



GATEKEEPING IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

Prof. Pamela J Shoemaker


Abstract

Gatekeeping involves the movement of information through a channel from gate to gate. Gates are decision points, in which information is selected or rejected, shaped, timed and repeated. The gatekeepers who make these decisions are mostly people (both journalists and social media users) or organizations, but some are also computer algorithms who have been coded by people. Once a relatively simple process, in which information passed from reporters to editors within mass media channels, today gatekeeping resembles a complicated network of mass and social media gates, gatekeepers, and channels. Information travels within and between media, with both journalists and social media users becoming gatekeeping agents. Overarching these agents are supra-gatekeepers, such as Facebook and Twitter, that select news content from lower-level agents. The result is a complex system of information on two levels of analysis that strongly shapes our ideas about social reality.

Bio

Pamela J. Shoemaker is professor emeritus from Syracuse University, the SI Newhouse School of Public Communications. She held the John Ben Snow Chair there for more than 21 years. Previously she was director of the School of Journalism at Ohio State University, and before that was an assistant and associate professor in the Department of Journalism at the University of Texas at Austin. Her PhD in mass communications is from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and her BS and MS in communication are from Ohio University, Athens. Her recent books include *Mediating the Message*, *Gatekeeping Theory*, and *News Around the World*. She was co-editor of *Communication Research* journal and is a past president of the Association of Journalism & Mass Communication. She has received the top research award from AEJMC, along with career achievement awards from Ohio University, the University of Texas and the University of Wisconsin.



 
18 March 2019
(Mon)
12:30-13:45
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HOW TO BUILD THEORIES: THE EXAMPLE OF DEVIANCE AND THE NEWS SEMINAR

Prof. Pamela J Shoemaker

Abstract

Creating a new theory requires a disciplined outline of the constructs used (with theoretical and operational definitions), a list of theoretical statements (assumptions and hypotheses, each with theoretical and operational linkages) and methods that can test the hypotheses. The example offered builds a theory of “hard-wired news” that is derived from previous theories of biological and cultural evolution. The theory explains why much of the news is about statistical, normative and social change deviance and why this is true around the world. Deviance makes up much of the world’s news, and differences between countries largely rely on how deviance is defined.

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