



PROJECT MUSE®

What is Magazine Media? Expanding the Scope of Magazine Research

Journal of Magazine Media, Volume 18, Number 1, Fall 2017, (Article)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jmm.2017.0003>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/716088>

What is Magazine Media? Expanding the Scope of Magazine Research

The following is a transcript of a panel that was presented by the Magazine Media and Visual Communication Divisions of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication at the AEJMC annual convention in Chicago on August 12, 2017. The transcript has been edited for length and clarity. The panel included:

- **Susan Currie Sivek**, Linfield College
- **Berkley Hudson**, University of Missouri
- **Parul Jain**, Ohio University
- **Greg Miller**, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- **Catherine Staub**, Drake University
- **Miglana Sternadori**, Texas Tech University

Kevin Lerner of Marist College, and the editor of the Journal of Magazine Media, moderated.

Kevin Lerner: Hello and welcome to “What is Magazine Media? Expanding the Scope of Magazine Research,” which is a research panel co-sponsored by the Magazine Media Division and Visual Communication Division. I’m Kevin Lerner from Marist College and also I’m the editor of the *Journal of Magazine Media*.

This panel is in some ways about an existential question that is in some ways facing the Magazine Media Division, but is facing magazines in general. We’ve been having a discussion for the last couple of years about what makes something a magazine and we’ve changed the name of the division. Two years ago, we voted to change from the “Magazine Division” to the “Magazine Media Division,” which echoes a change made by the professional organization, “MPA—The Association of Magazine Media,” and is meant to sort of broaden the scope of what we think of as a magazine, because I think that when most people see the word “magazine,” or hear the word “magazine,” they think of a glossy—they think of something that you buy on a newsstand. It’s got a photo on the cover, probably a celebrity or a model, some cover lines, curated content inside. It’s stapled, it’s perfect bound, you can subscribe to it and get it in the mail.

That’s what people think of, when they think of magazines, but this panel is premised on the idea that what makes a magazine is something a little bit less tangible than that. That it’s not necessarily a physical product and the Magazine Division over the course of the last week at

this conference has been talking about another possible name change to try to reflect that. We've tossed up things like "Magazines Longform and Niche Media," or "Magazines Longform and Lifestyle Journalism." So, we don't really know what it is that makes a magazine.

What is it? That's what we're trying to get at with this panel. I think that all of us who work with magazines and who love and appreciate magazines have a little bit of a gut feeling about this, but we have a hard time defining it and we often end up with the Potter Stewart quote about pornography, which is, "I can't define it, but I know it when I see it," right? We know when something's like a magazine. David Abrahamson from Northwestern University was originally supposed to be on this panel. He had a conflict and was unable to be on it, but he sent me an essay and here's a quick quote from something he wrote about defining the idea of magazine media. He says:

most observers agree that, unlike newspapers and books, the magazine is hard to define; in fact, it may elude any but the most general definition. Francis Bacon [you can tell this is David Abrahamson when he quotes Francis Bacon], the 17th-century English philosopher spoke of the middle axiom. Commenting on Bacon's views, Victor Navasky [a former publisher and editor of *The Nation*] wrote: "Magazines as a genre do not specialize in abstract generalities; nor, at the other extreme, do they present raw, undigested experience. Rather, their comparative advantage is in dealing with the in-between or netherworld—the middle region, inhabited, according to Bacon, by 'the solid and living axioms on which depend the affairs and fortunes of men.'" The idea of a middle axiom, however apt, might be considered problematical because it may appear to define the magazine by what it is not.

Which is another way we've been thinking about it in the Magazine Division this week. We are the "not hard news but still journalism but also some visual stuff and maybe also audio and video division," which is hard to get people to join in.

I looked a little bit at thinking about this the etymology of the word "magazine," which I think many of you know comes from the idea of a storehouse—a place where things were stored. That is particularly artillery, gunpowder, to have a powder magazine or a magazine and a gun for instance, if you think about this, but I'm not sure that's particularly helpful, but it does talk a little bit about a collection of things which is one way of we maybe thinking about magazines. But is it curatorial? Is it an editor-driven or producer-driven product? Is it something that is just defined as not being hard news? I come from the Magazine Division, but our co-sponsored Visual Communication and that is something that

is often thought of as being a part of what makes something a magazine, that it is news presented in a visually appealing way. But maybe there's something less visual about it and something that is artistically appealing, people think of magazines as art. Victor Navasky edited a book called "The Art of Making Magazines." So is it something about artistry and presentation? Do magazines even have to be objects at all?

I've asked each of the panelists today to propose a medium or product or title and defend it for its "magazine-ness." I don't know what everybody is talking about and I like it that way. I actually asked them not to disclose it. Let me start by introducing them and I'll ask each of them to make their case and if there's any time, I can make the case for one of my pet projects that I think is a magazine. Speaking first, we have Susan Currie Sivek, from Linfield College, we have Berkley Hudson from the University of Missouri, Parul Jain from Ohio University—you're third, Greg Miller from the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Catherine Staub from Drake University and Miglena Sternadori from Texas Tech.

So Susan, what's your magazine?

Susan Currie Sivek (SCS): My magazine? Well, I have something that—it's definitely going to go with the "magazine as object" definition that you were just describing and I'm not sure I entirely buy that this as a magazine, but I think it raises some interesting questions about this "magazine-ness" concept. So the example that I've brought—and I'll pass this around for you to see—is something that is extremely tangible. This is actually a subscription box of stuff that you can sign up for. I know there are many such subscription boxes, but this one I happened to buy from my mom this summer. It's a subscription box of British stuff because she grew up in London and she loves this stuff. This one was focused on the theme of Cornwall and it had a Poldark bonus add-on. Poldark is a drama series that she's particularly fond of. So anyway, lots of stuff in here.

So, is this a magazine? It contained a, for example, a wooden cooking spoon, a bag of potato chips— sorry, crisps—a calendar, a t-shirt, a tea towel, whole bunch of stuff. So what characteristics of a magazine does this exhibit? Why don't you all look at that? It is a curated collection of items, it was crafted by a person who has a specific audience in mind, it's edited, it even includes a letter from the person who founded this company to explain their concept, it represents a niche interest, in this case, focuses on a particular theme every month. It's delivered periodically—and it's actually by mail in this case. It includes visual content: everything in there has some sort of image of Poldark or Cornwall or whatever. It can contain advertising for other products that are somehow relevant to the audience. There's an

online community that interacts around this content. People are encouraged to share their reflections on these things. There's a hashtag that's used, there's a Facebook page, Twitter, Instagram, etc. There's content there that retains its value for a longer period of time, just as we often talk about with magazines—right? Or stuff that's not just ephemeral—it has shelf life—maybe not the crisps but the other stuff.

So it's not just a disposable thing or something that has a brief value. I would argue that it contains aspirational content and even a narrative that people are aspiring to—you know, they'd love to live this life from *Poldark* or they'd love to live in Cornwall or they like the guy from *Poldark*, so they want to imagine having him around. So there's some things there that we talk about.

So you know the things we talked about with magazines as well, right? This idea of aspirations that are represented within content and narratives that are there. Well, it's not obviously in many ways the traditional fusion of text and visual content. There's very little text in there. There's some. It doesn't use the production methods that we usually associate with print magazine production of course. I just jotted down here as you were talking, Kevin, the quote from Victor Navasky about raw undigested content is the fact that this is just presenting—I'm sorry—raw undigested experience. This is just presenting experience, right? There's no digestion—again the crisps thing is a really bad example of that, but...

It's not somebody reflecting on that, it's just: here's the experience for you, the recipient, to have as a firsthand experience. So those might be arguments against considering this as a magazine, which I maybe should not have mentioned, but I think we should consider it. So given the focus of this panel, I just want to say, quickly then, what I think this means for magazine research and what kinds of questions this strange example might bring up, even though it kind of contains few of the elements that we might traditionally study when it comes to magazines.

You know, I think in some ways it can draw our attention to that idea of curation, that this box is creating that sense of an imagined community or an imagined nationality. Some of the recipients may actually possess that nationality—others don't—but there is that sense of an aspiration to a different lifestyle or a different identity and I think that's something that we can find maybe across different sorts of things that we might consider magazines. It might be something worth looking for. I think it's interesting to think about how this particular style of consumption helps create that sense of an imagined community. So is it that you're subscribing to this? You're exchanging money for this regular dose of material that helps you feel a part of that community? Is it the kind of willingness to go along with what the editor

here thinks of as Britishness and the idea that that can even be purchased and experienced through this random bunch of products? Kind of going along with what the community feels and consenting to be a part of that concept of Britishness—I think that’s an interesting thing that we might look for elsewhere—what it means to join that community. I also think it’s interesting here to think about the intertextuality between what’s in that box, and particularly the Poldark stuff, so it’s evoking this whole other series of references from this TV series past and present, because there’s an older version and the newer remake and so by bringing that in, we’re also getting a whole fan community involved, in this imagined community. And so there are these intertextual connections which you may see elsewhere in other sorts of magazines and that’s kind of emotionally powerful, creating this additional sense of a story around the content and so this subscription box phenomenon, you know—are we going to consider it a magazine or not, you know? You can evaluate this argument for yourself, but I think certainly some of the concepts there can help us find maybe some common ground with other kinds of things that have not traditionally been regarded as magazines. So, thanks!

KL: Thank you. Berkley, what’s your magazine?

Berkley Hudson (BH): Okay, so I do love the definition of a storehouse of stories and I had this wonderful YouTube video of one of our guys defining in Arabic and does these funny things, but the dog ate that. I love the idea of a storehouse of stories and what I decided to do is—it’s a little idiosyncratic, but think about the common magazines that my students are now creating in the and now what I’ve began to realize is they are the future and their thinking and cross pollination kind of ways—very cross-platform kind of ways—and I’ll just show you a couple here.

This is from a student of mine who graduated about seven, or six or seven years ago. It’s called *Collective Quarterly*, and there is that kind of magazine now that you may call the niche magazine. This costs \$20. It’s hard bound, like this, but it’s also on the web. So here’s another issue—here, I’ll pass it around. It’s sold in places like Anthropologie and Urban Outfitters. It’s sold in Tokyo and London. He’s making it somehow—this is issue six here. It says quarterly, but really it’s been coming out three times a year. I’ll just pass this around, but it’s very tactile, it’s very well designed, photographed. He has sponsors and it sort of—it connects with the idea about, you know, the curated Cornwall package, in terms of the kinds of things you can order from the sponsors. This issue’s about Wyoming.

KL: It's got a strong smell of print too.

BH: It does. So, is it a magazine? Yeah. It's a storehouse of stories that you can look at. This, they call this an iPhone. You can look on it on your laptop, you can look at it on this, this tablet, or you can look at it like that.

Another one of my former students has a whole amazing story. When she was 13 in a town of 3,000 in northeast Missouri called Palmyra, near Hannibal, she started a website called *teenfashionista.com*. By the time she was in my class seven years later, she had about 40,000 visitors a month. She had Old Navy as the sponsor and she was getting ready to write a book, while she was working as an intern in New York at *Teen Vogue*. And she did write a book called *Dorm Living* and it was focused on what people have in their dorm rooms. She ended up going to work for *Teen Vogue*. She became the senior digital editor and then she left *Teen Vogue* about a year and a half, two years ago, and she had a friend who she had met in New York who worked at *Nylon* and they started this e-newsletter, which again is sort of a kissing cousin to what you've just described about the Cornwall thing.

So what I'm interested in is how they use the traditional sharing of these things, sharing from *Vogue*, sharing from all these different places and the rabbit holes that are wonderful, that you can go down in. So this is targeted towards teenage females and they've gotten coverage in *The New York Times*, in *Women's Wear Daily*, a lot of different places.

Anyway, so that's *Clover*. This is *Riveter*—this was started with a Kickstarter from three students from the journalism school of Mizzou and it's in print and you can download and it's been very successful. They had a launch party in Columbia[, Missouri] where they had a band, music, food, all this kind of stuff, maybe about two years ago, I think. So it's storytelling—riveting storytelling—about women and you can get the hard copy or you can download digitally and they're based all over. There are three main editors and they're based in different places. Two of them were working in Minneapolis, but it's very well curated, to use the term, in terms of what's there—you know, more than just a disorder about eating.

Now I'll go to *Fangirl*, another magazine—it was started by students at Mizzou. We have a publishing class and that publishing class—John Fennell is the main professor—and they do mockups of magazines. They want to create the business plan, design, photo, text and they go to Meredith [Corporation] in Des Moines and give presentations, you know, once a year

to the editors there. A lot of times they get great criticisms and they get also great tips on how to make it work and this is one that. One of the main people now has a job at *ESPN: the Magazine* as an editor, so I'm not sure how they're going to manage everything.

So that's some things to think about.

I did a chapter in the book—the magazine research book that David Abrahamson and Marsha Prior-Miller edited and mine was on visual communication and what was interesting, since we're talking about the whole idea of what do we need to be researching, I was kind of amazed at how little this thing done on visual. And you were talking about how the only kind of papers you get, sometimes, you feel like are graduate students that say, you know, how such-and-such— x, y, z war—was depicted. *Time* magazine, *Newsweek* versus online or something like that. I was surprised how little research has been done in the last 20 years on visual, in terms of magazines. So, I'll just leave that at that.

KL: Okay, thank you. So, Parul, what's your magazine?

Parul Jain (PJ): So what's my magazine? To me, the medium that sort of integrates most magazine-ness is social media, because of my own interest in social media research. There are different things that I keep on seeing in social media platforms that, to me, remind me of magazines. A lot of people use social media for information, right? For sort of instructional purposes and come to think of it, a lot of times, magazines are being used for, like, you know, parenting advice or health advice or fashion advice, or those kind of things. So I think there are parallels there. Also, in terms of interactivity, social media you can always interact. Magazines—it's a different kind of interactivity. So ten years ago, you have a magazine, you share it with your mom, you share it with your friends and you all talk about some of things that you may like in there—some of the designs or articles and things like that, which is now happening in a different space, but still a lot of characteristics sort of remind me of a magazine-ness, so to speak. Also, entertainment—you know, just to pass time, people interact, people engage on social and in the magazine also, that's a big huge factor of like why people read magazines. Then, as we were talking about thematics—so when there's political things going on or when there's festivals going on, you know, just like in the magazines, there's like coverage of Halloween kind of things or back-to-school. Similarly, we can see a spike on social media in the similar kind of themes picking up in discussion. Now, you know, it could be a problem too, because there's curated content from all over and

there's no gatekeeping, like in magazines. So, there's this whole issue of fake news and sort of things going on that should not have been there in the first place but, you know, influencing people. Right? So that's one thing and then also, you know, verification of factuality, those kind of checks are not present in social. But in terms of research, because, to me, a really intriguing question is: "How do traditional magazines intersect with social platforms?"

So there's this magazine-ness or magazine kind of qualities of discussion in social, but at the same time, there are traditional magazines pushing their content on social. So how do these two things interact? How do people actually consume traditional magazines on iPads, as you were saying, or other platforms and what sort of dynamics emerge out of readers that are picking up a magazine versus web browsing on their iPads or or these kinds of apps? Are there inherent differences in how? Because I'm also very interested in the persuasive effects and psychological effects of the content. So is there a difference between the audience itself and how the audience impacts them, when they access the content in different spaces?

Mine is relatively short, but that's what I want to leave you with because to me, that's a really interesting question going forward, even for the magazine industry. A graduate student and I have a project going where we are trying to see how online content informs the content in the magazines—so online content and comments of people on the content that is pushed by let's say *Glamour*, on Twitter. What sort of comments does that generate on a particular story and does that influence the subsequent content in other issues? So sort of interactivity of magazine in the digital space versus the hard copy.

KL: Great, thank you. So, Greg, what's your magazine?

Greg Miller (GM): So earlier this summer, my family and I went to San Francisco. We went to the Exploratorium there and it occurred to me that a magazine and a museum have a great deal in common. So you walk into the Exploratorium and the first thing that you experience is a range of quick, fun activities: looking in the mirror opposite your other family member and seeing the combination of the two faces—all of these different, very short and fairly simple science-related activities. As you walk deeper in, it's set up like a long vertical hallway. As you walk deeper into the second hall, you get out of your "openers well" into a set of deeper experiences which involve learning more about genetics, looking closely through a microscope, at images of fruit flies and a range of essentially feature stories—deeper experiences that take you deeper into the science and the placards become more

informative—so you're out of the departments and into more intensive immersive experiences. And then you walk to outside where there's a camera and a number of fun things to sort of finish off with. And then you exit through the gift shop. That's your "service well."

And so, you know, it's both an architectural and experiential model that both informs the making of traditional magazines, but also I think points to ideas that those of us who love magazines and the idea of curated collections to think about what might we do in space—how could we work, not just on pages or in virtual space, but in space itself to create magazine-like environments, to create environments that tell stories like that, possibly even potentially working together with architects and designers.

For many years, a friend of mine and I have worked at different magazines together, often sort of helping to build them from the ground up. And we both left our most recent magazine within probably about two or three months of each other and we were working on different projects and working with groups and doing some consulting and we found that we were both being asked sometimes to put together events and, you know, and I said to him, "Phil, why do you think this is the case?" and he said, "Well, part of what we are is packagers." It got us back to that storehouse idea.

And the last thing: one of my other interests is Russian culture, media cinema and there's a series of short newsreel-type films that a documentary director man named Dziga Vertov put together in the early 1920s, just after the Civil War and they were called "Kino-Pravda" and in terms of a curated collection that comes to you, well here was a series. He would take these screens out around the countryside and unveil it and have one episode focused on homeless kids in Russia—another focused on construction. Each one sort of had a dominant theme, but there would be multiple stories in it and then there were little magazines and they would call them—each issue was called a "vypusk": an edition. And at the very end of these newsreels, it says "If you are interested in bringing a screening to you, write to us at Kino-Pravda." And so when you were, Susan, when you were talking about the cultivated collection, I thought of this—essentially villages and communities across Russia calling in to have the next issue brought to them and screened for them.

So that got me thinking in Russian terms and the word for "a store" is "magazin," so it gets back to that etymological, that you were talking about and then the word for "magazine," for, you know "traditional magazine," in Russian, is "zhurnal." And I think if we're thinking about both print terms and online terms, it's also healthy for us to think about a magazine as a journal with everything, with all of the diversity that implies, as a package that includes,

even though it's—we're thinking about ourselves as journalists but a package that includes fiction, a package that includes beautiful photo essays, a package that includes the imbedded music.

So I think we can think a lot more about the diversity of the elements that go into our journal, into our storehouse, and whether we set it up experientially like my museum idea, or whether it's something that we're creating online, that we engage many parts of the culture, many forms of creativity. And for those of us who are teaching in journalism programs, that's a challenge to say, well, we need to include fiction in what we're doing, we need to include engagement with music, different elements of our culture. But if we're going to think about What is Magazine Media? those things have to be a part of it in order to create our storehouse or museum of experiences and have that have all the breadth and richness that the tradition of magazine implies.

KL: Ok, thank you.

GM: Thank you.

KL: Catherine, what's your magazine?

Catherine Staub (CS): I'm going to start first with a definition that I've put together for myself that, as much as anyone else on magazine media, is not strictly as eloquent as David Abrahamson's and Victor Navasky's, but it works for me and has all of the components. So to me, magazine media is:

original, specialized, regularly produced content in a consistent voice that was created following journalistic principles and ethical standards, that has gone through a formalized editorial process and that tells an engaging story of interest to a targeted audience.

So that's my definition of magazine media. Based on that, I believe we should research or study content marketing as magazine media, not as a marketing vehicle—and I know, depending on who I'm talking with, there can be a lot of "*gasp*, no! That's over in business,

that's, you know, marketing. It has a different purpose!" I think often, and sometimes the word "brand journalism" is used instead of "content marketing," the industry has all landed on content marketing though. I think the reason for the negative reaction that I sometimes get is that there are a lot of things labeled as content marketing that absolutely are not. So content marketing really should—there's, well, and there's not much research in the field. Industry does the content marketing institute's sponsors research, but as terms of scholarly research, it's a wide open field. But there is a British researcher, Geraint Holliman, who talks about content marketing and he says the formula's (this is quote) "the writing standards of conventional journalistic products, that the content is designed on behalf of an organization with an aim to engage their customers or members deep in relationships, which they ultimately hope will lead to loyalty, sometimes lead to product purchases or services purchases as well."

So it's specialist content, it's targeting a very specific niche audience. There's a consistent format to that and the format is irrelevant—I mean, it really is audience-dependent, rather than say, well, "we're going to launch a print publication or a website or social or whatever." You need to first flip it around and look at where is your audience and where does your audience want to hear from you. So the platform is irrelevant and it can be video, audio, whatever it needs to be to tell the story that an audience wants to hear in a space where the audience wants to hear it, but it does have a consistent format, it is produced regularly, if it's going to be effective. If it's a one-and-done more like an ad campaign, then it's not content marketing and it's not going to be effective either. It does follow, or it needs to follow an editorial process and to me, that also needs to include someone other than a content creator, and I was thinking that distinction more as I was thinking through what I wanted to bring as my magazine and I think an independent one-person blog, to me, even if they're writing about all kinds of things, does not, to me, fit into my definition of magazine media, because it's one person creating, editing, deciding everything all in themselves. To me, magazine media has an editorial process where there is a creator and an editor, whatever that looks like. The content is curated for a specific audience. Content marketing that is done right follows journalistic principles and ethics: there is solid reporting, there is research, the sources should not be all in-house at the organization who is sponsoring the content—absolutely not! So it follows that. When it's done right it's going to have continuity, it's engaging storytelling, whether that be done via video, or written word, or photos, or audio. But it does have that engaging storytelling. It has a consistent voice and tone—one that resonates with the audience, but also one that's aligned with the brand, if content marketing is going to be successful. It's original content. It's not just curating things from other organizations and

again, when done right—and it has to keep in mind the audience—it has more in-depth coverage than news.

So I have a couple of examples. Red Bull has a media house and they actually, interestingly, now produce content for other organizations and they are functioning as a publisher essentially, for other organizations, but they also do fabulous stuff for Red Bull. So they have *The Red Bulletin*, that is interestingly, given their audience, it's a print magazine, but it's a monthly print magazine. International, 2.2 million print copies a month. And it is, well, I've only looked at the online version of it, but it's beautifully done, well-written. Some of their most recent stories: they did a look at a NASA boot camp. They profiled a Nat Geo photographer, they did a service piece on how to cure meat and they went through the latest developments in VR.

So they are not talking about Red Bull. At all. You know, it's not like "How to serve Red Bull at your next Super Bowl party." There's nothing like that and I think that's one of the reasons why, when content marketing is actually done correctly, it completely falls into the magazine media realm. It is not an advertising or hard marketing tool. So that's one example. They have other forms too. They have Red Bull TV that does similar kinds of stories, they have, like I said, a web presence for their magazine content.

American Express OPEN forum is another wonderful example. Totally different audience—small business owners. They do, as a company, benefit. They get the most leads for their small business credit card from this, but the content is all about things that small business owners would want to know: how to put together a business plan, how to get investors, HR kinds of challenges, funding your next growth, those sorts of things. And then they have, just like any other magazine site, it has ads—of course their ads are from American Express OPEN, but, that, to me, doesn't diminish its spot as falling within magazine media.

Patagonia's "The Cleanest Line" is a blog that has stories and images of interest to their customer base. I mean, it's adventure-kinds of things. Of course, I'm sure people would be wearing Patagonia clothes if the photos are, you know, original photography, but all of the stories are not about "What Patagonia gear to pack for your next hike." It is riveting content for the sort of people who would also shop at Patagonia. So for all of those reasons, I think content marketing needs to come over to the magazine media wheelhouse, as opposed to being looked at as something for marketers and business folks to study.

KL: Thank you. Miglena, what is magazine media?

Miglena Sternadori (MS): So, some of you know, and some of you actually are involved in the process of creating the next *Handbook of Magazine Studies*, which I'm the co-editor of, along with Tim Holmes from Cardiff University. And the contributors to the Handbook—so far we have six chapters—have very much influenced my thinking about what magazines are. And I'm talking about contributors from outside United States, because I think I have heard a lot of perspectives from, you know, presenting research in our division, going to all of the meetings and so forth. So it's always interesting to hear perspectives from sort of a global point of view.

Two chapters that really influenced my thinking about magazines: one was contributed by Xiang Ren. He's a postdoc in Australia, from China. He wrote a chapter about Chinese magazines—fantastic chapter! And one argument that really impressed me, was he argued that there are enormous fan communities in China and, you know, considering the population in China, of course you have sometimes hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of people in a fan community. So apparently on WeChat and Weibo, there are celebrities who curate content and they have followers and they will recommend things like, you know, cosmetics—it's pretty much like Kim Kardashian and so forth. So he made that argument that those are essentially becoming like magazines. They have enormous influence over their audiences. They're targeting a specific audience. Yes, they're produced by one person, but I will get to why I think this still counts as a magazine, even though there is no editorial process. So I'm going to disagree with Catherine here.

The other chapter we have received so far that really influenced my thinking about magazines came from John Hartley. He's an eminent British scholar on magazines who is now an emeritus. He is, I think temporarily teaching at Curtin University in Australia, so John Hartley, of course started his chapter by explaining what magazines are, you know, the origins of the word, and I wasn't surprised until I got to the point of where he mentioned that there are certain military connotations to the word "magazine," which got me back to my own native language, which is Bulgarian and I remembered that where you put bullets—and by the way, I've never in my life held a gun, but you know, I've read novels, you put bullets in the magazine. So I found the definition "magazine," in the context of firearms, is "an ammunition storage and feeding device within or attached to a repeating firearm. They can be removable, detachable or integral to the firearms." So it's basically where you put the bullets. and I don't know—again, I've never actually held a gun. But so, basically John Hartley was making the argument that the word "magazine" indeed does mean a storehouse, but it originated more along the lines of a military shed full of ammunition. So there isn't

that much diversity within that military shed. He explains contemporary magazines as sort of metaphorical sheds and that contains some sort of novelty bundling. So the novelty bundling is not so much from the perspective of whoever created the shed, but whoever is going to be the audience. So there is an element of surprise in magazines and people to have to go to magazines—unlike hard news, magazines don't just come to you. Like, you know, I'm in the elevator and there are all those news scrolling on whatever screen there is. Unlike hard news, you have to request the subscription, you have to call or whatever kind of process—you, it doesn't just come to you—it does require some agency and initiative on the part of the audience. You have to join a fan community, you have to follow Kim Kardashian or whatever. But magazines, in a sense, however as far as content goes, they're targeted and specialized for specific lifestyle and specific identity and a specific audience—they're like bullets, in the sense that the content only fits a specific firearm. You know, you have different kinds of bullets for different firearms, I think—if I'm ignorant, please correct me. So as long as you have an audience and you're creating a readership community and you have a target and you're hitting the target, I think you could argue that that could be a magazine.

So when there is an editorial process, a lot of magazines become mainstreamed and a lot of the content becomes sort of—it's brought down to the lowest common denominator and there are a lot of niche or niche audiences who are sort of dissatisfied. And so the example of one of the top papers was on the DIY-zines that Chelsea Reynolds presented. You know, sometimes those are made by a single person, but the thing is, it's not a single person talking to themselves—there is a readership. Those magazines or zines are being spread—there are people who are picking them up or buying them or, you know, in one case just to mention the example, somebody gave a zine to a friend and then she gave it to her daughter and then the daughter gave it to a friend—and so there is an audience that's responding to them.

Magazines are also persuasive—they do want to guide you. They don't just offer you things. So John Hartley again—he's so brilliant, I can't help it, I'm sorry. John Hartley asks the question in his chapter, "Is Amazon a magazine?" because they don't really—you know, I mean it's a big store, it's an online store, it has stuff—a lot of different things. Sometimes we go to Amazon because you might be surprised, you don't know what you're going to find, like in any good store and you could argue that each product tells a story because many products have reviews, so in the sense, there are stories surrounding each product that's being offered. But ultimately, he makes the argument that Amazon or other online shopping sites are not magazines, because they do not appeal to a specific—one specific targeted audience. It's not so much the lack of content, but just the sort of the lack of targeting.

So ultimately, my argument for what a magazine is—I think we should consider fan communities and I agree with Catherine here that we should consider brand communities that are created in different ways, like Red Bull has a YouTube channel and of course has other content coverage and so forth. Okay, I'm going to stop here!

KL: Well, thank you to all the panelists. Before we move into the discussion and try to figure out how this all goes together, I'd like to throw in my favorite pet, quote-un-quote, "magazine," which is podcasts. I am as much addicted to podcasts as I am to magazines or was to magazines when I was 16 and 17 years old. You know, magazines always, they defined the phases of my life, right? There was—and I think some comic books are magazines—you know, that was the G.I. Joe phase of my life—and there was the time I subscribed to *Flying* magazine, because I was going to be a pilot, and there was the time when I was subscribing to *Guitar Player*, to *Rolling Stone*, because I was going to be a rock star, and then it became like *Writers Weekly* or whatever. And now there's the *Columbia Journalism Review*. But, for me now, it's podcasts, and I'll focus in on what is probably my favorite podcast.

So I'll back up now and go to the anecdotal lead, which is that while we were waiting for this panel to start, my husband, who is at home, was texting me photos of a couch being delivered to our new townhouse. And what does that have to do with magazines? Well, it came from an online-only company that I heard about from one of my favorite podcasts—I know exactly where it came from because I went to article.com/99pi to get my \$50 discount on my first order, right? So I've got a brand-new couch from Article—if they want to send me anything for plugging them in front of our five audience members, feel free to do that! But "99% Invisible" is a podcast about design and it is a magazine. It is produced to high standards of artistry, it is an incredibly well-produced radio show for anybody who knows how audio production works. They put a lot of time into it, their stories are crafted in the same way that long-form journalism is crafted, there's a niche audience that is a community—they have built a community and I think there are two great ways to talk about how they've built up this community. One is that the producer of the show—a guy named Roman Mars who's got a silky radio baritone that is—it's so alluring that he has given away his voice as ringtones. You can download a ringtone that says, it's like, "You have a new message. This is Roman Mars."

Roman Mars has named the community group, his listeners, "The Beautiful Nerds" and there are even giveaways that the site has done, where I am advertising for Amy's organic frozen food in my house, because I wanted "The Beautiful Nerd" 8x10 custom print signed.

So there is a framed “Beautiful Nerd” sign in my house. The other is that they did a show about something called “challenge coins,” which are things that different divisions of military carry. So you if you were a member of such-and-such fighter wing or such-and-such battalion, you might have a customized coin that you carry with you and when you’re at a bar, somebody will throw their challenge coin on the table and you have to throw yours out to show that you have it. And then Roman Mars produced “99% Invisible challenge coins,” which, if you subscribe to the podcast and you donate a little bit of money, you can have one. And so it’s a community, but it’s also a way to support the podcast—there’s an identification with this.

There’s an element of surprise. The podcast is supposed to be about design, right? The idea of 99% Invisible is supposed to say that 99% of the design work is not seen, you only see 1% of the work that goes into design. And so sometimes there are episodes that are about things you would expect as being designed—architecture. There’s a lot of architecture in there. But there’s urban design, there’s traffic engineering—there are episodes about traffic circles, all right? There’s an episode about a ship that was built out of ice that the United States was experimenting with on a frozen lake in Canada during World War II—I didn’t expect that. There’s an episode about radioactive cats!—go look it up. It’s a great show and it is—it’s constantly surprising and interesting. It is narrative, it is reported, it is put together by a team that speaks with a single editorial voice—it’s always the voice of Roman Mars as the host, but he’ll throw it to a reporter who will tell the story for the rest of the show.

I think that podcasts, even many traditional radio shows—I think “This American Life,” is a magazine. It is a magazine show in the way that 60 Minutes used to claim the title “magazine:—they still do, they still have that mock-up magazine behind the correspondents when they’re talking. So I think that magazines are not one particular medium and I think that it’s really important for us to start thinking about how we can expand that and even more important, partly for the sake of the division and the research that we get, to communicate that broader idea to researchers, to the public at large who can understand that these things that they are consuming affect them very much, the same way that magazines do. So I’ll open it up to the audience for questions and if not, I’ve got a couple of my own that can get the discussion going.

Lisa Weidman (LW): Hi, I’m Lisa Weidman from Linfield College and I have loved magazines since I was a kid and worked for magazines for a long time. And I know that I’m, you know, I, even in the era of the online version of the traditional magazine, I still prefer the print

version and so I know I'm a little bit old-school, but this has been very eye-opening and kind of expanding to listen to all these possibilities. And I think when you throw out something that's not been traditionally considered a magazine and you identify all ways in which it is like a magazine, that does really help us identify what does make a magazine, right? You know, and so when you mentioned Amazon, I instantly was like "No!" in my mind and the reason I'm saying this is because of one characteristic that I didn't hear anybody mention.

I wanted to preface that with—I really appreciate all of the ideas that you all presented—and that is original content. And that is why I said "No." I mean, Amazon sells products that are original content I guess, but they don't create original content per se. So does—would you agree that that could be a dividing line? And the music that was on Fangirl was repurposed—that wasn't original—but a lot of the content was original. And of course, traditional magazines will, you know, have, in the past, republished some things, but the majority of the content is original.

KL: Based on that, would something like—I don't know if they'd still publish it, but the J. Peterman catalog, which some people only know from Seinfeld episodes. Do they still publish?

SCS: It's still published. I get it for some reason!

KL: -which describes each product with an originally written story about some lifestyle experience. Would that then be more of a magazine?

LW: I would suggest that original content is not the only qualifier. You couldn't have just that. But also, those are fictitious stories. So, not that you can't have fiction in a magazine, but it—most magazines are not primarily fiction. But then with the journal's definition, that does bring a lot more fiction and poetry into the conversation, but I would say not buy it—original content wouldn't be the only criteria.

Sharon Bloyd-Peshkin (SBP): And even that's a bit flexible, isn't it? Because you think about something like the *Utne Reader*, which is really—it is a magazine—and it's a collection of excerpts from other places—

LW: Plus, some original content.

SBP: -plus some original content.

LW: But you're right. That's, it's, they do repurpose a lot of the content and it's one of my favorite magazines.

John Hanc: Well, but also the Cornwall box was a lot of repurposed material too, but done in an original way and thematically in an original way, because I like that. I like Poldark too, but I think that's—but I kinda like Cornwall too. But I just think that that was a—that was a really intriguing example, I mean in kind of a more of closer to the J. Peterman catalog, I guess, of where the border of the magazine is, but I think repurposing content that was originally produced for something else, can sometimes count in a magazine.

SCS: But I think too, of the email newsletter that you showed too, Berkley—I think that's very, very magazine. Can we start using “magazine” as an adjective instead of just a noun? That might be a useful—“That's so magazine!”

KL: I was using magazine-y but that sounds like a pasta.

LW: Magazine-ness. Magazine-like. But, email newsletters are, you know, maybe a few sentences here and there introducing a particular set of links, but then all of the links are usually to other people's work—sometimes the editor's own. But you know, and I'm, personally I think email newsletters fit really well and what we're thinking of a magazine, so.

GM: I think you have to think about the creativity and intensity of the curation that's going on. Is the way that you package, the way that you preface, the way that you surround anything that might have originally come from somewhere else, sufficiently new and creative? That you're not only adding value, but you're somehow transforming the original in some way? I think that's the question.

SCS: But here's—here's a little weird thing about too, is to think about the Amazon example. Because if quantity and creativity curation is a factor, does that have to be human curation and creativity? Because Amazon, for example, has author pages that are pulled together based on author biographies, the list of their books, etc., that argued that content is unique to Amazon in its algorithm it's created in. So I mean, we're kind of getting into automated magazine creation, I guess, which is a whole other...

KL: Yeah, along those lines, when people thought the tablets were going to save magazines, applications like Flipboard, right, which pulls together—

LW: Make your own magazine.

KL: —or make your own magazine or it will make a magazine based on algorithms where it thinks it knows what you want. Or Texture, which is an app that's created by the magazine industry basically, where these magazines say, well we'll compile all of our subscriptions into a single Netflix for magazines, where you can go and subscribe to all of them at once—but maybe you get it in bits and pieces so you're reading something in *Runner's World*, but then it takes you to something from *Men's Health* as the next article. I mean, do those—is that container a magazine?

GM: I think there has to be a guiding ethic and intelligence, you know? So Miglena was talking about fan communities and brand communities and I think it's defined partly by the community of people who are drawn to the magazine, but also by the guiding intelligence

that creates an ethic and identity for the magazine, you know? Another metaphor I was going to use is a house—your house. I mean, you curate different phases of experience, both for yourself and for anyone who would visit your home, you know? The entry hall's a certain way, the living room's a certain way, the bedroom's a certain way and then the backyard is dessert, so to speak.

And it's the sense of the guiding intelligence of either an individual, or a group of individuals who share a common vision, that creates, you know, in this case, your house, a family. In the case of a magazine, you and your fellow editors. And they create a vision that then goes out into the world and finds kindred souls. I think that's important and, you know, one thing I—one example that I'd like to use is, "Does a magazine, when it goes online, does it keep its spirit or lose it?" And that has a lot to do with, does it continue to have the imprint of that original ethic and set of ideas? And so if you look at what happened to *Sports Illustrated* when it went online, it completely lost its identity—it lost what it had always been. If you were a long-time subscriber to the magazine, the website was not an extension of that experience or a deepening of that experience—it was something just... different. It was just a massive compendium of stories that didn't always reflect the larger mission of *Sports Illustrated* as we had known it and things that were completely external to it and it—visually a mess. You look at what *The New Yorker* has done and the spirit of the magazine, the spirit of what they are—the identity that successive generations of editors have developed over the last 90 plus years, right?—is completely there on the website, even though the website is embracing all the new potentialities of what they can do, including podcasting. But it still has that guiding intelligence behind it, so I would make that sort of a centerpiece of my definition.

SBP: This is Sharon Bloyd-Peshkin from Columbia College-Chicago. I think we're revolving around a couple of really interesting key concepts. One is that of creatively curated content being essential to magazines. I think what we're wrestling with is how broadly are we willing to define content? Will we include objects or will we not include objects? Is food okay? And I think a baseline, but it's incomplete, is story.

And stories can be in multiple media, but I think we have to be careful not to define being so broadly that everything falls into them. And I love the subscription box, because it pushes at the very edges of what a magazine can be and it doesn't—you don't quite let it be in, because all it is is objects and they're objects that tell stories, but what's a story? Like some of these words can get used so loosely that they cease to be useful, but I do think we're talking about

creatively curated content that is stories, for niche audiences that become communities of interest. There's something in that universe that's starting to work and the two poles in the universe are what the content is and who it's for—and who it's for includes who creates it—who's creating, consuming and transforming it.

So I think we're going somewhere really fresh and interesting and I'm certainly not there yet, but I love the way, pushing it to be too broad makes us need to contract it. But when we contract it too much, we finally have to expand it. And I'm really intrigued by the content marketing. I know—I have a friend who worked at *Chicago* magazine and then *Playboy*, who's now at the *Red Bulletin*. Yeah, it's a genuine magazine. I happily consume the Patagonia catalog—and it's not even really a catalog in many ways. Well, it is—it's a magalog, which is a term.

KL: Speaking of objects and boxes, are any of you familiar with *McSweeney's*, the Dave Eggers sort of literary journal-slash-magazine? You know, one of their early “issues” (and I’m using air quotes) was a box of stuff and a lot of it had printed stories in it, but they had curated something that was literally a box of stuff and called it issue no. 4, or whatever it was. Or they’ll decide that the next issue is going to be a mock-up of a newspaper and it comes in a completely different format. And I’ve judged the Columbia Scholastic Press Awards in the high school literary magazine category and some of the inventiveness that goes into those, the students love when they get a budget to spend it on crazy things. So there will be a CD thrown in the box, or somebody will make origami cranes and there’s one little section, just open it up and it’s a box of origami cranes—and I don’t know where these students have the time to do it.

SBP: Well, here’s one for you, just to ask you if this is a magazine. So when I worked at Vegetarian Times magazine, among other things, we provided a lot of recipes, right? And at one point, you could buy a box with a bunch of recipes and every so often you’d get more recipes to put in the box, right? Is that another issue of the magazine? You could make an argument.

CS: But you probably thought of it as an ancillary when you were working there, right? I mean, the magazine I worked for sold t-shirts and hats.

SBP: It was an after market. It was kind of like, oh, we have all these recipes, we could sell them too, but I don't want to take too much time.

Joy Jenkins: I was just going to say this—it's kind of an interesting discussion we're having and but we had a panel about magazines but then we kind of got off on defining some of these questions too. But I think it's this emphasis on brand—and that's something that's not just affecting content marketing—it's traditional magazine organizations and that's the kind of the question of when, they're kind of challenged by: how do we stay sustainable with all these things happening and how do we respond to the tech changes and audience changes and all those things. It's the strength of the brand and all the things that fall beneath it. And that's—my dissertation was to be in a city magazine and I ended up changing the title of Brand Believers, because that's ultimately why everybody there was united by. And so people that not only if they did—they could work on the magazine, they could be curating the Instagram for the magazine, they could be doing an email newsletter for the magazine, or they could be doing an event—I mean, whatever it was, it was all under that umbrella of the brand which was kind of the cultural authority for Dallas and that's how they define themselves and how they saw their impact. Because that's the thing too, like, I think we need more research kind of talking to these magazine journalists themselves. Like, how do you define what you do and who you are?—and might ask them for that, and a lot of times that's kind of what's helping them kind of think forward too, because there's also—so their print audience is kind of, is aging and so they're trying to figure out how do we bring in that new group and it's the Facebook, it's the Twitter, it's, you know, online content, it's blogs and so figuring out how to keep that consistent and so I think there's a lot of ways that this brand and this is gonna help us think about magazines in the firm ways too, but still kind of the personality aspect of it.

KL: I find the way that *The Atlantic* has restructured fascinating. That there's a magazine that has an editor, but now he's just one little piece of The Atlantic media group, which runs websites and various other sub-branded websites and podcasts and The Atlantic itself has a new radio show. So there's a lot going on with that.

John Hanc (JH): Oh, we're supposed to introduce ourselves. I'm John Hanc, I teach at New York Institute of Technology, but I also been a long time magazine writer and I thought also

they've—worth noting, my dad was in the magazine industry—he was a—one of the people in charge of the research and testing at *Consumer Reports* magazine for 30 years. And so something that Greg mentioned really resonates with me: this guiding intelligence, not that—my dad was smart, but I'm not saying he was the guiding intelligence more than many—but it speaks to something that I think is really another important component and that is the sense of authoritativeness that a lot of these publications have. Certainly, *Consumer Reports* had that, I mean, it was—you know, that kind of credibility that couldn't be bought or sold, because they never, famously, never sold ads, but I think even in the sort of buff(?) magazines or the how to, the prescriptive—the service magazines, like I've written for *Runner's World* for many years as I think Kevin knows. Even when *Runner's World* printed something that I know was wrong or questionable about how you should train, people believe it. That's a part of it and I wonder if all of these new iterations, all of which I think are fascinating—like I said I love the Cornwall box, I love some of the work your students have done from Mizzou. Those are great, interesting magazines—say a lot about where magazines are distributed too. In Urban Outfitters instead of the vanishing newsstand, but I think, I wonder, how that transcends to some of these new forms, whether that sends a—that implies expertise is still there, it has to be rebuilt in different ways, or what?

BH: So, I mean I'm comfortable with the big tent, and it is interesting when you say Amazon or when you say Red Bull. I mean, I start thinking ethical questions, you know, and then what are the magazines that I love and when you speak of authoritative and where does journalism fit in this, versus mass communication versus marketing, branding. I mean, I think those are all interesting ideas to do research about and to analyze and to tell those stories out of there. So, I mean, that—I do love that my head's exploding±but with ideas, you know. Is a magazine, does a magazine have to have deep reporting, deep writing, deep revision, a distinctive voice? You know, I think about when I took poetry class because when our poetry teacher says—and we would say, “Well, what's the difference in prose and poetry?” It's just, “Poetry's broken lines and punctuation is different and there are not full sentences sometimes and there are full sentences, but it's just broken lines—it's not paragraphs. So that's a really liberating view of poetry. So whether we use the magazine storehouse—it is a storehouse? Does it have to be a story—a storehouse of stories? Or can it just be a shed?

MS: I was going to say, it seems to me that identity is really an important aspect of that and so—and that connects the idea of brand, because there's a whole brand identity scholarship field and

so forth. But I think people accept the authority of a magazine, because that magazine has become a part of their identity. I think the same applies to a fan community, you know. You're—are you a Star Trek or a Star Wars person?—that's a part of your identity. What's in your house?—that reflects your identity. I mean, I read the New Yorker and you know, obviously that's part of my identity—it's kind of like snobbish and you know, you say you read the New Yorker and you belong to a special group of people. Yeah!

BH: Yes, *The New Yorker*! Yes, *The New Yorker*, yes, *The New Yorker*!

MS: So I think we need—I don't know how—but I think the word “identity” is really crucial here and this is why I have long argued for the word “lifestyle,” which unfortunately in an American context has been thrown around, politicized in all kinds of negative ways. But I find a lot of overlap between “lifestyle” and “identity” because it's about—if identity is performed and constructed—here I'm going into some family scholarship—if our identity is performed and constructed every single day by the choices we make, that's essentially the same as how you live your life. So I choose to read *The New Yorker*, and yes, there's some choices I don't make, you know, you just, like you're constrained by your environment and just routines and so forth, but I think magazines play a role in constructing this identity every day, which is why I keep liking the word “lifestyle.”

KL: No, I think the idea of performing and constructing using magazines is really interesting. But are the magazines themselves performative and constructive?

MS: Of course, yes!

LW: Lisa Weidman again. This—what you guys have just been saying really makes me think of, I think that the most successful magazines are the ones that do develop a loyal following of people who feel like they're in community with the editors of the magazine and with the other readers and I think the New Yorker does that. And the magazine I worked for was a skateboarding magazine and it had a competitor—and at various times more than one competitor—but one major competitor and skateboarders would define themselves by which

of those magazines was their favorite. And you were one kind of guy—mostly guys then—if you were a *Thrasher* reader, which is where I worked, or, and you were another kind of person if you worked for *TransWorld* or you read *TransWorld*. And so it, especially when, you know, when you feel like you're part of a sub-community that's on the outs with mainstream society, the magazine becomes an even more important way—and this was before the web—of, you know, feeling united with that piece of your identity.

KL: Lisa do you think that's why general interest magazines seem to be the first to die off?

LW: Probably, right? Yeah if there's not—you know, at first I was kind of objecting to niche being part of our central definition, because there have been general interest magazines, but going forward, what is it to tie, really tie those people in? There's so many sources of information now that we can go to and we can self-select the ones that, you know, give us what we want to hear, so.

SBS: But I would argue that that is actually not just a lack of like people being passionately attached to the general interest magazines, that those eyeballs are too ill-defined for advertisers.

JH: Well and also, let's not forget we have a first wave wave of vast circulation magazines that went out of business—went out of business when television came along. So, you know advertisers realized this was a much better way to deliver it and even great magazines like *Life* and *Look* and *Colliers*, they kind of just lost—they lost their focus. So I do think, in fact that was one point I was gonna make, all of your very interesting and thought-provoking examples and Kevin you started this so you're the one who had to think whether this is part of the definition too—they all seem to me to be doing something that most magazines that are successful do—they have a very specific market segment in mind, whether they are fans of Poldark, whether they are people who, you know, the teenage girls, or any of the other mentions. I think that has become, like it or not, a really, that's probably what you—if we were gonna start a magazine right here, that's the first thing we'd have to think of—who is this specific market audience we're serving and that, you know, that we can make money from? Let's be honest.

KL: In the last three minutes, I'll ask a question that is unanswerable even in an hour. But, so are magazines vital and important, or is magazine media vital and important in 2017?

SCS: Absolutely.

BH: We're human beings and we love stories and we love stories that have a distinctive voice and that recognize us as individual, distinct human beings with needs, wants, joys, aspirations—and magazines connect with that. So, yes.

JH: The audience concurs.