

Paradigms of a New Discipline

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ABSTRACT

Scientific objective: The aim of the paper is to analyze the premises that lead to the definition of paradigms of media and social communication in the context of new classification of fields and disciplines of science. **Research methods:** Assuming that the new discipline is dominated by representatives of the current media science, as well as book studies and information science, it is important to undertake an identity discussion, identify sub-disciplines and improve research tools. **Results and conclusions:** The paper presents a chronological and problematic outline of the development of media research in Poland, especially after 2011, including the activity of the Polish Society of Social Communication. **Cognitive value:** Attention is drawn to the potential resulting from the combination of autonomic disciplines characterized by multigenic aspects and openness.

KEYWORDS

book studies, information science, media studies, social communication



In the fourth issue of *Studia Medioznawcze* (Eng. *Media Studies*) in 2018, a paper entitled “Social Communication and Media—A Federation, Not an Incorporation” by Marek Jabłonowski and Tomasz Mielczarek was published. What is important is that the paper was part of “The Identity of Media Science” series. The authors aptly diagnosed the process of broadening the primary paradigms of three disciplines as a federation, i.e. the equivalence of research methods and practices, and the commonality of the subject of research. Interestingly, they focused on explaining the specificity of book studies and information science as a scientific discipline in the humanities (until September 2018), taking it for granted that social communication, despite the separation of the cognitive and social communication studies within the discipline, was a strong link in the media science’s research tradition in Poland.

Social Communication in Media Science

The Ordinance of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of September 20, 2018, on science and scientific and artistic disciplines (Dz.U. 2018, Item 1818, as amended) essentially reproduces the FOS classification (Fields of Science and Technology, Pol. *OECD*), and in relation to the previous one it meets the expectations of the scientific community of media experts, who were postulating since 2017 that “social communication” should be added to media studies.

As the president of the Polish Society of Social Communication, I was the initiator of these activities, and under the mandate from the nationwide Conference of Deans of Faculties and Directors of Institutes educating in media studies I was the author of letters formalizing the argumentation for broadening the paradigm of media science. In the open letter addressed to Minister Jarosław Gowin, supported by the resolutions of Faculty Councils and Institutes represented at the Conference, I formulated the following premises for acknowledging the status of research and didactics in the new discipline:

- organizing research areas in the context of the identity of the discipline, while taking into account the transdisciplinarity as the value of science in the world;
- equalizing the status of research and didactics in the field of media and social communication (analysis of the faculties’ situation in the aspect of the specifics of research, education programs, majors, and published journals confirms that this condition formalizes the existing state of affairs);
- creation of uniform criteria for the assessment of scientific and research achievements in the discipline, in particular in grant and expert procedures (so far the discipline of media science is assigned to various panels of the National Science Center);
- the need to provide specialized didactics, especially the diploma thesis, work internships, launching scholarship programs by employers who are not editors or media centers;
- creating a perspective for obtaining the right to confer a doctoral and postdoctoral degree in the discipline (currently, these qualifications have five and two academic centers respectively);
- accepting communication research on media and social communication processes in line with trends in world science (the practice of international cooperation of media research centers in Poland indicates that foreign partners attach great importance to communication of the scope of research as a model and rooted in the humanities and social sciences)” (PTKS, 2018).

These premises resulted from the analysis of research directions and didactics related to broadly understood media and social communication conducted at 19 universities in Poland. The analysis of the data allowed to state that at 16 universities the basic education is journalism and social communication, at 6 universities—at the faculties of social sciences, and at 5—at the faculties of humanities. In addition, journalism or related studies are conducted at 11 other faculties, e.g.

faculties of theology, political science, management and social communication, political science and international relations, radio and television (Hofman & Pataj, in press).

The basis for the activity of the Society and of the Conference was the conviction of the inseparability of research fields and education programs at the level of the scientific potential of academics. The Act on Science and Higher Education, in force since October 1, 2018, enables other solutions in which the fields of study will have no relation to the research subject taken by academics. This solution, justified in didactic, practical, and dual profiles, should not, in my opinion, be applied in the general university profile. I am an advocate of a clear model: the fields of study follow the discipline (scientifically evaluated one). The Ordinance on the Fields and Disciplines of September 20, 2018 (Dz.U. 2018, Item 1818, as amended) obliges to positioning the media and social communication through research subjects and learning outcomes characterizing the field of social sciences. This results in the necessity of preparing a new description of majors related to cognitive and social communication studies, book studies and information science in the domain of the humanities. Paradoxically, the Act and the Ordinance confirm a kind of dualism in the essence of media and social communication, vividly discussed since the 1970s in the context of meta-theoretical proposals of Mieczysław Kafel, Irena Tetelowska, Walery Pisarek, and Tomasz Goban-Klas (Hofman, 2015; Hofman, 2017).

Multigenic Aspects of the Discipline

Historically, after the standardization of education in Poland until 2012¹ and after specialization of universities resulting from the adoption of didactics as the main factor of research achievements of a few academics with media interests at the time,² media studies as a subject of political communication, advertising, marketing and public research relations witnessed a great development—this development allowed Pisarek to observe that: “In the 21st century, the most dominant discipline for the media communication science was probably political science (...), manifested here first of all in explaining the phenomena occurring in the media sphere with political factors” (Pisarek, 2008, p. 229). However, Pisarek notes that contemporary media studies can also be affiliated with the following disciplines: sociology, psychology, law, Polish philology, and foreign philology; let’s add—philosophy, book studies and information science, as well as management science.

Pisarek’s statement points to the problem of multigenic aspects of journalism studies (again historically identified with media science, press studies, and media studies); I understand multigenic aspects as the multiplicity of levels of the crystallization of journalism studies in the sense of the profession and subject of research. Multigenic means that the subject of research

¹ The standards of education for journalism and social communication included such subjects as: language communication, journalistic genres, philosophy, sociology, psychology, contemporary history of Poland and the world, contemporary political thought, rhetoric and eristic, media systems in Poland and in the world, media law, social communication theory, and journalistic workshops.

² For example, the University of Wrocław, the Faculty of Social Sciences, consolidated its position through research into political communication conducted, among others by Professor Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska (prof. dr hab.), Professor Robert Wiszniowski (prof. dr hab.); Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań—media law being the domain of Professor Jacek Sobczak (prof. dr hab.); The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin—media ethics, pioneered by Fr. Professor Leon Dyczewski (prof. dr hab.)—this current of research is perfectly continued by the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, a team of priest and Associate Professor Michał Drożdż (dr hab.), a professor of the University of Life Sciences).

is the genesis and structure of media science in the context of the disciplines forming the core of cognitive reflection in the humanities (literary studies, psychology) and communication (press studies, sociology). Nowadays, due to the new classification of disciplines and scientific areas, the discussion on multigenic aspects requires supplementation with the paradigms of cognitive and social communication studies as well as book studies and information science, but still remains in the field of social sciences (media impact, communication processes, social functioning of the media and journalism) and the humanities (language of social communication, mediolinguistics, genealogy of journalism). The multigenics problem of the new discipline should also be localized in the context of inter- and transdisciplinarity, and taking into account the research fields of such disciplines as: history, sociology, philosophy, linguistics, political science and public administration, psychology, economics, pedagogy, management science, law, science about culture and religion, literary studies, and art sciences. This summary illustrates the dynamics of the development of media and social communication research, as well as the correlations of research subjects and methods appropriate for “joint” disciplines (Hofman, 2015, pp. 1, 5).

The Polish Society of Social Communication (founded in 2007 in Wrocław) consisted of 23 research sections (modeled on the structure of international societies) and initially in operation are 18 of them. These are: Philosophy and Anthropology of Communication, Media Education, Media Economics and Media Management, Media History, Mass Communications, Intercultural Communication and International Communication, Political Communication, Visual Communication, Popular Culture, Media Policy and Media Law, Public Relations, Advertising, Journalism Studies, Axiology of Communication, Media and Local Communication, Language in Media, Health Communication, New Media, and Radio. The names of the sections reflect well the changing discipline paradigms.

Jabłonowski and Mielczarek (2018) recall in the paper three previous statements from the pages of *Media Studies* regarding the identity of media science (Jabłonowski & Gackowski, 2012; Mrozowski, 2012; Jabłonowski & Jakubowski, 2014). It is worth reminding that after the Ordinance of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of August 8, 2011, on science and scientific and artistic disciplines (Dz.U. 2011, No. 179, Item 1065, as amended), a conference on the definition of the paradigm of a new discipline at the time, i.e. media studies, took place at the Institute of Journalism of the University of Warsaw. Goban-Klas proposed including sub-disciplines in the internal description: history of the media and media studies (and journalism), language of the media (rhetoric and eristic, language practice of journalistic genres), axiology of media (media legislation, ethics), new media (technologies), economics and media management, public relations and marketing (media, political and advertising, media consulting), media systems, and theories of social communication (political and cultural).³

Goban-Class's proposition took into account the basic framework of the discipline; he retained the model value thanks to the possibility of updating the description of sub-disciplines—and so language of the media, new media, and theories of social communication have a great potential.

During the same conference, Pisarek discussed issues resulting from the methodological openness of the discipline and the development of empirical research currently being the most frequently chosen way to solve scientific problems.

³ Conference materials provided to participants.

Earlier, many times on the status of research on the media, Teresa Sasińska-Klas and Janusz Adamowski appeared in public (including in contact with the Ministry of Science and Higher Education). Their contributions to the formalization of a separate discipline are indisputable.

The Crystallization of Disciplines

Separation of the discipline of media science in 2011 became possible after determining the autonomy of the subject of research, the advancement of means and results of learning, the degree of meta-scientific self-determination and the organization of education. Thus, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education recognized the arguments of the signatories of the resolution signed on September 16, 2010, during the Second Congress of Polish Society of Social Communication, held in Lublin under the slogan “Autonomy of the Discipline” (Hofman, 2013).

It is worth recalling that until 2011, at various stages of the presence of media research at universities, the terms: journalism, press, and media studies were used. Julian Maślanka (1976) defined the journalism studies, referring to the components of the profession of a journalist (knowledge of facts, information hierarchy, communication skills, ethics, awareness of media functions). Pisarek (2006, pp. 119, 157), attached to the term “press studies,” emphasized the aspect of knowledge about the social issues of periodic mass communication, and used the term “media studies” in the sense of mass media science or, more broadly, media communication. From the beginning of the post-war history of media research in Poland, concepts based on studies of the functionality and impact of the media (Mieczysław Kafel) and interdisciplinary (Irena Tetelowska) can be noticed.⁴ I understand that Kafel’s conceptualization of the press studies has had a social provenance. According to Pisarek (2008, p. 229), Tetelowska regarded as the research subject of press studies “all phases and aspects of the functioning of the press, including its political, social, cultural, legal, and economic determinants.” The press studies seen from Tetelowska’s perspective had a multidisciplinary structure of mass media studies. In the 1970s, media research (*de facto* the press research) and social communication processes were partially in the fields of interest of sociologists, psychologists, linguists, theoreticians of literature, historians, economists, and anthropologists. The communication was dominant, although there was no systematic discipline and awareness of the potential of joint research. In 1976, Goban-Klas (1976) proposed an interdisciplinary structure of the communication science, the validity of which confirms in contemporary reflections (Goban-Klas, 1999, 2011). According to the researcher, when attempting to determine the identity of the discipline, its stratification should include: anthropology, sociology, psychology, semiotics, history, political science, economics, law, aesthetics, and theory of literature. Currently, in addition, perhaps as a sub-discipline, also cognitive science, book studies and information science are defined differently.

By synthesizing the state of research into the conceptualization of the discipline, one can notice the coherence of its crystallization processes with the tendencies of differentiation, integration, and unification in science (Hofman, 2015, Hofman, 2016, pp. 20–36⁵).

⁴ Media research was carried out by the following entities: Polish Press Research Institute (1946–1948), Press Research Institute in Warsaw (1955–1959), Press Research Center in Krakow (1956), Public Opinion Research Center of Polish Radio (1957), Department of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1953–1958), Faculty of Journalism of the University of Warsaw (1953–1960).

⁵ Findings of the researchers—J. Sucha, S. Kamiński, and S. Majdański: “Processes of differentiation of science are accompanied and somehow counteracted by integration processes,” „to the development of science

The Cost of Research and Education

Expanding the paradigms of media studies makes it necessary to rethink and revise study programs with the content and effects resulting from the combination of three, so far autonomous, disciplines. Especially important and expected in many universities are Rectors' decisions concerning the transfer of majors such as "information management," "information architecture," and "cognitive science" from the humanities (philological) to social sciences (according to the new classification of scientific disciplines and fields). Systematically conducted since 2007 research on education programs on the most popular media-related courses, i.e. journalism studies and social communication, have confirmed the compliance of students and «employers» expectations regarding skills and competences acquired in the education process.⁶

In 2017, journalism and social communication at the first and second levels of education were pursued at 19 public universities, while public relations (PR and branding), advertising and marketing (promotion), new media (Internet journalism), media production, visual communication and design, photography, logistics and media management, media research (media analysis and monitoring) were the most common among the majors (Hofman & Pataj, in press). There are also majors determined by divisions of journalism studies, e.g. radio, television, sports, music, and business (economic). In the Ordinance of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of January 22, 2019, regarding cost-absorbing factors (Dz.U. 2019, Item 202, as amended), the didactic factor for the discipline is 1.5, and the research—1.0. Despite the announcement of reducing the importance of these coefficients in the financing of science algorithm, coefficients are not adequate to the costs of modern practicing of science in media studies. The Ministry did not take into account the argumentation for their realignment, contained in the correspondence of the board of Polish Society of Social Communication of December 14, 2018, i.e. with reference to the cost-effectiveness ratio of education—the costs of internationalization of the education process and the mobility of academic teachers and students; the costs of specialized diversification of the education offer and making the education process more accessible in the general university profile; the costs of maintaining technological potential in radio and television studios, new media laboratories, photography, media graphics, and the maintenance of student media as places of apprenticeship and directional activities. With regard to the cost-effectiveness ratio of conducting scientific activities, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education did not recognize the following arguments: internationalization costs of research and development of research networks using new technologies and software, increasing the importance of cost-intensive statistical research on application values, research on the impact of electronic media (audiovisual program analysis laboratories); cost-intensive archiving and digital data processing. This argumentation gains reinforcement and postulative dimension, when we take into account the specificity of research and education in the broadened paradigms of the discipline.

and the increase of scientific knowledge comes about as a result of links between disciplines that were once separated.”

⁶ In the years 2007-2009, the research was conducted by the team of the University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszow under the supervision of Sławomir Gawroński, PhD (Gawroński 2009a, 2009b, 2010). In the years 2013–2015, the research was conducted by a team under the supervision of Post-doctoral Associate, Agnieszka Stepińska (dr hab.), coordinating the Polish part of the international project „Journalistic Role Performance Around the Globe” (Journalistic, 2019).

New Paradigms

The new classification of scientific and artistic disciplines and fields adopted in 2018 in relation to the discipline of media and social communication requires a new description of the content of the discipline, which will take into account the main research fields of the cognitive science and social communication, as well as book studies and information science. The representatives of the first of them mostly declared that their discipline belongs to “philosophical sciences,” and Jacek Paśniczek in a letter to the Central Commission for Degrees and Titles even stated that “the vast majority of Polish cognitivists did not have contact in their work with the media and social communication” and that “cognitive science and the media and social communication have different scopes, and at best they are minimally similar.” Paśniczek pointed out that cognitive and communication science have been functioning in Poland since the early 1990s in the formula appropriate to cognitive science. According to the analysis of available documents, cognitivists are not interested in formalizing cooperation within the sub-discipline of media and social communication.⁷

Jablonowski and Mielczarek (2018) in the paper refer to Krzysztof Migoń’s understanding of book studies. The researcher emphasizes, among others diversification of the status of book studies in various environments and countries, as well as the multigenic nature of the discipline deriving, for example, from literary studies, linguistics, philosophy, theology, and the sciences of art. However, in the eyes of this researcher only book studies guarantee “integral analysis of the phenomenon of a book” (Migoń, 2005, p. 50).⁸ The researcher also draws attention to the fact that nowadays, moving away from the librarian studies paradigm, the library science and librarian studies are linked to scientific information.

Irena Socha refers to the concept of “book culture” as an object of research, pointing to two possible levels of interpretation of a book, i.e. as a literary and publishing phenomenon and in contexts of the multimedia communication and social functions of a book. The researcher gives examples of scientific problems in book studies thus understood: “A book or document,” editing, theory of book art, behavior of book users, and a book in the media space. She emphasizes the values of book studies as an open discipline, necessary for other humanistic research and having the ability to adapt new categories to its own instruments (Socha, 2016).

Information science, as the second part of the original name of the discipline, has a greater affinity with the media and social communication. I share views on the dynamics of transformations in social communication processes, including: organization of these processes and information management, expressed inter alia by Pisarek. In *The Encyclopedia of the Book* (the title of the publication is important, directing attention to potential recipients), Pisarek (2017, pp. 33–42) emphasized the context of globalization and media convergence, writing about “improvements” in media communication in terms of communication, storage, and processing messages.

In a paper by Barbara Sosińska-Kalata (2013), entitled “Areas of Research in Contemporary Information Science,” I found an overview of the definition of the discipline (Paul Otlet, Maria

⁷ I express my sincere appreciation to Postdoctoral Associate Andrzej Ostrowski (dr hab.), a dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology of UMCS for consultations.

⁸ The title definition of the bibliography, Migoń, follows Paul Raabe: „Buchkultur is a historically shaped, covering a large part of cultural life, actively functioning, the whole world of books” and by analogy to the culture of writing, printing, typographic, editorial, bibliographic, library and reading culture (Migoń, 2005, p. 54).

Dembowska, Harold Borko, Tefko Saracevic) and a lecture on modern information science, which allows, with regard to this area of research, assume far-reaching coherence of subjects and research methods in relation to the media and social communication. Sosińska-Kalata states the multidisciplinary of the information science (all disciplines included in the media and social communication in the new classification have this character) and appreciate the technological determinants that influence the information behavior of media users. Behind the unchangeable axis of information science, it assumes «ensuring effective communication of well-established knowledge between people in different environments of their activity and using the most effective methods and tools» (Sosińska-Kalata, 2013, p. 9). In the genesis of information science, she notices a dominant European research tradition, focused on «methodology and social problems of access to well-established information and knowledge» (specialized bibliographic and documentation activities, creation of library and paralibrarian centers of documentation) (Sosińska-Kalata, 2013, p. 11) .

In a multiplicity of approaches to the subject of information science research, interdisciplinary character and relationship with information technologies, diversity and internal incoherence of the research field are characteristic (Sosińska-Kalata, 2013, pp. 18–20). Sosińska-Kalata, referring to various attempts to conceptualize information science, also mentions the interesting concept of Marcia Bates, according to which “information science is a special kind of meta-science that conducts research and builds theories on documentation of knowledge created by other disciplines of science and practical activity, and its purpose is to determine the optimal rules for representing this knowledge and organizing access to it” (Sosińska-Kalata, 2013, p. 23).

This concept is interesting because it “leads” information science beyond the strict classification of disciplines, extracting its potential for universal usefulness. In this context, it is worth noting that Sosińska-Kalata sees the danger of disintegration of the discipline due to the presence of research on modern communication technologies in the field of research of many disciplines.

In the second part of the discussed paper, Sosińska-Kalata presents 26 areas of research in information science based on the analysis of international journals (*Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, *Journal of Information Science*, *Journal of Documentation*). These are the following areas (internally diverse and characterized by the author): analysis of knowledge domains (including: information, education, legal, public, social knowledge, and social informatics), information architecture, usability, design and evaluation of websites, archives, libraries and repositories digital, user research (behavior and information competences), language barriers, library history, book studies—social book function, quantitative information research, library science, bibliotherapy, archival documentation, information economics, information ethics, digital humanities, human communication with the machine, scientific communication, information science—theory, research categories, new media and mass media, organization of knowledge, information policy, scientific policy and obtaining grants, social web, information technology (including e-government, information retrieval, artificial intelligence), information services, information and knowledge management (communication in business), sources of information (credibility and availability of information) (Sosińska-Kalata, 2013, pp. 28–32).⁹

⁹ At this point, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Postdoctoral Associate Anita Has-Tokarz (dr hab.) from the Faculty of Humanities of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University for the consultation and friendly help.

In the “identity” proposal of Jabłonowski and Mielczarek (2018) in the analysis of the content of media-related journals (*Journal of Communication*, *Journal of Media Studies*, *Media Studies*), we find an interesting regularity. In journals from the ministerial list A, the percentage of topics is dominated by: media content research, political communication, media audits, and media impact studies. Correspondingly, in journals from the ministerial list B—media content research, media and journalism history, mass communication theories, and media language. In this group one should notice a clear advantage of media content research (over 90%) in relation to the others (for comparison: political communication 4.9%, media auditing 3.9%, media impact research 12.1%). This juxtaposition is less detailed than computer collation and leads to the conclusion that at this stage of crystallizing the identity of the new discipline, the optimal solution is to merge research areas and attempt to identify sub-disciplines by selecting the basic for each of the previously independent disciplines. Representatives of the new discipline should discuss the ways to distinguish sub-disciplines that take into account joint research fields.

Conclusions

The analysis of the indicated areas allows us to find some similarities and links between information science and media studies. One can talk about the interaction and even enriching the paradigms of media and social communication. There is a need to reflect on the approach of describing the new discipline and answering the following questions: (a) is it enough to describe the sub-disciplines of federated disciplines in a simple manner?; (b) Is it necessary at this stage to try to organize research areas in order to avoid the risk of repeatability and at the same time use the multiplier effect?; (c) Will there be unification of research methods?; (d) How will the identity of the discipline develop?; (e) Will we adopt the model of a dominant research culture, or rather - the discipline at the origin and with the assumption of “multi-” will adopt an inter- or transdisciplinary status?

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