
Backstage in the history of media theory: The George Gerbner Archive and the history of critical media studies.

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Abstract: This paper explores the significance of the George Gerbner Archive (<http://web.asc.upenn.edu/gerbner/archive.aspx>) as a resource on the history of Communications and Media Studies. Drawing on historical theory, the paper analyzes a 1973 clash between Gerbner and the International Communication Association over the future of the *Journal of Communication*. Exchanges on this matter revealed conflicting views over how to manage and finance the title. These quarrels manifested surprising drivers behind the US' emergence as a dominant force in global communications research. The letters suggest that much as Gerbner's scholarly reputation is well established, he also exerted considerable influence as an ideas broker. Overall, the case study illustrates the value of complementing media theory with research on the organizational and interpersonal histories behind published work, showcasing the value of the Gerbner archive in this task.

Keywords: George Gerbner, Cultural Indicators Project, International Communication Association, History of Communications Studies.

Introduction: George Gerbner and the backstage of media theory

When George Gerbner died in 2005, the renowned founder of the Cultural Indicators Project (Gerbner, 1969a, 1970, 1973), bequeathed half a century's worth of papers and professional correspondences to The University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication (ASC). These letters, emails, memos and ephemera are a time tunnel to a pivotal period in media research. Gerbner famously pioneered new ways to conceive how media affected political socialisation. His role as an influential "ideas broker" is less well known. The archive registers the enormous energy he expended on organising a nascent discipline. These records are worth examining, because they lend significant insights to recent work on the global shape of communication and media studies. Over the last twenty years, writers have identified linguistic and geographic power centres in communication research. Their work signals the need for research into the social processes that spawned these hubs. The following paper shows that Gerbner's correspondences with the International Communication Association (ICA) concerning the management of the *Journal of Communication (JOC)* evidenced how these processes worked, and when they took shape. The case study is indicative of the Gerbner

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archive's value as a historical resource that lends useful insights to current questions about the arrangement of communications and media studies.

In their study of peer reviewed journal publications from 1930 to the present day, Günther and Domahidi (2017) noted the ICA's stewardship of peer review as a key driver that has shaped global research excellence. It is reasonable to suspect, then, that when the ASC assumed responsibility for publishing ICA's flagship *JOC* in 1973, installing Gerbner as editor, that this was a pivotal historical juncture in the field's research trajectory. In a decade long tenure, Gerbner skippered a major outlet for peer reviewed communications scholarship in the period culminating in the *JOC*'s classic "Ferment in the Field" edition. No-one could have known at the time of his appointment, but this made the Hungarian émigré a key gatekeeper for the ideas and people who would define the discipline as a global practice.

A file in the archive contains the correspondence between Gerbner and ICA officers, arranging his appointment. The letters therein are more than dry recordings of crossed "t"s and dotted "i"s. They register sometimes heated arguments across 1973 and 1974, indicating that Gerbner came very close to walking away from the editorship; a decision that would have changed the *JOC*'s complexion. The episode, brief as it was, enlightens research on the arrangement of peer reviewed publication in media studies. Over the last 30 years or so, scholars have recognised the ICA and the *JOC* as major power brokers in global research cultures that remain heavily rooted in the English-speaking world, especially North America (Demeter, 2017; Gunther and Domahidi, 2017; Lauf, 2005). At the same time, these writers acknowledge that this imbalance cannot be attributed to intentional bias. Concurring, Gerbner's archive records how North America's scholarly hegemony emerged from hard-nosed, but well intentioned business decisions that were the subject of occasionally intense struggles within what has become the "centre" of global communications research. Gerbner's *JOC* file offers an intriguing historical quirk; the Anglo and US bias in communication is partly down to the dogged determination of an Eastern European refugee to make media scholarship a force to be reckoned with. This informational nugget is indicative of the archive's value. Gerbner's contribution to media theory and methods is well established; but the presence of the archive indicates new directions, where he also stands as a notable historical gateway to the sociology of our discipline.

The purpose of this article is to model how the archive's personal correspondences afford useful insights on the purpose and evolution of critical media research. In illustration, what follows uses the contents of the *JOC* file to answer questions Demeter raised in his analysis of fifteen thousand journal articles from nineteen respected communications journals (2017). Demeter pinpoints the mid-1970s as a crucial period when quality communications outputs began to congregate around core ICA journals. He further suggests that this "fact" invites sociological reflection on the explicit and implicit forces that made things so. What follows details how we might approach this task by applying historical theory to the Gerbner archive, and why it is worth investing time in learning more about a figure whose impact on media research seems to have already been established.

The Question of History

E.H. Carr famously cautioned against focusing history on "great" figures. Historical junctures do not emanate from personal ambitions, tenacity, skill, proclivities or foibles alone; Rome didn't invade Egypt because Mark Anthony was enamoured of Cleopatra's nose (Carr, 1963). Carr's warning is apt, because it is easy to be seduced by Gerbner's hagiographic lure. Refugee, soldier, Nazi hunter, McCarthy victim; the sober social scientist cut a dashing figure. It is easy

to focus on the man himself, and pay less attention to the period that he represented. But that story has been told (e.g. Lent, 1995).

Gerbner's contribution to mass communication theory is even more renowned. Morgan's *George Gerbner: A Critical Introduction to Media Theory* (2012) exploited the archive's collection of Gerbner's published work to map his professional journey across shifting political, scholarly and technological sands. Morgan authoritatively depicted Gerbner as a methodologically catholic researcher who cannily used TV violence to accuse corporate storytelling for impoverishing public culture. Morgan's account is deeply historical, noting how Gerbner's interests were grounded in multi-methodological comparative analyses of diverse cultural industries. His book argued that Gerbner envisaged a critical paradigm that could produce historically informed, sensitive explanations for how media industries spun seductive stories about reality through intricate, frequently unpredictable decision-making networks. Morgan shone a spotlight on Gerbner's lesser known projects; topics such as international differences in popular representations of education and heroism (Gerbner, 1966, 1969b, 1972), the role of confession magazines in harnessing gender discrimination to commercial interests (Gerbner, 1958), and the peculiar tale of how screen regulation and risk aversion in the television industry led to stereotyping of the mentally ill (Gerbner, 1959; Gerbner and Tannenbaum, 1961). Morgan also detailed Gerbner's adventures as a media activist. Gerbner always hoped that the violence profiles would spark popular demand for a richer public culture. In the 1990s, he tried to catalyse such a popular movement, by creating the Cultural Environment Movement.

The quality of Morgan's book threatens to bypass the archive's value as a living resource. What remains to be said? Especially when using scraps of personal and professional documents that were not written for posterity's sake. A little inside knowledge reveals notable discrepancies between those records and Gerbner's real life. Glaringly, there are just two emails to show from over 30 years of work with Michael Morgan. Given such omissions, and that many of Gerbner's confidantes remain active in the field, the risks of being caught out in misinterpretation are high. Archivist Sharon Black shares her frustration in knowing the archive does not capture some of Gerbner's deepest relationships. Hence, using the archive as a resource in trying to write a history of communications and media studies is fraught with risk.

Added to this is the fear that archives skew historical knowledge. Specialists detail a vigorous debate on the nature and purpose of archives dating back more than a century. In the 19th century, the American Historical Association noted an explosion of archiving activities from a diverse range of people and institutions. Much as this enthusiasm represented a historical opportunity, it also threatened to exacerbate the eternal problem of ceding history to those who kept the best records (Birdsall, 1979). Gerbner's digital archive is a variation on this theme; threatening to exaggerate his significance by the simple fact that his records are there.

More positively, what all of this points to is the need to heed Carr's warning on the importance of looking through "great people" into the worlds that made them figures of note. A Gerbner centred history built on published works already exists. However, there are sound theoretical reasons for arguing that this can be complemented by a non "Gerbner centric" corollary, based on his other materials. The value of writing an alternative Gerbner history, focused less on the man himself, and more on the scholarly era that he encapsulated, is illustrated by reflecting on history as a creative pursuit that re-landscapes the past.

Reinventing Gerbner. "Reperiodisation" as a method.

So, anyone using the Gerbner archive is confronted by the absence of key materials, and the presence of experts who lived the history one is trying to reconstruct. Daunting indeed. But

there is some comfort in realising that such is life for the archival historian. So, too, the knowledge that eminent historians do not simply seek to recreate a past that would be agreeable to those who lived it. Truth is surely important. As Eric Hobsbawm observed (1994), history is about things that happened, and the people those things happened to. On the other hand, John Lewis Gaddis characterised history as a narrative process that *creates* periods of historical significance. Where first-hand accounts will always be indispensable, they are not to be gifted “divine rights” in making sense of what has been. To Gerbner and his colleagues, he would offer:

All we can say for sure is that we'll only in part be remembered for what we consider significant about ourselves, or from what we choose to leave behind in the documents and the artefacts that will survive us. Future historians will have to choose what to make of these: it's they who will impose meanings, just as it's we who study the past, not those who lived through it, who do so. (Gaddis, 2002, pp. 23-24)

Gaddis' words are more than a pragmatic account of how history works in practice. Gaddis believed that good historians engage with the past by rearranging conventional historical periods. Hobsbawm's “short 20th-century” thesis (1994)-the notion that the shifts that characterised that age occurred between 1914 and 1989- is probably the most famous exemplar of what we might call “reperiodisation”. “Reperiodisation” enhances understanding of key historical periods by focusing on details that are conventionally deemed to be of little consequence. Of particular interest regarding Gerbner, consider the following Gaddis quote:

This particular form of time travel only works, though, when the historian is prepared to shift scales: to consider how phenomena so small that they escaped notice at the time could shape phenomena so large that we've always wondered why they occurred (Gaddis, 2002, p. 25)

The passage indicates what there may be to say about a man of whom so much has been said. The fact that we already have well-researched and persuasive histories of Gerbner's scholarly impact does not preclude the possibility of undiscovered “key moments” that enrich our understanding of how his work affected the field.

Method

“Reperiodising” Gerbner involves finding “small” archive data rich enough to test the thesis that Gerbner's administrative life impacted his discipline. The *JOC* file, containing correspondence with twenty-six people between the years of 1973 and 1991, is fit for purpose, *prima facie*. As has already been mentioned, the file details a period where Gerbner assumed a weighty role in organising international media scholarship, in the decade preceding a cornerstone edition of a canonised voice in communications scholarship. Gerbner's ascension is part of the story of how media research came to be organised in a particular way in a pivotal period. Hence, the documents in this file are a suitable database to test the idea that the Devil in understanding Gerbner lies in the administrative detail.

The technique used here “reperiodised” Gerbner by mapping evidence of organisational conflict in the file. The justification for the approach is as follows. We know that qualitative research often seeks “dramatic” moments where the building, defending or breaking of social rules becomes unusually transparent (Geertz, 1973; Van Maanen, 1988). In this case, the idea was to see if conflict evidenced in administrative letters affected how the ICA and the *JOC* went about their work of cultivating excellence. In this regard, the period when ASC assumed responsibility for publishing *JOC*, and Gerbner became its editor, produced eighteen exchanges between ICA officers over how to maximise the publication's impact. These letters and memos

were written between May, 1973, and April, 1974. Mapping these documents, it is possible to see that the “Ferment in the Field” noted in 1983 was foreshadowed by often animated debates over the management of high-quality peer-reviewed research; in other words, the ferment started bubbling ten years before it splashed onto paper.

Disagreements in this episode largely settled around key three key players, and had a particular rhythm, reflecting the unique nature of scholarly work in the US. The drama's main protagonists were Gerbner, Fred Smith, then ICA President, and R. Wayne Pace, who preceded Smith in the role. Pace was a member of a “Past Presidents’ Committee” that Smith convened to oversee the Annenberg transfer. Judging by the archive, Pace’s queries provoked flurries of sometimes irritable exchanges over the *JOC*’s future. These notable squabbles registered influential opinions on how to establish research excellence that continue to affect how scholars go about their work.

The Annenberg Move.

Curiously, evidence from this file suggests that Gerbner became a little alienated from the ICA, even as he took the bridge of its flagship publication. Gerbner believed that handing *JOC*’s operational management to ASC would foster the secure business foundation required of a leading academic publication. Smith initially concurred. But actioning the move sparked months of wrangling, souring the working relationships among all involved. What follows gives a more detailed explanation of the dispute, its chronology, and the details of the critical turning points.

On May 15th, 1973, Fred Smith formally notified Gerbner that an “ad hoc” ICA publications committee had voted to make the Annenberg School publisher of the *JOC*, with ICA “retaining editorial control”. The decision had been made to “ensure the financial, professional and promotional resources necessary to reach the new goal for the journal” (Correspondence, Alfred Smith, May 15 1973, no page). Smith’s correspondence flagged a considerable personal and institutional coup for Gerbner and his organisation. Smith welcomed Gerbner’s incomparable intellectual and editorial leadership’ for a publication charged with stewarding ICA’s medium of intellectual leadership in the field of communication at large, serving not only ICS membership but also reaching all those interested in communication developments in every field”. An enclosed committee memo revealed that the ASC Press agreed to shoulder production and distribution costs and oversee advertising and subscription matters. The deal was good for ten years, although either ASC or ICA could cancel. Smith’s letter was no more than a formality; member of the ad-hoc body, Gerbner knew all about the switch (Correspondence, Alfred Smith, May 15, 1973). However, Smith issued an omen of what was to come. ICA’s publishing commitments were incredibly complex, he warned. Operations demanded four managing committees. This included a body of past ICA presidents “to guide us through a number of large and small problems I would now propose that we need at least three kinds of committees to direct our publications programs” (Correspondence with Smith, May 16, 1973, no page). And so commenced the drama.

Trouble stirred within two weeks, as Gerbner accused Smith of exaggerating the complexity of the move. Gerbner saw no need for the Past Presidents’ Committee, or a member ballot, since ICA rules empowered the board to make executive decisions. “Bylaws give the Board authority to make such arrangements for publication as it sees fit”. ICA did need a new publications committee, given plans for new journals; he suggested members of the Past Presidents Committee, excluding Pace. Gerbner acknowledged the intricacies of reworking financial arrangements; the organisation of cash flow from library subscriptions was a case in point. Nevertheless, the agreement in place manifestly made this an ASC issue; the organisation responsible for all production costs, had the right to maximise revenue schemes. Gerbner saw

the Annenberg move as a pragmatic step toward the economic footing that a top rank publication required. Ominously, he displayed little interest in ICA rank and file feelings (Correspondence, Alfred Smith, May 31, 1973). And with that, Gerbner exited the stage for Europe, as the US school year ended.

But peace didn't last long.

In July, Smith became aware that *JOC* plans had to synchronise with the launching of new ICA venture Communications Monographs. Knowing that several of the Past Presidents were in and around LA, Smith offered to fund a meeting to discuss budgets for each operation (Correspondence with Alfred Smith, July 17, 1973). But just two days later Gerbner left the US, offering instead to host an all-expenses-paid Past Presidents' jaunt to Philadelphia on his return (Correspondence with Alfred Smith, July 20, 1973). Hence, complex questions about how to fit new journal operations within ICA rules arose just as nine-month US contracts expired, and scholars turned their attention to research.

Had the Past Presidents been able to meet, perhaps the bureaucratic tensions that developed could have been averted. Instead, on July 26th of 1973, Pace received legal advice, warning the proposed agreement gave the ASC the power to usurp the ICA as the leading gatekeeper of global communications studies (Correspondence, R Wayne Pace, July 26, 1973). Attorney Farrell Lines unnerved Pace with four observations. First, the Montreal agreement, if actioned, effectively transferred the *JOC*'s "name, good will...income and assets" to Annenberg. Second, although both parties agreed that either could cancel the cooperative arrangement with twelve months' notice, there was no mention of, nor mechanism for, transferring *JOC* back to the association; ASC was entitled to cut ties with ICA and keep *JOC*. Third, ASC enjoyed insurmountable editorial control; School members of the board outnumbered ICA officials. Fourth, Line's reading of ICA by-laws indicated no such major decision on core assets was constitutional without a member vote (Correspondence Farrell Lines, July 26, 1973). In essence, Lines warned the Presidents' committee that Gerbner's confidence about the fortitude of the Montreal agreement was at best premature. The problem for ICA was that the ASC Dean had nothing to lose by being wrong.

At this juncture, Smith's tone with Gerbner became less conciliatory. ICA's President rejected Gerbner's view that the Annenberg move could forge ahead on a tide of good faith. As Summer ended, Smith welcomed Gerbner home, but revealed his concerns about Pace's warnings. By now, he seemed persuaded that relocation could be dangerous. Mentioning communications from Pace, he asked for a more detailed agreement that would secure ICA's future rights to the *JOC* and the monies flowing from it. Although Gerbner had "The green light in general", Lines had persuaded Smith of the need for "one general adjustment in the Montreal statement, and that is to work out some mechanism or procedure for terminating/ the agreement if this ever becomes necessary in the future" (Correspondence, Alfred Smith, August 27, 1973, no page).

Then, September 11th, 1973 saw something of a collective meltdown. Things started with Smith taking on the roles of referee and mildly irked father figure. Smith wrote to Pace, praising his efforts on the ad hoc publications committee, but warning against an apparent plan to halt publication of the ICA newsletter, in protest at the status of the *JOC* quarrel. Coincidentally or not, the same day saw another Smith memo outlining the heavy lifting required of ICA President. Smith was responsible for; auditing finances, arranging budgets and the behemoth that was the annual ICA conference and overseeing the launch of new journal ventures. The administration had become so absurdly labyrinthine, that Smith had formed a committee of committees! And this was business as usual. No matter where the fault lay, the Annenberg transfer overburdened an already overburdened system. Worst of all, the wrangling stopped smart people from doing their day jobs; planning the future of communication. What was the field? What were its questions? What were its methods? Smith was afraid that the

Association was wasting too much time “navel-gazing” (Correspondence, Alfred Smith, September 11, 1973). He was also irritated by the lack of appreciation for his bureaucratic spadework, and how vital such labour was to scholarly goals; “Everyone must be free to do his own thing, to pursue glory, fulfilment, and salvation of the field as a whole. If the members of ICA don't do this planning, it will be done for them by other agencies.” (Correspondence, Alfred Smith, September 11, 1973, no page).

But Gerbner was not for turning. He retorted with an equally stern letter, on the very same day. In it, the ASC Dean offered to terminate ICA/ASC agreement, return *JOC* to ICA, and proceed with a new, independent publication. Gerbner argued again that the agreement had been robust. Much as he respected Pace, and did not wish to cause disunity within ICA, he was dismayed at the lack of appreciation for the service that he and his school were offering. Where Annenberg had moved swiftly to ensure a new quality journal, at a time when such a publication was sorely needed, “The feeling I get...is one of delay, obstruction and bickering. The momentum of Montreal has been allowed to It seems that ICA cannot yet provide optimum conditions for the revitalization of its Journal” (Correspondence, Alfred Smith, September 11, 1973, no page) He remained on the offensive in two communications in November of 1973, complaining that he had received so little support in his editorial role that he could not even tell readers how to subscribe (Correspondence, Alfred Smith, November 2, November 22, 1973-5). Some of the tension arose from Gerbner’s own alarm that the scholarly mission was vulnerable to the most mundane of flaws:

Let me again express my concern over the name and address given for dues and subscription. The uncertainties presents ICA and the Journal with grave risks. of the matter is your responsibility, I have a corresponding duty to safeguard the Journal's financial integrity for both ICA and ASC (Correspondence, Alfred Smith, November 22, 1973, no page).

Matters reached a nadir on April 8, 1974, with a letter to Gerbner from the newly appointed ICA business manager, B Martin Hurley. At the turn of that new year, Smith had finally announced an arrangement for directing a portion of *JOC* subscriptions to the Annenberg Press. Shortly afterwards, Hurley admonished Gerbner’s business acumen. Former chided latter for complicating new arrangements with his „wishful thinking” on how the association’s business operations worked. The Annenberg move only looked „simple” those who knew little of ICA’s daily existence. And, for this reason, Hurley invited Gerbner to contemplate „the share you hold in responsibility” for the problem (Correspondence B. Martin Hurley, April 8, 1974, no page).

Shortly afterwards, Smith wrote to Gerbner, applauding a fine first *JOC* edition under his stewardship. Smith expressed admiration for the clever mix of essays and research articles, the inclusion of scholars and media practitioners, and a laudable international focus (Correspondence Alfred Smith, July 8, 1974). But another note, written by Gerbner a decade later, suggested that the ill feeling from the incident never really dissipated in his long tenure as *JOC* editor. In the Spring of 1984, Gerbner wrote to new ICA President James Anderson to complain about a decade of wrestling with an uncooperative ICA publications committee, a lack gratitude the fact that Annenberg had subsided the organization for a decade, and dismay at a proposed “farming out” of the ICA publications to “a commercial organization” referencing a planned deal between the body and Sage publications. Gerbner was irritated that the decision had been made without consulting him and felt this left no alternative other than to reconsider the deal he had fought so hard to establish in 1973. (Correspondence, James Anderson, March 21, 1984). It is strange, and a little sad, that ten years of work leading to the publication of “Ferment in the Field” ended on such a note. Nevertheless, Gerbner’s sombre exit indicates what this episode, and these records, might say about enduring practices in media scholarship.

Discussion

Archived exchanges show that Gerbner's inauguration as *JOC* editor was beset with tensions over the publication's mission and operation. These quarrels had nothing to do with ideas, and everything to do with management. Gerbner was sure a robust international professional body, fit for matching expanding media challenges, needed to function as a business. His fractious conviction provoked tricky questions about profitability and ownership. The idea that Gerbner clashed with professional colleagues on a managerial level lends a new historical perspective that modifies our understanding of his place in disciplinary history.

This is because the *JOC/ASC* episode lends possible explanations to recent questions raised by research on trends in published communications studies. One theme in these projects has been how communications studies has struggled to marry cohesion and expansion. Since the 1970s, the discipline has endeavoured to build a solid scholarly "core" that embraces internationalisation. To some extent, a peer review journal industry that remains heavily US centred has advanced global research culture. Naturally, however, this has come at a cost, regarding diversity. The upshot is that the story of the *JOC*'s move to the ASC is a tale that puts people, events, conflicts and turning points into the equation of how communication studies remains rooted in the English-speaking world, despite the international aspirations of its practitioners. The Gerbner archive presents us with an "origin story" for the puzzle, hence justifying the idea that Gerbner exists as a valuable historical lens.

History proves that Gerbner was right in thinking that ASC's muscle would improve the visibility and coherence of media research. As Gerbner stepped down as *JOC* editor, Borgman and Reeves (1983) discovered that communication studies was hard to "see" as a discipline, because its scholars were less likely than peers in other fields to reference a common core of literature, published in a common core of respected publications. A strong global disciplinary dialogue was unlikely in circumstances where so many talented practitioners were unacquainted. Hence the desirability of a centralised publishing operation. Journals sponsored by organisations like ICA were vital, visibility wise, and everyone needed that visibility (Borgman and Reeves, 1983).

Twenty years later, research noted that ICA journals are major disciplinary power brokers, and that this hegemony carries many advantages. Bunz (2005) identified *JOC* as one in a suite of ICA and NCA journals that significantly affected success and failure in tenure cases. Ingeniously, her quantitative analysis of the relative productivity of differently ranked professors who publish in these journals indicates that *JOC* and the like exert more than an explicit form of power. Bunz argued that an ICA journal based tenure system worked in the favour of highly research active departments, and this system was in effect a valuable "training ground" for the highly productive professoriat of the future.

Lauf's study of the same year found that these same practices exacted an Anglo centric price. Analysis of forty-three communications journals from 1998-2002 discovered 86% of the content was authored by native English speakers. Lauf also noted correlations between the nationalities of scholars who published, and those who attended ICA conferences. Mass communication journals were the least international in focus in this period. Importantly, however, Lauf attributed this to no malice, but did wonder how far such imbalances could be attributed to structural matters and unspoken realities of scholarly life. In any case, Lauf noted the need for investigation into the social processes that contributed to the patterns he discovered; the genesis of the reality he noted was a puzzle that relied partly on greater knowledge about how scholarly work happened in practice.

Marton Demeter (2017) recently reached the same conclusion. Demeter's quantitative analysis of fifteen thousand articles from seventy-two communications journals between the years of 2013-2017 found broadly similar distributions of power, albeit with a diminishing load

of US based authors. Demeter believed this confirmed the need for deeper sociological investigations into the social conditions that cultivated particular forms of knowledge. It is here that a historical approach to the Gerbner archive connects with this theme.

Bearing these studies in mind, it appears that Gerbner's determination to forge a solid institutional base with real administrative skill and considerable financial muscle had enduring effects on the practice of media research. If current metrics debates note the predominance of US institutions, Gerbner archive holdings suggest that this hegemony was the product of not inconsiderable emotional labour, driven at least in part by a desire to provide a much-needed service. Perhaps more intriguingly, it shows that the Anglo centric centre of communications studies was considerably driven by an Eastern European scholar for whom English was a second language. Additionally, Gerbner presided over the growth of an internally conflicted hegemony that could have moved in a different direction, because of tensions within the centre. Finally, these tensions were exacerbated by the peculiar temporality of the US' academic calendar. Well-resourced as American universities are, it proved impossible to convene meetings outside the timelines of nine-month appointments. Hence, the archive confirms Lauf and Demeter's suspicion that easily discernible power imbalances were likely the issue of less overt, yet influential factors.

Conclusion

This paper has considered the purpose and methods of researching the personal correspondence of a leading scholar of the mass communications era. Examining scholarly biographies has been established as an engaging and productive activity (e.g. Barton, 2001; Lent, 1995; Neurath, 2001; Noelle-Neumann, 2004; Peters, 1996). The Gerbner archive represents a methodological juncture, as an instance where a community of scholars have unprecedented access to a comprehensive, organized data set that offers a glimpse of the interpersonal and organisational variables that built today's media studies.

Gerbner's renown as a pioneering scholar is established. That said, the research presented here pilots the idea that his archive reveals significant interpersonal intricacies that also contributed to the "state of the art" in contemporary critical media studies in less visible ways. The archive records pivotal administrative moments that inform questions about how global communication and media studies came to take a particular shape. Holdings show that *JOC*'s reputation has been built through sometimes bitter bureaucratic struggles between well-meaning scholars; concentrations of power in the peer reviewed research business surface from internal conflicts within the very organisation that so powerfully determines academic excellence. Specifically, evidence from Gerbner's records of his dealings with the *Journal of Communication* suggests that changed editorial and publication arrangements sparked a debate about the management of peer reviewed research. This debate shows a correlation between the power of US based arbiters of research excellence, and pragmatic, well-intentioned business decisions, made with the intention of giving international media scholars a fighting chance of winning an effective voice in debates on media and democracy.

The irony that it is possible to locate the power of English speaking American research in the ambitions of a Hungarian scholar speaks to the historical nuances behind the publishing patterns noted in recent studies. This demonstrates the potential value of historically informed approaches to the Gerbner resource, seeking to understand Gerbner as a "node" in the organization of media research at a crucial time, and seeking to complement conventional chronologies by paying close attention to the minutiae of daily cultural life.

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