MMM
Memory, Mind & Media

Editorial II: Meeting at the crossroads of *Memory, Mind & Media*

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As we began to explore in our first Editorial (Barnier and Hoskins 2022) for *Memory, Mind & Media*, a great deal of established and emergent work in the broad field of memory tends to reflect and reinforce a major fault line, namely a division between interest in and study of the individual and cognition – roughly 'memory in the head' – and interest in and study of social and cultural domains – roughly 'memory in the wild' (Barnier and Hoskins 2018).

This divide is evident from most of the content of two other key journals on memory: *Memory*, which was founded by Martin Conway and Susan Gathercole (pre-eminent in the fields of psychology and neuroscience) and publishes mostly work on the mind and the psychology of memory; and *Memory Studies*, which was founded by the two us (Andrew, social sciences; Amanda, cognitive psychology) together with Wulf Kansteiner (history) and John Sutton (philosophy) and publishes, despite its interdisciplinary intent at conception, work predominantly on social and cultural remembering.

Bridging space and time

Another way to see this constraint on the field of memory is by noticing how many approaches hive memory off into distinct zones or even containers – the body, the brain or mind, the social, the cultural, etc. However, technologies and media work not just <u>within</u> but <u>across</u> these domains, extending and strengthening individual, group and societal memory. In recent years, these metaphors and ideas have proliferated such that memory is now said to be 'prosthetic', 'extended', 'networked' and 'connective' (Barnier and Hoskins 2018).

Writing, printing and electronic media in successive phases have transformed human cognition and our capacity, control over and power to remember. Technological developments often are presumed to deliver an advancement in and human mastery over memory; memory appears to be constantly renewed by the media and technologies of the day. In this way, memory is always 'new' but at the same time, media shapes a reassessment of the inherent value of remembering and forgetting (Hoskins and Halstead 2021). What, if anything, must we personally or collectively capture from the past and keep for the future amidst billions of images and messages shared, edited, linked, liked, fabricated and deleted across social and other media platforms every day?

Our journal, *Memory, Mind & Media*, interrogates what memory is and what memory does at a time when access to information via digital media, communication networks and archives is pervasive, immediate and potentially long-lasting. Memory is not held

solely in cognitive or spatial 'boxes' but continuously distributed across minds, bodies, personal and public lives and infrastructure. In such circumstances, media is no longer a straightforward champion of memory. Instead, artificial intelligence, algorithms and the complexity and scale of information and data, unsettles if and how the past is seen, used and abused; memory today has a more exploitable and unpredictable life. These developments challenge the canon of a memory studies founded and developed amidst twentieth century media, and the wider fields of memory, their concepts and parameters, theories and methods.

Memory, Mind & Media aims to provide a commanding and clear agenda on these intersecting questions and problems, because historically, as well as in digital contexts, media and technologies enable human communication about the past, present and future across space and time. In bridging space and time, media also complicate the relationship between memory in the head and memory in the wild; that is, between individual and social/cultural domains.

One example of just how compelling this combination of memory, mind and media fields can be is the special issue of *Memory Studies* edited by psychologist Daniel Schacter and theologist Michael Welker on 'Memory and connection: Remembering the past and imagining the future in individuals, groups, and cultures'. Although published in July 2016, it remains the most downloaded and cited special issue of that journal to date. It was the product of a cross-disciplinary workshop that brought together people and perspectives from psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, history, sociology and religious studies, an ambition we share for our new journal.

Recognising complexity

We are not alone in placing faith in the value of interdisciplinarity. Universities, national and international academies, and research funding and assessment agencies are increasingly ready to support breakthrough or disruptive ideas and collaborations across the boundaries of traditional disciplinary perspectives and methods (eg Australian Research Council Statement of Support for Interdisciplinary Research 2018; National Academy of Sciences 2005; Times Higher Education 2022; UK Research and Innovation 2023). This reflects a view that the academy should focus on solving large-scale societal problems and that these problems are embedded within inherently complex and interrelated physical, human and social worlds, requiring answers beyond single and separate disciplines.

This trend towards interdisciplinarity (while recognising that it has long been at least an aspiration of many funding bodies and academic institutions) is consistent with calls for similar approaches across the fields of memory studies. For instance, at the 2017 Annual Memory Studies Association Conference, Professor Astrid Erll, Professor of Anglophones Literature and Cultures at Goethe-University Frankfurt, argued that interdisciplinarity in memory studies is not just valuable but an essential, defining characteristic. During a roundtable discussion on 'The Horizons of Memory Studies' chaired by Professor Jeffrey Olick, she said that:

> … although there may be little agreement over a common canon, memory scholars make effective use of 'travelling concepts', which cross disciplinary and subdisciplinary boundaries … a memory scholar knows that what he or she is looking at has many other perspectives … a range that is impossible to cover by just one person.

In the same roundtable discussion, Professor Carol Gluck (2017), Professor of History and Japanologist at Columbia University, likewise argued that as a memory researcher and

historian she's often asked, '*what do I mean by "public memory" and how is it different from history*'. She admitted that there are holes in her knowledge and expertise that she needs to fill and that she needs help in filling them. Like Professor Erll, Professor Gluck sees great value in interdisciplinary work, arguing that it can and should be more than just 'parallel play'.

Such endeavours are not, of course, without complexity. From our own experience and discussions with colleagues over many years, one central challenge we often face is the lack of a shared understanding across disciplinary boundaries of basic concepts and assumptions we routinely use and make about memory (mind and media). As we asked in our first Editorial (Barnier and Hoskins 2022):

> … is it possible to journey from our individual, disciplinary separate perspectives to find common, transformative language, questions and approaches to memory?

In answering this, it may help to consider briefly what we mean by cross-, multi- or inter-disciplinary work. For the purposes of *Memory, Mind & Media*, we use 'cross-disciplinary' as the broadest term to encompass pluralistic modes of collaboration and engagement that cross-disciplinary boundaries in some way.

We use 'multi-disciplinary' to refer to cross-disciplinary research, researchers or teams that involve two or more disciplines working in parallel or combining their expertise to address a research question. Researchers in multi-disciplinary teams or projects may or may not see themselves as living outside or between (Callard and Fitzgerald 2015, 5) their disciplines and may not identify as cross- or interdisciplinary researchers.

Finally, we use 'interdisciplinary' to refer to cross-disciplinary research, researchers or teams that involve two or more disciplines working together in more integrated or emer-gent ways to address a research question. Interdisciplinarity is about *interrogation* in dia-logue of critical assumptions that underpin different disciplines and intellectual paradigms, and achieving some pathway forward as a result (Hoskins and Tulloch 2016, 12). Researchers in interdisciplinary teams or projects may be more likely to see themselves as living outside or between disciplines and may be more likely to identify themselves as cross- or interdisciplinary researchers. Interdisciplinary research also may be more likely to lead to entirely new concepts, questions or approaches that lie at the intersection of the original disciplines, potentially creating new sub-fields.

We envision cross-disciplinary research as a space that both shapes and is constituted by collaborations that take place within it (Mansilla et al 2016). Many factors can influence where within this space a project may lie: whether the goal is problem-finding or problem-solving, the nature of research questions, the required skills or methodological expertise and the evolving knowledge and interests of the researchers. Thinking of cross-disciplinary research in this way, we value all modes as part of our agenda for *Memory, Mind & Media.*

However, we fully appreciate the challenge in our requirement for authors to:

> … combine scientific and humanistic approaches to the study of memory in the digital era … reflect upon and signal how we can push the boundaries of existing knowledge and methods at the intersection of memory, mind and media … and … encourage cross-disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary dialogue and debate (Barnier and Hoskins 2022; see also https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/memory-mind-and-media/information/about-this-journal).

And we personally understand the reaction that some may have to this challenge. After all, it took us more than 5 years to translate what each of us meant when we talked about memory and to forge an overlapping agenda of questions. We constantly found

ourselves examining and explaining to one another the very basics of our disciplinary-forged assumptions as to what remembering and forgetting are, why they matter and how to investigate them. It's no mean feat to bridge our disciplinary divides and successfully navigate from scratch to grant or manuscript submission and beyond.

Across the scales of a fish

The premise of *Memory, Mind and Media* is, essentially, that there is much to be gained in such attempts, irrespective of success. Over the last few years, via interviews with approximately 20 highly successful interdisciplinary colleagues, we have explored methods for promoting cross-disciplinarity in memory studies.

In 2017, Amanda interviewed Professor Andy Clark, Professor of Cognitive Philosophy at the University of Sussex. Across a career of influential, interdisciplinary contributions, he is perhaps best known for his extended mind thesis with David Chalmers, which argues that objects in the environment (including physical, digital and other media) scaffold cognition and became part of the mind (Chalmers 2008; Clark 2008; see also Barnier 2020). Judging by tens of thousands of Google Scholar citations to his work as well as Clark's own track record, he has inspired conversations and collaborations with and among scholars across a broad swathe of disciplines who resonate with his question '*Where does the mind stop and the rest of the world begin?*'

When I asked Professor Clark what training or experiences in his early years helped prepare him to work in this interdisciplinary way, he pointed to the influence of Professor Donald T. Campbell, a Professor of Psychology who examined Clark's PhD thesis. Campbell (2005, 3-4, 6) described obstacles to cross-disciplinarity and offered his 'fish-scale model of omniscience' as a solution:

> The obstacle described in this chapter is the 'ethnocentrism of disciplines', that is, the symptoms of tribalism or nationalism or ingroup partisanship in the internal and external relations of university departments, national scientific organizations, and academic disciplines. The 'fish-scale model of omniscience' represents the solution advocated, a solution kept from spontaneous emergence by the ethnocentrism of disciplines. The slogan is collective comprehensiveness through overlapping patterns of unique narrownesses. Each narrow specialty is in this analogy a 'fish scale'. Our only hope of a comprehensive social science or other multiscience lies in a continuous texture of narrow specialties that overlap with other narrow specialties. Due to the ethnocentrism of disciplines, what one gets instead is a redundant piling up of highly similar specialties leaving interdisciplinary gaps. Rather than trying to fill these gaps by training scholars who have mastered two or more disciplines, we should be making those social-organizational inventions that will encourage narrow specialization in these interdisciplinary areas.

One approach to filling these interdisciplinary gaps in by sharing our models, methods and techniques across the scales of the fish. Of the 20 successful, interdisciplinary researchers we interviewed, the vast majority described applying models, methods and techniques developed in one discipline to problems identified in another. This cross-fertilisation at the methodological level was experienced as a lower risk entry point to interdisciplinarity than attempting to apply entirely new conceptual approaches across disciplinary boundaries.

Another approach to filling these gaps – and the one we are taking with *Memory, Mind & Media* – is to reward interdisciplinary effort and not just achievement, especially risky effort. As Professor Clark also said during our conversation, the most challenging work we do often turns out to be the most rewarding.

One of the great features of the *Memory, Mind & Media* platform is continuous volume publication, meaning that content is not subject to the time and space constraints of being fitted into an 'issue'. Our special collections enable much greater flexibility, such that a collection can be added to over several months or longer, enabling responses to earlier published pieces to appear in the same collection. This offers much greater potential for interdisciplinary engagement in a dialogic fashion than the finality and more typical parallelism of a traditional 'special issue'.

So, we look forward to receiving your manuscript submissions and proposals for special collections. Take the challenge and together we will show how the past is made and remade and why it matters through interdisciplinary engagements at the crossroads of *Memory, Mind & Media*.

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