptability. A magazine is, fundamentally, a universal communicational platform possessing distinct characteristics. It specializes in a diverse array of topics, covering subjects as varied as horticulture or snooker, and caters to specific audiences, including children, adolescents, women or men. It is within this intersection of interests and demographics that magazines uniquely foster community building, surpassing other formats in this regard.

This exceptional quality of magazines, long recognized by scholars such as Abrahamson (2009), can be significantly enhanced within the digital realm. Thus, online, and particularly through social media platforms, it becomes possible to cultivate micro-niches, giving rise to what might be termed "micro-magazines." This potential is fully realized when multimedia resources are effectively utilized to complement the inherently engaging communicational nature of the magazine format. However, doing so requires a conscious departure from the established paradigms of print media and an unreserved embrace of the opportunities afforded by digital innovation.

Digital innovations, particularly "all-you-can-read" services, like Apple News+, have contributed to circulation growth for several publications (Maher, 2025). Steven Watson, of Stack, a subscription service delivering a different independent magazine each month, observes that "the best magazines make readers feel part of a community of people who share the same worldview" (Ferguson, 2025, para. 16).

¹ <https://taylorandfrancis.com/about/>

Magazines undoubtedly remain relevant and deserve critical academic study. They serve as a holistic reflection of society, offering insights into prevailing social trends and shedding light on the values and aspirations that unite individuals across a myriad of domains, encompassing a wide range of topics (e.g., celebrity lifestyles, forthcoming winter color palettes, optimal sponge cake recipes).

Within the digital landscape, only one type of magazine appears to be particularly vulnerable: the newsmagazine. David Abrahamson presciently anticipated this trend more than 15 years ago, when he projected the sector's evolution to 2020 (Abrahamson, 2009). This particular genre of magazine is a hybrid, positioned between newspapers and traditional magazines (Cardoso, 2022a). In the United States, *Time*, which pioneered the concept in 1923, emerged as an innovative product, offering a weekly synthesis of news.

However, the rise of real-time news dissemination in the digital era has rendered such recaps of the week's hard news increasingly redundant. Consequently, we are witnessing a dilution of newsmagazine identity (Cardoso, 2022b), as their websites adopt the visual design and thematic structure more commonly associated with newspapers. Nevertheless, the newsmagazine appears to be an exception rather than the rule. The prevailing trend encompasses a broad spectrum of potentialities serving both industry and academia.

The second issue (v.02, n.01) of the *International Journal of Magazine Studies* (IJMS) was organized by Professors Carla Rodrigues Cardoso, Ana Figueiras, and Ilo Alexandre. Following a rigorous double-blind peer review process, four outstanding articles were selected for publication, reflecting both academic excellence and critical insight.

The topics covered explore a wide range of subjects, engaging with diverse magazine formats and case studies from multiple national contexts. By examining both established

print titles and emerging digital platforms, the research offers a nuanced understanding of how magazine media continue to evolve. Demonstrating the transnational nature of Magazine Studies, the articles featured in this issue originate from Brazil, Spain, Taiwan, and the United States. Collectively, the contributions illuminate the field's richness and complexity, affirming Magazine Studies as a dynamic, interdisciplinary domain that bridges tradition and innovation.

In this issue of IJMS, we are honored to feature an essay by Tim Holmes, from Cardiff University, one of the most respected scholars and advocates of Magazine Studies worldwide. He is the founder and pioneer of the Mapping the Magazine conference series, an initiative now integrated into the Magazine Media Lab at CICANT, Lusófona University.

Entitled "The Maga and the zine", Holmes's essay draws on a range of examples to issue a timely warning: are magazine publishers neglecting the crucial role of distribution, which connects a publication to its audience? He also revisits the often-overlooked subgenre of "little magazines," literary focused periodicals that remain underexplored in academic research. This essay takes readers on a journey from *Blackwood's Magazine*, affectionately known as "Maga" and rooted in the early 19th century, to the zines of the digital era, ultra-specialized, audience-driven publications that continue to embody and advance the spirit of the magazine form.

The peer-reviewed section opens with "Cosmopolitanism in Print: *The Atlantic* vs. *The Economist*," by Francisco Seoane Pérez. The article examines how the two magazines embody distinct models of cosmopolitanism. While *The Atlantic* is rooted, *The Economist* is global. Analyzing their editorial missions, content, and audiences, the study shows how *The Atlantic* fosters a plural, critical American identity, while *The Economist* champions Western cosmopolitanism and liberal rationality. Both target influential elites but reflect different ideological stances. The article argues that while

these outlets shape global discourse, they also perpetuate cultural and structural limitations in their engagement with the world.

Hong-Chi Shiau and Yen-Chieh Lo examine how *CommonWealth* magazine in Taiwan has evolved from a traditional publication into a data-driven platform focused on ESG (environmental, social, and governance) issues. Through interactive visualizations, corporate partnerships, and AI tools, the magazine is redefining its journalistic role, positioning itself as a bridge between the public sector, businesses, and society. The study focuses on three key areas: using data visualization to tell stories, integrating data from various stakeholders, and navigating the promises and challenges of artificial intelligence. The case illustrates the complexity of digital transformation in non-Western contexts, with an emphasis on the tensions between innovation, credibility, and institutional sustainability.

In "Evolution in Campus Media: How a Pandemic and Social Justice Movement Prompted Student Journalists to Rethink the Campus Magazine," Carol Terracina-Hartman describes how, although campus magazines typically eschew carrying breaking-news content in favor of exploring social and cultural impacts, during the global pandemic and social justice demonstrations, student editors redefined "campus culture" to reflect broader societal changes, particularly following the police killing of Breonna Taylor. This study examined how a student medium, as a Community of Practice, responded to and reflected on the social impacts of Taylor's death, analyzing editions based on covers, tables of contents, and editors' notes, identifying 15 themes and confirming that "identity" within these communities persisted despite changes in operational practices.

The issue concludes with "Paper and Screen: An Analysis of *Elle Brasil* Magazine's Multiplatform," by Vanessa Valiati,

Amanda Caroline Dorr Ferreira, and Gabrielle Pacheco Jost. The article compares the print and digital versions of *Elle Brasil*, examining how the magazine reinvents its journalism style across platforms. The print edition takes an analytical, upscale approach, while the digital version (Elle View) focuses on current affairs, accessibility, and a youthful tone. Based on content analysis and an interview with the editor-in-chief, the study reveals thematic overlaps but apparent differences in audience, format, and language. It highlights the complementarity of formats and Elle's adaptation to mobile and digital logic, emphasizing the role of multimodality, hypertextuality, and interactivity in contemporary journalism.

Together, these contributions underscore the liveliness and diversity of contemporary Magazine Studies, showcasing how magazines, whether gender-specific, student-led, or mainstream, are sites of ongoing reinvention and negotiation across digital, cultural and ideological dimensions. The featured research spans geographies, from Brazil to Taiwan, exploring topics ranging from gender politics to artificial intelligence, and engages with actors including student journalists and elite opinion-makers. Understanding their complex cultural significance extends beyond appreciating their value as magazines, as they disrupt public discourse, negotiate identity, and respond to societal changes and technological advancements. These concepts, aligned with comparison, transnationalism, and transdisciplinary approaches, can elevate magazine studies, doing justice to magazines' critical relevance in navigating the complexities of our mediated world.

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