Preface

Surpassing any other medium in penetration, usage, and impact, mobile has become the most popular and powerful medium for activities, ranging from mobile gaming to mobile governance. Equally superior to any other form of communication in penetration, usage, and impact, mobile has become the most popular and powerful communication, ranging from mobile journalism to mobile health communication.

Mobile has redefined space and presence (Fortunati, 2002), creating connected presence (Licopp, 2004), absent presence (Gergen, 2002), and modified presence and absence of individuals in social space (Fortunati, 2002). Enabling inter-personal and mobile-human interactions across time and space, mobile can be real, virtual, or mixed in its communication of all kinds. Dramatically and exponentially, mobile has been changing our world and our lives, redefining the way we live, the way we work, the way we communicate, and the way we interact with each other and with the world.

While mobile has surpassed desktops or laptops in many developed countries, it has been widely used as a replacement of desktops or laptops in developing or underdeveloped countries. Mobile has become a preferred medium for both individuals and institutions. Switching from “mobile, too” to “mobile first” or even “mobile only” strategies, governments, companies, institutions, and individuals around the world are all leveraging mobile to enhance their respective communications and performances.

Never-ending new forms, features, and functions of mobile keep arriving, shaping our present and future. For instance, as predicted by Stewart Wolpin (2014) on the eve of the 2014 Mobile World Congress, Bluetooth 4.0 will turn our room entry keyless and NFC will enable us to go ticketless and cashless. His other predictions include biosensors being able to monitor our health and fitness constantly, anytime, and anywhere, biometric security enabling us to get away with passwords or swiping patterns, wireless charging, and ubiquitous and automatic WiFi (Wolpin, 2014).

As the key driver of big data globally (Leonhard, 2014), mobile is playing a big role in bringing about big business worldwide. There is big business in mobile money and mobile banking. The big business also goes to mobile health, mobile travel, and mobile shopping. When it comes to mobile entertainment, mobile gaming, and mobile creative industries, the business is equally big. And big business also embraces mobile trade, mobile commerce, and mobile education.

As best described by Rich Ling in his foreword to this volume, mobile is going Lernaean. As a medium, mobile is constantly changing its forms, features, and functions. The moment the old dies, the new is born. Equally Lernaean as a communication, mobile replaces the old with the new the moment the old dies, be it a form, a feature, or a function of a communication. Naturally, the Lernaean nature of mobile has led to increasingly diversified studies of mobile media and communications in ever-changing areas across different disciplines.
STUDIES OF MOBILE

Mobile has been examined as a medium used in wide-ranging areas from different disciplinary perspectives. Key studies include, for instance, convergence, divergence, and the role of mobile media (Hjorth & Kim, 2005), mobile capacity to reconfigure users’ relation to actual and virtual space and their experience (Richardson, 2007), the niches of mobile media in space and time for news in the interstices (Dimmick, Feaster, & Hoplamazian, 2011), the relationship between location-aware mobile media and urban sociability (Daniel & de Souza e Silva, 2011), gamification and personal mobility in location-based social network (Frith, 2013), mobile social space and news sociality (Lee, 2013), and mobile Internet adoption and diffusion (Damásio, Henriques, Teixeira-Botelho, & Dias, 2013). As shown by these representative studies, mobile has been examined as a medium at the micro level from different disciplinary perspectives, such as designing, gamifications, social space, diffusion of innovations, social networking, location-based services, and niche theory.

Studies of mobile as a communication have examined, for instance, diffusion and success factors of mobile marketing (Scharl, Dickinger, & Murphy, 2005), the influence of mobile phones on the public sphere (Gordon, 2007), the impact of mobile multimedia journalism on news (Martyn, 2009), mobile news (Westlund, 2013), transnational mothering (Chib, Malik, Aricat, & Kadir, 2014), and the effects of smartphone use on engagement in civic discourse in China (Wei, 2014). As shown by these research articles, mobile has been examined as a communication in different but separate disciplines, such as journalism, advertising, marketing, health communication, governance, political communication, and family studies.

In studies of mobile published in the form of books, most scholars took various macro approaches in their examinations of mobile media and communications largely from different disciplinary approaches such as sociology, psychology, cultural studies, social networking, ethics, social policy, politics, and interaction between users and technologies. In their investigations of mobile as a medium, for instance, some scholars examined social and interactional aspects of the mobile age (Brown, Green, & Harper, 2001), the impact of mobile on society (Ling, 2004), global mobile media (Goggin, 2010), mobile media as cultural technologies and communication in the case of iPhone (Hjorth, Burgess, & Richardson, 2012), and mobile technology and place (Wilken & Goggin, 2013).

In the case of the studies of mobile as a communication, scholars have investigated, for instance, private talk and public performance in mobile communication (Katz & Aakhus, 2002), the global and the local in mobile communication (Nyffri, 2005), renegotiation of the social sphere in mobile communications (Ling & Pedersen, 2005), mobile communication in everyday life (Höflich & Hartmann, 2006), mobile communication and the transformation of social life (Katz, 2006), how mobile communication is reshaping social cohesion (Ling, 2010), dimensions of social policy in mobile communication (Katz, 2011), and applications and innovations for the worldwide mobile ecosystem (Bruck & Rao, 2013).

MOBILE STUDIES AS AN EMERGING FIELD

After more than a decade of investigating mobile, a new field has emerged. It was first called Mobile Communication Studies when the Center for Mobile Communication Studies was established in June 2004 at the School of Communication and Information, Rutgers University, USA. Under the leadership of Prof. James E. Katz, the center helped to develop mobile-related courses for the Department
of Communication and also provided advice for public and private sectors. After Prof. Katz moved to Boston University, he launched a center bearing the same name in the College of Communication, Boston University. Different in location, but same in principle, the center is designed to investigate “human uses, meanings, and co-construction that arise from” “the distribution by, or the exchange of, data from devices that can be moved physically with relative ease” from broad ranging disciplinary interests including those of psychology, sociology, philosophy, and political science (Center for Mobile Communication Studies, 2013).

Another milestone in the development of this emerging field is the launch of a new journal by SAGE, *Mobile Media & Communication*, co-edited by Rich Ling (IT University of Copenhagen, Denmark), Veronika Karnowski (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany), Thilo von Pape (University of Hohenheim, Germany), and Steve Jones (University of Illinois at Chicago, USA), which positions itself as investigating mobility in communication from interdisciplinary approaches. *Mobile Media & Communication* has become an icon of this emerging field being recognized worldwide.

As an emerging field, although it is often referred to as mobile communication studies (see Katz, 2008), mobile studies is a better term to accurately and fully describe the subjects, scope, and strategies of studies of mobile as a medium or a communication from interdisciplinary approaches. Mobile communication studies can be easily confused with studies of mobile communication from mobile computing science or design perspectives. For instance, in terms of academic journals from the science side, we have the *Journal of Mobile Communication*, the *International Journal of Mobile Communications, Personal and Ubiquitous Computing*, and the *International Journal of Mobile Computing and Multimedia Communications*. These journals largely publish studies of mobile from the designing and mobile computing perspectives.

First used by Kristóf Nyíri in 2007 in his book *Mobile Studies: Paradigms and Perspectives*, the term “mobile studies” was also used to name the global institute for mobile media and communication education, research, and services, which I founded in August 2012. The Institute’s name was changed to Mobile Studies International by mid-2013 to match its international orientation, operation, and reputation. In Glossary on the Website of Mobile Studies International, I define mobile studies as follows:

“Being interdisciplinary and applied, mobile studies examines forms, features, functions, processes, experiences, and effects of mobile as a medium or a communication used in different areas for different purposes. Major areas of mobile studies include, not limited to, the following: mobile experience, mobile content, mobile services, mobile users, mobile governance, mobile marketing, mobile advertising, mobile education, and mobile journalism (Xu, 2012).”

In my definition, mobile consists of two dimensions. One is the medium side and the other is the communication side. My definition not only identifies fundamental components of mobile studies but also summarizes its subjects, scope, and strategies.

As an emerging field, whether it is called mobile studies or mobile communication studies, it should be “integrally connected to the study of media and communication more broadly” (Campbell, 2013, p. 11), “putting people at the center of future mobile communication research” (Wei, 2013, p. 54), and “look[ing] to the changes in the technical, social, political, regulatory, and other forms of infrastructures” (Horst, 2013, p. 147).
MOBILE STUDIES AS AN EMERGING DISCIPLINE

In response to the needs of both the emerging field of mobile studies and the rising dominance of the mobile industry, there have been efforts to launch mobile studies as an emerging discipline in institutions of higher learning.

After being examined in the social sciences and the humanities for more than a decade, mobile has come of age as a new discipline with an increasing amount of scholarship accumulated over the years. The results of mobile studies from interdisciplinary approaches were summarized in Mobile Studies: Paradigms and Perspectives (Nyíri, 2007), which constitutes another milestone of the development of the new discipline.

As “the world’s first academic unit to focus solely on social aspects of mobile communication,” the Center for Mobile Communication Studies “will educate Boston University students, especially those of the College of Communication, to become the next generation of experts in understanding the role and consequences of mobile communication for human society in all its dimensions” (Center for Mobile Communication Studies, 2013).

At Mobile Studies International, one of its global initiatives is Mobile Campus, which is “designed to offer customized courses from different perspectives. First of its kind, Mobile Campus is also created to help hosting universities to develop mobile curriculum, to train instructors, and to co-organize Mobile Workshops” (Mobile Studies International, 2014). Another initiative is to co-run Institute for Mobile Studies in universities around the world. Among its goals are (1) promoting mobile studies as a discipline in institutions of higher education around the world and (2) staying productive, relevant, and excellent in mobile media and communication education, research, and services. Its major activities include: (1) co-conducting research projects related to mobile media and communications, (2) co-organizing international conferences on mobile studies, (3) co-running workshops for mobile professionals, (4) co-supervising PhD students in mobile studies, and (5) co-running graduate programs in mobile studies (Mobile Studies International, 2014).

As part of the curriculum development at Mobile Studies International, core courses for the graduate programs include (MS01) Mobile Foundations, (MS02) Mobile Theories, (MS03) Mobile Methods, (MS04) Mobile Creativity, (MS05) Mobile Economy, (MS06) Mobile Content, (MS07) Mobile Services, (MS08) Special Topics in Mobile Studies (Mobile Studies International, 2014).

INVESTIGATING MOBILE: INTERDISCIPLINARY WAY

Against the backdrop of mobile studies’ emergence as both a field and a discipline, seriously lacking are efforts to put mobile under interdisciplinary scrutiny, despite the increasing amount of scholarship on mobile media and communications. The interdisciplinary approaches are designed to get a holistic picture and a better understanding of ever-changing forms, features, functions, processes, experiences, and effects of mobile media and communications. As mobile has been used in increasingly different areas for different purposes, resulting in massive and complicated situations, no single discipline can do the job of fully and accurately describing, explaining, and/or predicting mobile uses, impacts, and implications.

The interdisciplinary approaches to mobile studies are being widely recognized but not widely practiced. For instance, according to the journal positioning statement of Mobile Media & Communication, the journal “is a peer-reviewed forum for international, interdisciplinary academic research on the
dynamic field of mobile media and communication.” “While the center of gravity lies in social sciences and humanities, the journal is open to research with technical, economic, and design aspects, provided they help to enlighten the social dimensions of mobile communication” (Ling, Karnowski, von Pape, & Jones, 2013).

Driven by interdisciplinary approaches to mobile studies, this volume investigates mobile locally, regionally, and globally. Its scrutiny covers more than 18 countries across 5 continents. Locally, it examines the impact of mobile on gender rituals in the Philippines, mobile location-based advertising and marketing in China, the role of mobile in bottom-up movements in Singapore, and the mobile engagement and empowerment among the youth in Malaysia. Its scrutiny also goes to mobile literacy in Australia, mobile engagement in UK, use of mobile as a news device in US, and the role of mobile in liberating young female Adults in Nigeria. Regionally, it investigates the use of smartphones among children in Denmark, Italy, Romania, UK, and Ireland. Under its microscope are the implications of mobile learning in the Arab world as well as mobile healthcare in BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). Its global investigations focus on implications of mobile location-based services on privacy, challenges, and implications of mobile usability, and the reconfiguration of social-spatial relations in mobile gaming.

In its investigation of mobile in different geographical, social, cultural, political, and economic environments, this volume focuses its scrutiny of mobile media and communications by combining mobile studies with education, gender studies, identity studies, political communication, family studies, games studies, computing studies, marketing, advertising, healthcare, and journalism. To make interdisciplinary investigation possible, I have invited 22 researchers and scholars from 10 countries across 5 continents with diversified academic interests and approaches in exploring and examining the social, political, and economic implications of mobile media and communications.

Topics investigated in this volume are (1) mobile literacy, (2) evaluation of instructional apps, (3) mobile learning in the Arab world, (4) digital mobilization and identity, (5) implications of mobile technologies on gender, (6) social consequences of mobile use on young female adults in intimate conflicts, (7) dynamics of transmedia pervasive narratives, (8) mobile use in youth engagement, (9) mobile bottom-up civil movement, (10) implications of smartphone use among children, (11) mobile parenting amid global mobility, (12) social-spatial relations in mobile gaming, (13) implications on privacy of mobile location-based-services, (14) mobile location-based advertising, (15) mobile location-based games in marketing campaigns, (16) implications of wireless technologies and mobile devices on healthcare, (17) mobile as a news device, and (18) mobile usability.

These topics were examined in different frameworks and concepts. For instance, they include the combination of different theoretical traditions of literacy with Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological model, merging educational theory with technology tools and human interactions, mobile learning theories, concepts of digital mobilization and identities, ritual and gender studies, mobilization, collective actions, domestication, mobile location-based services, social-spatial relations, diffusion of innovation theory, expectancy-value model, technology acceptance model, and mobile usability.

The results of investigating the above-listed 18 topics are presented in 18 chapters in 6 sections: (1) “Mobile Literacy and Learning” (Chapters 1-3), (2) “Mobile Identity and Ritual” (Chapters 4-6), (3) “Mobile Engagement and Movement” (Chapters 7-9), (4) “Mobile Children and Parenting” (Chapters 10-11), (5) “Mobile Advertising and Marketing” (Chapters 12-14), and (6) “Mobile Uses and Usability” (Chapters 15-18). Each section starts with an editor’s note to provide a preview of what is covered.
In the first chapter of the first section, “Mobile Literacy and Learning,” drawing on different theoretical traditions of literacy studies, Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological model, and the results of an ethnographic study conducted in Australia, Calvin Taylor constructed a model of mobile literacy, revealing both contextual factors and the structural impact of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic resources associated with mobile devices. In the second chapter, Janet Holland proposed a set of questions to evaluate instructional needs for mobile learning apps on the basis of the results of three pilot studies. In the third chapter, after reviewing mobile learning practices in the Arab world, Saleh Al-Shehri identified challenges faced by Arab students, educators, and researchers.

After examining definitions and dimensions of mobile identity and its relationship with digital mobilization, Katalin Fehér, author of Chapter 4, offered observations and insights on mobile identity. In Chapter 5, Cheryll Soriano explored the implications of mobile technologies on gender through the lens of gender rituals and highlighted the importance of culturally embedded rituals in shaping and understanding the mobile phone’s place in society. In Chapter 6, Gbenga Afolayan discussed the role of mobile communication technology in liberating young female adults from the perspective of socio-economic transformations and its wider transformative social impacts. These three chapters are grouped under “Mobile Identity and Ritual” in the second section.

In Chapter 7, Elizabeth Evans examined mobile engagement in relation to the technological and social dynamics of transmedia persuasive narratives. In Chapter 8, Joanne Lim discussed the use of mobile media by youth to put forward their own agency, to challenge the existing social and political structures, to strive for social change, and to construct their own identities. In Chapter 9, Carol Soon and Cheong Kah Shin identified digital bottom-up movements in Singapore as Singaporeans were increasingly leveraging mobile communication for seeking and sharing information, networking, and galvanizing support and mobilizing action for political and social issues. Chapters 7-9 fall under “Mobile Engagement and Movement” in the third section.

The fourth section, “Mobile Children and Parenting,” starts with the tenth chapter, in which Mascheroni Giovanna discussed implications of the use of smartphones amongst children in the context of changes in mobile technologies and the mobile Internet. It ends with the eleventh chapter, authored by Ma. Rosel San Pascual, who argued that mobile communication has become an imperative part of parenting for the survival and growth of transnational families in the age of increasing global mobility after investigating how parenting was done among the Filipino migrant mothers in Singapore.

After charting the trajectory of mobile location-based services applications in the mass market, Hee Jhee Jiow, author of Chapter 12, captured and discussed the social, political, and economic implications of mobile location-based services on privacy through a proposed framework of measuring user-position or device-position focus and alert-aware or active-aware applications. In Chapter 13, through examining a mobile location-based game launched by The North Face (TNF) in China, Elaine Zhao argued that it was important to understand both opportunities and challenges in utilising mobile location-based games for marketing purposes. In Chapter 14, Mei Wu and Yao Qi investigated the dilemmas faced by location-based advertising in China through a case study. The three chapters are placed under “Mobile Advertising and Marketing” in the fifth section.

In the final section, “Mobile Use and Usability,” Paul Martin proposed in Chapter 15 a model to examine the reconfiguration and contestation of social-spatial relations in mobile gaming. In Chapter 16, Xigen Li located significant predictors of mobile phone use as a news device. In Chapter 17, Florie Brizel offered her observations of and recommendations for mobile healthcare. In Chapter 18, Linda M. Gallant, Gloria Boone, and Christopher S. LaRoche examined challenges and implications of mobile us-
ability in their critical investigation of usability testing methods, contextual complexity, audio interfaces, eye and hands-free interactions, augmented reality, and recommendation systems.

This volume serves the needs of mobile practitioners, policymakers, professors, and students around the world for updates and insights on the social, political, and economic implications of mobile media and communications. Shedding light on the changes, challenges, and chances in the mobile world, this volume contributes to the mobile world by introducing a model for studying mobile literacy, a model for investigating socio-spatial reconfigurations in mobile gaming, an evaluation instrument for mobile leaning apps, and predication of mobile use as a news device. More contributions include insights on digital mobilization and identity, the interaction between gender rituals and mobile technologies, the role of mobile in liberating young adults in intimate conflicts, implications of mobile location-based services on privacy, audience engagement in a mobile environment, civil movement via mobile, domestication of smartphone among children, and mobile parenting. Further contributions lie in insightful observations and recommendations on mobile location-based marketing, advertising, and healthcare.

Serving as a steppingstone, this volume invites more global collaborative efforts in locating further social, political, and economic implications of mobile media and communications around the world.

Xiaoge Xu
The University of Nottingham Ningbo China, China

REFERENCES


