

Preface

Since the Internet entered China in 1994, it has had a profound impact on Chinese social development as a method of communication, an industry, and a form of media. According to the 38th Report on the Status of Chinese Internet Development by CNNIC, up to June 2016, there are 710 million netizens in China, among which 660 million access to the Internet through mobile devices. The overall adoption rate of Internet in China is 51.7%, which is 3.1% higher than the world average and 8.1% higher than the Asian average. The Internet has become the main platform for the public to obtain information and voice their opinions, and for social communications and mobilization in work, study, and leisure. The Internet has not only fundamentally changed the ways of life for the individual netizens, but also facilitated the evolution of structures and characters of social groups, and eventually, the entire social structure.

In comparison with traditional media, new media, for example, the Internet, provide its audience with more information and more diverse communication channels. As a result, it also exists in a more complicated ecology. New media have brought more and more conveniences into people's lives, but have also, at the same time, brought in new issues such as relative shortage of contents with regard to diverse channels and a lack of high-quality resources in information abundance, which calls for further investigations and solutions. New media and its impact on society have quickly become the spotlight of attention of both the governments and the media, and have drawn researchers from different fields. Thanks to the rapid development of new media, education in journalism and communications has grown tremendously, with almost 500 colleges and universities now offering majors in this area. At the same time, such development has also posed challenges to the traditional ways of teaching journalism and communication.

Under these circumstances, we, as communication scholars, focus our research interest on Internet communications and start to study the development of new media in China and its impact on society and economy of China in this situation. In recent years, we have served as the principle investigators or collaborators on more than 20 research projects, published more than 10 books and more than 100 peer-reviewed journal articles in this area. To facilitate future collaborations, in

2016, we founded the Center of Online Information Communications and Social Development at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, intending to continue our research in new media and the development of Chinese society through the interdisciplinary approaches, including management science, communications and information science. We conduct both theoretical and applied research on both international and domestic issues, and have published papers on topics such as Internet ecology, information behavior in Internet space, and mass communications on the Internet.

New media and China are the result of a conversation with Dr. Jan Servaes at the Communication/Culture and the Sustainable Development Goals International Conference in Thailand in December 2015. We discussed the effect of new media on the world, and he recommended Springer to me to pursue a book project. In the next few months, we invited many top scholars in the field of communications in China to join the conversation and offer their understandings of the core topics of new media in China, which made up the content of this book.

For the publication of this book, we have many friends and colleagues to whom we owe our gratitude. Dr. Jan Servaes is of tremendous help in connecting us to Springer and accelerates the publication process. Dr. Ran Wei in School of Journalism and Mass Communications at University of South Carolina has offered help and feedback to my research on new media. We have obtained many of our research ideas from discussions with good friends and collaborators such as Dr. Menno de Jong, Chair of the Department of Communication Science at University of Twente and Dr. John Downey, Director of Centre for Research in Communication and Culture, School of Social, Political and Geographical Sciences at Loughborough University. We also thank researchers who were a part of this edited volume, including Dr. Peiren Shao, Dr. Manli Cheng, Dr. Xiaohong Wang, Dr. Fei Jiang, Baohua Zhou, Lu Wei, Yiqing Hu, Mingxin Zhang. My students Yan Dong, Tahmina Niazova, Mohammad Tipu Sultan, Martin Jovche, Le Wang, and Lili Wang have also participated in the editing process of this book. Mr. Vishal Daryanomel at Springer has been extremely meticulous over details of this publication. And finally, we thank all friends who have helped us in our research on new media.

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New Media and Chinese Society

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