# Editorial

As the thematic section of this edition focuses on political communication, it must be mentioned that the Media Professor *("der Medienprofessor")* has taken care of it, and this is certainly a precious gift to our readers. For many years Roger Blum, former director of the Institute of Communication Science at the University of Bern, served as *the* Media Professor in Switzerland, a title assigned to him by journalists and other insiders, making it appear as though he happened to be the single chairholder in our field of research throughout the entire country. Of course, in a multilingual nation where communication studies are flourishing, he was not, in fact, the only one. Yet no other researcher was connected with journalists and the Swiss political establishment in a similar fashion. Being also a former top editor of *Tages-Anzeiger,* one of the two quality papers based in Zurich und thus well respected among political journalists, for decades Blum was the primary source of information on the intricacies of the Swiss political system with its concordant democracy, sophisticated federalism and frequent voter ballots.

After retiring from his chair at the University of Bern, Blum and his wife, Marlis Prinzing, left Switzerland and are now living in Germany. Thus, this edition is also a farewell to both of them – or an expression of our wish that they remain invested in Switzerland and return frequently – thus, let us send them off in the three major Swiss languages: Auf Wiedersehen, Au revoir, Arrivederci! May we also add a special warm welcome to Blum's successor, Silke Adam. Her start as the new expert in political communication at the University of Bern, where the professorship for media and communication sciences has been refocused on political communication, could have been easier had she not been attacked by populist politicians who have become another astounding reality in this small, but politically fascinating country. Believe it or not, some assert that Swiss nationality should dictate who can become a professor in Switzerland, rather than basing the decision on professional

qualifications as a researcher. However, the unanimous reaction of the Swiss and non-Swiss scientific community in this country to such threats of academic autonomy was encouraging, and thus, Silke Adam will hopefully have many years ahead to study political communication in Switzerland from nearby.

As the thematic section will be introduced by Roger Blum himself, we can focus here on the general section and on the noblest function of an editorial – to provide transparency of editorial policies.

The first two contributions in the general section are also loosely related to political communication. Research contributed by Diana Ingenhoff and Ansgar Thiessen on how the relationship of journalism and corporate communication is developing in crisis situations has an obvious political dimension. The controversies and the communication disasters related to the catastrophe of the present oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico underline the political dimension of this research topic.

Bettina Beurer-Züllig, Christian Fieseler and Miriam Meckel empirically analyzed the roles and profiles of German, Austrian and Swiss communication managers. This is of similar relevance to political communication, as these communication experts are the decision-makers who frequently shape journalists' perceptions and public opinion from backstage.

Finally, Barbie Zelizer's essay in the laboratory section should receive special mention. Based on her keynote to the conference "Journalism Research in the Public Interest" organized by the Zürcher Hochschule Winterthur in November 2009, her reflections on what falls in the public interest are clearly related to politics and policies. Thus, her speculations on the future of journalism education in times where no one can be sure how independent quality journalism will be financed in 2020 carry strong political connotations. Zelizer's belief that journalism and journalism education should not only adapt, as suggested by Jeff Jarvis, to the new environment, but should proactively take a role in its creation should be echoed in Switzerland and all over Old Europe. It should be transmitted to the personal politics of communications departments, as journalism educators like Roger Blum, that is educators with remarkable records in the daily practice of journalism and research, will be needed in the future.

Changes in Editorial Policy

Though we surely don't intend to reinvent the wheel, we would like to communicate a few changes in the editorial policy:

We aim to focus on "Swissness" in an intelligent, sensible and cosmopolitan way. Which means this journal should reflect who (and what) is "moving and shaking" communications research in this country. It should remain a multilingual forum, though the share of publications in English should continue to increase. English is the "lingua franca" of research. It grants us visibility across the world and allows for superior exchange among the linguistic areas of Switzerland (as even within our pool of communications researchers, not everyone in Switzerland is fluent in German, French, or Italian, not to mention Romansh…). On that note, it must be mentioned that without the help of Kate Nacy of the Università della Svizzera italiana, we would have been unable to edit the English texts of this volume thoroughly.

As SComS is based in Switzerland – and thus in the German, French and Italian-speaking intersection of the world, we intend to become a "showcase" of developments in communication sciences in these language areas, striving to link our thematic sections to major conventions and symposiums in Switzerland. We aim to become a platform for publications dealing with important contributions to both conferences and workshops taking place in Switzerland and those featuring Swiss researchers. SComS readers should have the first opportunity to learn if a renowned researcher presents at a workshop in Winterthur, and should also know when our colleagues from Switzerland are offering meaningful contributions to international conferences in Sydney, Singapore or San Francisco.

To make this possible, we must make two exceptions from peer review in the future:

– If the editors' agree that an article should be published immediately, it may be published as an "editors' pick" – which means that the double-blind peer review will be replaced by a fourfold agreement among the editors themselves. This is how Barbie Zelizer's essay was added to this edition in a timely fashion.

– Each thematic section editor has the privilege to either add an introductory essay or to contribute an article of his or her own without

further peer review. We would not choose such a section editor if we did not trust in his or her competence – and thus he or she should also have the opportunity to make a contribution to our joint venture. This is how we've been able to include Roger Blum's and Marlis Prinzing's research in this volume.

Aside from these changes, SComS will remain a peer-reviewed journal, though it becomes increasingly difficult to find reviewers as everyone seems to be busy, busy, busy. In one case, we actually contacted 13 colleagues until finally succeeded in finding a reviewer. The academic world has always been competitive, but such competition seems to take forms which can be detrimental to the public service dimension as an integral part of our mission.

Changes in the Editorial Board

This is the last edition of SComS under the direction of Eddo Rigotti as a member of the editorial board. We will miss him dearly, the lively multilingual and multitalented mastermind who decided in the 1990s that the newly founded faculty of Communication Sciences in Lugano would require its own research journal, and who, energetically as always, oversaw the merger of SComS and *Medienwissenschaft Schweiz*. He, the expert in semiotics, argumentation theory and linguistics, will be succeeded by Jeanne Mengis, the new expert of managerial communication at the Università della Svizzera italiana. Jeanne Mengis' willingness to join us promises continuity of commitment, and symbolizes how our discipline is redefining itself and heading towards new territory while enlarging its frontiers. Jeanne returned from the University of Warwick, UK, this January following her appointment to Assistant Professor in Organizational Communication in the Università della Svizzera italiana's Faculty of Communication Sciences. Her research focuses on a communication perspective of knowledge processes in organizations. In particular, she investigates the communication practices through which cross-disciplinary collaboration, knowledge integration, and evidence-based learning are achieved.

Stephan Russ-Mohl
On behalf of the Editorial Board