

Transmit

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- [Respond to this Article](#)

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1 In an increasingly globalised and networked world, to transmit is to exist. In a sense this has always been the case as transmitting is at the heart of human communication and works on many different levels, including information, knowledge, culture, language, and media. What has changed then is not so much the action of transmitting itself, but rather the speed of transmission, facilitated by increasingly sophisticated transmission tools and widening access to those tools. This in turn has major implications for the volume of transmissions and the ability or inability to process them. In this context of content overload and fierce competition for attention, to transmit effectively becomes vital, whether on a professional, personal, community or global level.

2 The call for papers ‘blurb’ for this ‘transmit’ issue of *M/C Journal* was written thus, and we have deliberately reproduced it here to draw attention to the somewhat narrow boundaries it inadvertently set in terms of the expectations for the submission of articles for this issue. This initial ‘blurb’ – which could be called a *genre* of transmission itself – was then followed by an invitation for reflections on ‘transmit’ from *all potential angles* relating to media and culture. Despite this invitation, the majority of the surprisingly high number of submissions came from a decidedly *new* media angle, albeit in an excitingly wide variety of approaches. This is not to say that we are disappointed about that – far from it – it fits very well with the kind of journal that *M/C* has evolved into. However, it does draw attention to the unexpected ‘Chinese whispers’ that can occur between the point of transmission and the reception of what is transmitted, and some of the authors rightfully took us to task over that, which led to some useful self-reflection about the process of transmission.

3 Unfortunately, not all of these authors are represented in this collection, as we had to make some difficult editorial decisions, but we are excited by the quality and creativity now ready for transmission. The cover image, for which we are indebted to the wonderful Miss Jay Paul, represents the continuity of human transmission through ever changing tools of transmission: from ancient rocks to graffiti walls to the ubiquitous blue sky that a certain software company uses to save screens. We have decided to leave the significance of the ants to the reader’s own imagination...

4 What is transmitted then, as well as how the transmitted information is formed, underlines the themes of many of the articles here. Reasons for transmitting information and representations, and transmissions for communication and interpretation are dissected and reassembled. How boundaries are crossed, how new ones are created, and what it may mean when transmitted information is interpreted and misinterpreted, whether electronic or artistic discourses, are some of the important and timely questions and discussions raised.

5 In our feature article, ‘SMS Riot: Transmitting Race on a Sydney Beach, December 2005’, Gerard Goggin discusses one of the most important ‘new’ tools of transmission, the mobile

phone, and specifically the practice of ‘texting’. In relation to the Cronulla race riots, he provides some much needed reflection on what he calls a ‘mobile panic’ which followed the events at Cronulla, enthusiastically fanned by the mainstream media. Underlying this was of course a traditional technological determinist sense that the mobile phone *itself* had caused the riots. Goggin compares this to his current research into the role of mobile phones in the overthrow of the Estrada presidency in the Philippines, or what he calls a ‘coup d’text’. But where in Cronulla the power of texting caused panic, in the Philippines it was celebrated as giving ‘power to the people’. Rather than approaching it in these narrow terms however, Goggin argues that texting should be seen in a wider context and as part of a complex dynamic which combines media – including ‘old’ tools of transmission such as radio and newspapers – politics, culture and technology.

6Tony Sampson’s article, ‘Senders, Receivers and Deceivers: How Liar Codes Put Noise Back on the Diagram of Transmission’, explores the difficulty of reliability and the anxiety about the potential lack of human control in a web environment, or in some cases the fear of superior human control (in the case of viruses). ‘The ideal system for perpetual communication has also turned out to be the perfect medium for the codes designed to destroy it’. This of course implies human agency, but what causes the anxiety is the anarchic nature and behaviour of liar codes once released unto a networked medium, which by extension threatens the traditional ‘linear’ transmission models of sender-receiver.

7From a different angle, Danny Beusch’s article is also concerned with reliability on the web or perhaps the lack thereof: along with the creation of new connections, communications and cultures comes the transmitting of fabrications. In ‘Transmitting the Body in Online Interaction’ Beusch examines this falsifying of transmitted information to discuss the importance of what isn’t transmitted. The ability to, and the implications of, transmitting fabricated information and forms has present and future implications, that rely just as much on embodied interaction as disembodied. Beusch’s article examines the social and cultural implications of transmitting information and fabrications online in a way that reveals the continuing influence of “reality” in “play.”

8In ‘Scenes of Transmission: Youth Culture, MP3 File Sharing and Transferable Strategies of Cultural Practice’, Dale Bradley delves into how the transmission of online information and presentation contributes to cultural crossings and cultural formations. How online transmission not only transgresses cultural borders but develops new formations is a dynamic and current experience. Bradley also considers how it allows previously disconnected and different cultural groups to create new connections. In the same way that many of the other articles’ arguments can be transferred to the transmitting of information across all forms and texts, Bradley poses important questions for future collaborations and developments.

9Transmitting personal identity is an important part of creating new connections and collaborations in an online environment. In ‘Grid: On Being-as-Transmission and Normativity’, Robert Payne questions the notion that ‘the ease, instantaneity and virtuality of transmission on the Internet produces not rigid structure but flow – a revolutionary fluidity of global interaction but also of personal identity’. The central question (with reference to Judith Butler) is: ‘How can an “I” be transmitted effectively unless via a grid of legibility that regulates what is transmissible?’ Payne explores ways for a movement towards an ethically sound fluidity of online identity which may guide us towards a ‘productive uncertainty of being off the grid’.

10 Ben Isakhan, Jason Nelson and Patrick West, in their article, 'creativity.com: Aladdin's Cave or Pandora's Box?', raise questions about what the world wide web has meant and continues to mean for transmitting creativity, both the form and the message. While their article focuses on what can be transmitted online, their probing ideas can easily be transferred to other forms of creativity and their transmission: what constitutes that creativity and how it is transmitted, received, used and managed.

11 In her article 'Mapping the Narrative in a Digital Album Cover', Patti Tsarouhis explores the contrast between analogue and digital transmission by focusing on the rituals involved with the consumption of packaged music. She argues that the traditional album cover and CD cover provide a catalyst to narrative activity on the part of the consumer, or in other words that they are objects to be transmitted, whereas the clickable digital icon is a transmission in itself.

12 Martine Hawkes develops the idea of 'play' in artistic terms and how dominant connotations of art for transmitting information or presentations involve pleasure and entertainment. Yet according to Hawkes, art, as a transmitter of information, is as potent a form for history and justice as it is for artistic expression and enjoyment. Such transmitting, through art, can allow forms of communication that cannot be expressed in other ways. While other articles in this issue focus on new ways of transmitting, 'Transmitting Genocide: Genocide and Art' focuses more on, not so much 'new' but, 'responsibility-based' reasons or purposes to transmit.

13 With a similar focus on transmission for socio-political purposes, Kate Milberry explores the Internet as a potential space for social activism. 'Reconstructing the Internet: How Social Justice Activists Contest Technical Design in Cyberspace' presents a vision for the future rather than an assessment of effectiveness. The emphasis is on technical design which Milberry sees as having the ability to create a space for an alternate vision of society.

14 Megan Boler rounds this collection off with a discussion of satire as one way of transmitting political messages in a post-9/11 environment characterised by the paradox of tightly controlled 'mainstream media' and the informational 'noise' of the combined old and new media. Like many other articles in this issue, her central theme is concerned with reliability and effectiveness of communication which appear to be at the heart of transmission. We expect that the next issue of *M/C Journal* ('collaborate') will extend the ideas presented here by elaborating on the role of productive collaboration in the transmission process.

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