Growing income inequalities, rising unemployment rates, unprecedented and new challenges to the environment brought about through human activity, and increasing vulnerability of the poor amid global economic and financial crises, these are some of the global trends we are living amidst. In the backdrop of these global trends, what role are communication scholars and practitioners to play?

That the existing way of doing things has to change and change quickly is an observation that is now being made by noted social scientists from Joseph Stiglitz to Paul Krugman to Amartya Sen. The role of communication in this social change process is salient, in shaping the processes of democratic decision-making and participation that will determine the policies that constitute our lived experiences now and for the generations to come. Communication is also integral to creating spaces of access to vital information on complex policies that are going to have tremendous effect on societies.

In the Department of Communications and New Media, we take this question of communication for social change seriously. To communicate for social change is to explore the role communication can play in nurturing spaces for diverse voices to be recognized and seriously taken into account. The work conducted by our faculty and our students pays theoretical attention to the interplay of communication, new technologies, and opportunities for global social change, especially to the ways in which communication excludes certain possibilities and how these exclusions can be addressed so spaces can be built for diverse actors.

Our faculty are some of the leading global thinkers on the role of new communication technologies in society. For instance, Associate Professor Sun Sun Lim’s research explores the adoption and appropriation of new media among youths-at-risk and offers invaluable insights about the ways in which technologies are embodied in the lives of those at the margins of networked societies. Dr. Lim delivered an opening plenary at the International Communication Association (ICA) titled “Young people and communication technologies: Emerging challenges in generational analysis.”

Highlighting the salience of social change in the realm of democratizing science, Dr. Denisa Kera conducted ethnographic research with citizen science communities across Asia, describing and examining the ways in which these communities collaborate to produce science. Dr. Kera’s work offers critical pathways for considering how a processes of scientific creation and production can be opened up to participation of citizens in transparent, collaborative, and creative ways.

The social change theme is also highlighted in the work of Dr. Iccha Basnyat. Working with the culture-centered approach, Dr. Basnyat explores the lived experiences and narratives of street sex workers in Nepal, allowing us to listen to the voices of street sex workers who have otherwise been erased from the discursive spaces of policy formulation and program implementation.

For many CNM researchers, fieldwork at sites of social change is a defining feature. At the Center for Culture-Centered Approach to Research and Evaluation (CARE), we launched two successful national level campaigns this year directed at raising awareness about the health, wellbeing and dignity of migrant workers in Singapore. The “Respect Our Rights” campaign on the dignity of domestic work was highlighted as a Starhub case study, with the social...
media component of the campaign reaching 1,980,245 impressions. In other work, through locally grounded processes of social change, the CARE team has co-created community cultural repositories for folk performances that nurture health and wellbeing in Chinese villages, built community centers for exercise, performance and play in rural India, and developed communication campaigns addressing the heart health risks experienced by women in Singapore. CARE has produced two documentaries on migration and health that have received national and global attention.

Distinguished visiting scholars such as the NUSS Professor Charles Briggs and Lim Chong Yah Professor Barry Wellman opened up spaces for new conversations on health and communication inequalities and network societies respectively.

The theme of communicating social change from the arena of fieldwork and research collaborations to the classroom with students often extends beyond learning about communication through projects immersed in the community.

CNM also was at the forefront of collaborating with the “Inconvenient Questions” (IQ) platform to create engaged online conversations on politics, society, culture and economics in Singapore. Through a module titled “Communication and Public Engagement,” students participated in research, writing, editorial, production and content management work in collaboration with the IQ team.

Our alums continue to embody the CNM tradition of creating communication for social change and we are proud of the excellent ways in which they contribute to society. Jemima Ooi’s work in war-torn countries and Liyana Sulaiman’s work with empowering women in science and technology are great examples of communication for social change.

We are looking forward in the coming year to ongoing work on communication for social change. As we expand our curriculum, we will continue to explore the ways in which the Department can continue to play its path breaking role in shaping the nature of communication and design practice.

With this emphasis on social change and learning by doing, the Department continues to maintain a strong global presence, serving valuable stewardship role for communication and mass media programs across Asia. As we transition into the Asian century, we see our role as integral to shaping the conversation on Asian modernities, grounded in the values of transparency, participation, and justice.

I welcome you to read this magazine with a spirit of excitement and curiosity. In the coming decade, communication will be at the forefront of the world we will envision together. The philosopher Martin Buber draws our attention to the powerful role of communication as dialogue in fostering opportunities for listening. Please join us in a dialogue on imagining the important role communication will play in creating spaces for global listening, especially to those voices at the margins that are drowned out by the powerful voices of the elite circulated through paid-for public relations and communication campaigns. The role of communication in committing to the voice of truth is more important than never before!

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]
On the cover: Touching Lives

In 2014, when a group of CNM students initiated The Swan Project as part of their Social Change module, they had no inkling how many lives they would impact. The students raised about $7,300 for Singapore’s first transgender shelter. They also created and maintained a successful blog about the lives of transgender men and women, thus sharing their remarkable stories with other Singaporeans (see Page 4-5).

The cover photograph shows the open palm of a transgender woman. We invite readers to join CNM in celebrating the differences that exist in society, and reaching out our hands in solidarity for social change.

Photograph by Lisabelle Tay
https://lisabelletay.exposure.co

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IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES IN SINGAPORE / INVESTING IN DANCE AS MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION
CNM was ranked best in Asia for Communication and Media studies according to the latest Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) University Rankings By Subject, which was released in April this year.

This is the second year running that the department took top place in Asia in the subject rankings. In 2013, it shared second place with the University of Hong Kong.

The QS World University Rankings by Subject highlights the world’s leading institutions in individual subject areas, covering 36 academic disciplines. The rankings are based on global surveys of academics and graduate employers, as well as research citations data. In 2015, the opinions of 85,062 academics, 41,910 employers along with analysis of 17.3 million research papers and over 100 million citations formed the results of the rankings.

Said CNM Head Prof Mohan J. Dutta, “Our global rankings reflect our continued commitment to leading the global conversation on communication, design and new media technologies. Our students, alum, and faculty engage the communication and creative industries in ongoing conversations on sustainable practices, innovations, and ethical practices. The strong CNM tradition of interactions with civil society, industry and activist communities fosters an interdisciplinary space for dialogues on cross-cutting trends in new media and design, and the role of communication theory in generating social impact.

“I look forward to our continued global presence as a leader grounded in Asia, serving as a generative space for imaginations of communication rooted in Asian traditions, values, and aspirations.”

Fourth-year CNM major Dexter Tay Hai Hong has opted to become a trailblazer by being the first CNM major to pursue a concurrent Masters in Project Management.

By Lee Kai Shun

Fourth-year CNM major Dexter Tay Hai Hong has opted to become a trailblazer by being the first CNM major to pursue a concurrent Masters in Project Management.

His unusual choice of Masters for a CNM student marks the first time that the School of Design and Environment (SDE) and the CNM department are offering a concurrent degree programme.

Tay, an entrepreneur-cum-scholar with the Land Transport Authority (LTA), will take night classes for the one-year Masters programme while he completes his final undergraduate semester during the day.

“A formal education in project management will help me avoid critical errors when managing complex projects as a student entrepreneur and future intrapreneur in LTA. It is also a good follow up from what I have learnt in CNM, where we developed into well-rounded and highly versatile individuals,” Tay said.

Tay expects the knowledge learnt from CNM and SDE to widen his exposure towards problem-solving and management, which will help him in his future career with LTA.

He is also breaking new ground in other areas. After a holiday in Japan, when he and his friends had to contend with sopping wet shoes from the rainy weather, he designed a rapid shoe-dryer to quickly dry shoes of any material in merely 30 minutes. He developed his design with a $10,000 grant from NUS, and is now seeking angel investors for his start-up company kutsuDRY.
Student project gives voice to invisible community

By He Yining & Benjamin Chua

When Iris* (name has been changed) was 20, she was kicked out of her home after her only family – her grandmother – died. With no formal education qualifications and nowhere to stay, Iris took up sex work for a living. Iris is transgender, and unfortunately, her story is not unique within the trans community.

An invisible community in Singapore, transwomen and transmen face difficulties and life circumstances that many people do not perceive or understand. To shed light on the stories and lives of the trans community, seven CNM students and alumni embarked on The Swan Project – a social change movement aiming to promote understanding and awareness of transgender individuals in Singapore.

Through a blog, they presented resources, information and stories for both trans people looking for solidarity and the general public looking for information.

The team chose the swan as a symbol of transformation, beauty, fluidity, love, grace and purity. Further, the swan in their logo, poised and ready for flight, symbolises empowerment and strength.

The Swan Project began as a research project in Semester I of AY2014/2015, under the honours module NM4230 Communication for Social Change. The students interviewed stakeholders in the trans community including trans people themselves, their loved ones, trans-friendly organisational partners and medical professionals.

Looking to extend their research project into its implementation phase, the students teamed up with Dr Leanne Chang in an Independent Study Module the following semester to bring to life one of their proposed solutions – raising funds for The T Project to help transwomen survive in the Singapore society.

The T Project is a social cause committed to empowering the transgender community in Singapore, and was founded in 2014 by June Chua, a transwoman. The letter T is short for transgender people.

JIA by The Swan Project

This February, The Swan Project launched a fundraising campaign, JIA (which means ‘home’ in Mandarin), to support The T Project’s shelter for trans people, the first of such shelters in Singapore. The shelter currently houses three transwomen.

By May, when the campaign ended, the project had raised $7,311.90.

The JIA campaign’s flagship event was a 3-day bazaar in March held at the NUS Science foyer. At its own booth, the team sold tote bags and postcards specially designed for the campaign, and held a photography exhibition showcasing the lives and stories of transwomen. Outreach events were also held at various locations around NUS including the Yale-NUS campus and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.
The exhibition and merchandise sales were also held in different satellite events – such as AWARE’s International Women's Day celebrations, Free Community Church outreach and Pink Dot – where the students felt they could directly reach out to audiences who would listen and take action to help trans people.

Reach was extended via social media such as blogs, Facebook and YouTube, where the students put their new media engagement skills to the test. The social media campaign was covered by local online news networks such as The Online Citizen.

The Facebook posts featured snippets of the photo exhibit, videos featuring residents of the shelter and other relevant content that urged Facebook fans to become trans allies. An introductory YouTube video to The T Project saw more than 8,000 views on Facebook while the page garnered more than 600 ‘Likes’.

Overall, the campaign videos achieved 27,872 hits, more than 3,400 post clicks and 412 comments across all other pages and personal timelines.

Even after the campaign, the students continued to maintain the informative blog that was created at the initial phase of the project.

Pink Dot

The Swan Project team volunteered at this year’s Pink Dot rally on June 13, rallying for their cause and helping to promote The T Project and its efforts to empower transgender individuals. Pink Dot SG, which began in 2009, is a non-profit movement that advocates the freedom to love, promoting openness and acceptance towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Singaporeans.

What’s next

As of yet, concrete succession plans are still not known. However, discussions are in place concerning ways to make the project more sustainable, including talks of handing it over to a new batch of students to continue making a difference. One thing is clear: what started out as a class project blossomed into something far larger – one that truly made a social change.

To follow the project, check out: https://swanprojectsg.wordpress.com and JIA by The Swan Project on Facebook.
The wind was blasting at me at over 40kmph. The deadly combination of lack of water, high altitude, and sulphur fumes started to take a toll on me. Despite the hostile conditions, I signalled excitedly to my best friend, Ashok, to head towards me. There was no higher ground for me to climb; I had reached the 5,671m-high summit of Asia’s highest volcano, Mt Damavand, in Iran.

In 2014, my friend Ashok and I organised the first Heart2Climb campaign to scale heights for a social cause, raising over $50,000 for the Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD) by completing a 220km Himalayan trek. Based on the success of that campaign, we decided to do it again in 2015, this time for the Children’s Cancer Foundation (CCF).

Interacting with the children from CCF is an eye-opening experience. For many of us, it is easy to grumble and complain about minor difficulties we face. But these children remain cheerful and good-natured, even as they deal with their daily routines of painful chemotherapy sessions, reactions to different medicines, and the challenges of restricted diets. Their tenacity inspired us to engage in this new campaign, and it was also an important reminder as we dealt with the many difficulties of fund-raising and the climb itself.

Raising funds for our cause proved to be as difficult as it was in 2014. Despite the media attention and accolades lavished upon us, this unfortunately did not translate into funds. We learnt to be more creative and thick-skinned in sourcing for donations. In the face of countless rejections, we soldiered on, often to the detriment of our studies, families, and training time to prepare for the climb. Eventually, we pulled through and exceeded our target of $50,000 before we left for our climb.

The mountain was equally challenging. We reached Iran in the midst of an unusually warm summer where the temperature at ground level was a sweltering 48 degrees, but plummeted to sub-zero at the summit. During the climb, we also had to make a crucial decision of whether to continue as we were running out water. Against these odds, Ashok and I managed to conquer Mt Damavand in just 36 hours; a climb that usually takes up to 5 days. We had done it. And there was much left to be done.

We descended from Mt Damavand exhausted and dehydrated. I had a fractured hand and was bleeding all over from cuts inflicted by numerous falls incurred during the descent. My bones and injuries would heal. What would remain from my journey would be a sense of fulfilment, a symbol of hope for the children at CCF, and a source of inspiration for other youths.

Scaling Asia’s highest volcano for children with cancer

Text and photographs by Ashik Ashokan

Ashik (right) standing proud with the Heart2Climb flag at the summit of Mt Damavand (5671m), Asia’s highest volcano.

Ashik (left) and Ashok with the inspiring children at CCF.

Spending some alone time at 4200m on Mt Damavand, facing the majestic Alborz range and mentally preparing for the summit push the next day.
CNM Society adds zest to students’ campus life

By Ong Jie Wei, Photography by CNM Society

The Society is the student body that represents CNM students, and aims to make the campus experience of CNM majors more vibrant and meaningful. To that end, the society works with the department to collect student feedback, and organises various events for students.

Industry visits

We recognise that exposure to the media industry is pertinent to students who are still unsure about their intended career paths, thus the CNM Society organised three student visits to design companies Fixx and Minitheory, influencer marketing company Gushcloud, and renowned PR agency Waggener Edstrom. The visits allowed students to network with media professionals, and gain insights into the everyday work processes and organisational culture of media companies.

Welfare pack giveaways

This academic year, the CNM Society held two giveaways of welfare packs containing an array of snacks, vouchers, stationery and exclusively designed CNM stickers to encourage and cheer CNM students on for the final examinations.

CNM bazaar

The annual CNM bazaar was held from 26 to 27 March 2015 at the Central Forum. The purpose of the yearly bazaar is to raise funds for upcoming the society’s projects and events, such as the welfare pack giveaway. A total of 14 vendors participated in the bazaar selling goods ranging from mobile phone accessories to fashion apparels.

Adobe workshops

To complement theoretical knowledge that students acquire from reading CNM modules, the CNM Society conducts short courses to impart basic designing skills, as well as provide them with hands-on learning experience in using design softwares such as Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, and Sublime Text 3.

CNM identity tee

To foster a stronger identity, the CNM Society designed a minimalistic yet versatile tee for the CNM staff and students to uphold their #CNMPride in style. With our iconic major clearly stated at the front, and a cheeky tagline that plays on ‘social media’ at the back, the tee represents our dynamic culture at its best.
CNM graduate students are involved in a range of research projects that enable social change or seek to identify and understand mechanisms underlying social change forces.

Seeking to understand how the Umbrella Movement was driven

By Pauline Luk and Tan Ee Lyn

On September 28, 2014, tens of thousands of people in Hong Kong converged to occupy major thoroughfares in three commercial districts to demand for a full direct election of their leader in a civil disobedience movement that the world now calls the Umbrella Movement.

Authorities in Hong Kong and Beijing quickly denounced the occupation as “illegal” and a “violation of the rule of law”, and police used pepper spray and fired tear gas to try to disperse the crowds. However, the protestors stood their ground, using umbrellas to defend themselves. For more than 70 days, the people stayed in their positions, living in tents they pitched, and building blockades to keep out the authorities.

Though the movement ended with the authorities refusing to give in to protestors’ demands, the movement caused deep fissures in Hong Kong society. While it had its supporters, many were against it and feared upsetting the Chinese leadership.

Using an online survey, this study looked into how the movement was driven in those 70 days and beyond by an intensive use of traditional and social media. We sought to investigate how people understand and negotiate their identities by using media in a campaign for social change. We also sought to develop a theoretical lens for understanding the communicative processes in such a campaign.

This research was featured at Random Blends, the department’s annual exhibition showcasing noteworthy work done in CNM.

Is music piracy a contagious habit?

By Joy Ng

What if habits are contagious? What if your behaviour is partly caused by other’s habits? It is both a scary, yet intriguing thought, that you may have less control of your behaviour than you think. This was the idea behind my research on online music piracy behaviour. While many will be quick to argue that online piracy behaviour is a conscious behaviour that is performed after weighing the pros and cons (e.g. pirating music is free and convenient), another school of thought calls for behavioural theories to consider the duality of information processing – the conscious rationalising and the non-conscious inner drives such as habits.

More specifically, piracy habit is a stimulus-response link established and reinforced by rewards. Once the behaviour is well ingrained in procedural memory through repeated and successful performance in response to a stimulus, it will be auto-triggered independent of the reward that was once used to reinforce stimulus and response. To put it simply, if you have consumed Coke a few times when you are thirsty (and the Coke has indeed satisfied your thirst), your procedural memory will make you choose Coke and not other drinks when the next thirst moment cues in. You do not consciously think about your decision anymore. That is, if we were to see music pirating as a habit, it is easier to understand why the industry has failed to eradicate piracy behaviour despite various measures.

To make the situation more complex, it appears that the piracy habit may be contagious. Prominent researchers such as Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler have found that obesity, smoking, happiness, and loneliness can spread through the hidden influence of social networks by three degrees. That would mean spreading from you to your friends, to friend’s friends, and friends of friend’s friends.

An exploratory survey was conducted with a clique of friends in a netball club. Through network visualisation, the data shows that their music piracy habit is associated with how close friendship networks were formulated. This suggests that the piracy habit may indeed spread within a network. Substantive work still needs to be done before there is a conclusive answer to the habitual proposition.
Open source diet and DIY nutritionism

**By Marketa Dolejsova**

The flow of global food exports and imports renders our everyday engagements with food opaque and estranged. Consumers feel uncertain about what ends up on their plates and become susceptible to expert advice provided by food companies’ PR managers, professional dietitians, and increasingly also a growing number of “citizen nutritionists”, who share their dietary experiences online.

This study followed groups of consumers who replaced their meals with a collaboratively designed open source meal called ‘Soylent’. This powdered-food substitute is made of a balanced ratio of macro and micronutrients, which should fully cover one’s daily nutrition intake. Recommendations on the design of soylent recipes are shared by an active online community of Soylent followers that represents a decentralised model of DIY (Do It Yourself) production of food sources and related nutritional knowledge. The Soylent diet thereby extends the existing nutritional discourse with new ontological as well as epistemological facets.

Through an online survey and live interviews with soylent dieters, the study sought to find out how the open source

Enabling migrant workers to share family stories

**By Cheong Kakit**

The recording and sharing of family stories remains an important part of what it means to be a “family”. While there is prior research into supporting storytelling for families living apart, there remains a gap in understanding and supporting storytelling for migrant workers.

This realisation gave birth to the Kwento (which means story in Tagalog) project. It adopts a participatory approach to investigate how technologies can be designed for domestic helpers. Nine domestic helpers were recruited and divided into three design teams. As a result of the design sessions, the design teams were able to conceptualize and prototype Kwento, a mobile application that uses prompts to encourage helpers to reflect upon their personal experiences.

The research, by Cheong Kakit and Assistant Professor Alex Mitchell, is supported by the Keio-NUS CUTE Center and will be presented at the International Conference on Human-Computer Interaction (INTERACT) 2015 in September.

How unwed mums in China enact agency within social constraints

**By Zhao Xiaoman**

The popularization of the Internet, especially the use of online forums or BBS (bulletin board system), has provided new opportunities for unwed mothers to enact their agency and construct their gender subjectivity within specific social and material limits. The study’s principal focus was to find out how unwed mothers in China, with the help of technology, strategize within a set of concrete constraints to negotiate points of tension between regulatory control and their own interests, as well as between traditional gender expectations and personal desire. By focusing on the interplay between systemic conditions and individual agency, the study aims to illuminate unwed mothers’ socio-technical practices, or the manner in which online forums are integrated into their lives, while creating new spaces for them to enact agency within specific social and material constraints.
Inter[ ]: Blending local culture with global technology

By Esther Ng

The Communication & New Media department’s art and design showcase last year focused on raising awareness of societal issues via interactive installations. But tasteful Singapore culture was the flavour du jour at this year’s Random Blends, held on April 4-6 at the Singapore ArtScience Museum.

Paying homage to the nation’s upcoming golden jubilee, the CNM classes organising Random Blends curated exhibits that celebrated all things Singapore. They also weaved lively technology into the exhibition, stitching the historical and the modern to form a seamless timeline of Singapore’s heritage.

Mr. Gabriel Lim, Chief Executive Officer, Media Development Authority, and Mr. Michael Lee, local-born internationally acclaimed artist-curator and founder of art gallery Studio Bibliothèque, graced the Random Blends 2015 opening launch as the Guest of Honour and Special Guest respectively. The three-day exhibition, themed Inter (_____) (pronounced “InterSpace”) was held in line with NUS’ 110th anniversary. It featured over 30 works by CNM students and saw an increased turnout of more than 900 visitors this year, with more than 300 streaming in on the opening day.

Local experiences mashed With interactive technology

Many an exhibit packaged locally inspired art and design in the form of digital, screen-based technology. Visitors had the chance to try curated games such as “Cruise Control”, which saw users navigating a car through busy roads regulated by the city’s Electronic Road Pricing system. Application prototype Jalan Jalan, which incorporated the recently unveiled Google Cardboard virtual reality tool to unite users with the stories of kampong residents, was particularly well received among judges scoring the exhibits. The judges included CNM Head, Prof. Mohan Dutta, Mr. Gabriel Lim, Mr. Michael Lee, CNM’s Associate Prof. Lim Sun Sun who is also the Assistant Dean (Research), and CNM Society president, John Ng.

Jalan Jalan creators Erfi Azhar, Goh Koon How, Suneil Kamath, Yeo Zhi Qi and Chan Yu Qing said, “We wanted this prototype to present a unique mode of storytelling, in which the user is intimately fused with his immediate surroundings. Today’s increasingly dynamic technological landscape means that there are now tools that can bring this idea to life. By allowing a more immersive experience that extends to directly communicating with one’s environment rather than simply becoming exposed to it, we hoped to translate fading kampong stories, an integral part of Singapore’s heritage, into a narrative that is still relevant.”

For the first time, this year’s Random Blends installation also utilised iBeacon estimates – Bluetooth-based location-aware technology – to heighten visitor interactivity with both the exhibits and each other. A smart music matrix...
named “Interfuse” tracked visitor movement via their Bluetooth-enabled mobile phones, collating the captured data as input for an interactive sound installation and turning visitors into live jukeboxes. Visitors were able to view, rate and comment on each exhibit directly with a downloaded mobile application as well.

Wong Hui Shan, a visitor to the exhibition, said, “The digital element to the showcase was a pleasant surprise – the various technology employed was fascinating from an outsider’s point of view, and I found myself immersed during my hands-on experience with the simple yet interactive and thought-provoking, locally reminiscent games.”

Other exhibits included art comics, infographics, board games and photography series. View, one of the photo exhibits at Random Blends 2015, is a collection of images shot on 35mm film that immortalised the perspectives of individuals on the street. Huang Yanling, the artist behind the collection, said, “The piece aims to provoke viewers into feeling a sense of vicariousness, a kind of introjection to recognise elements of themselves in the people in the images. Simultaneously, they are encouraged to see the bigger picture and acknowledge their surroundings, which they may have previously neglected or even lamented about.”

Chasing ambitions with continual learning and development

In their speeches, both Mr. Gabriel Lim and Mr. Michael Lee advocated the pursuit of one’s dreams, supplemented by lifelong learning and smart progress. Mr. Gabriel Lim encouraged students to “maximise [their] potential and interests to chase [their] dreams”.

He added: “In the current ever-changing landscape… it is the students of today and the to-be leaders of tomorrow who will manufacture more opportunities to transform Singapore into a bustling, vibrant technological hub.”

Mr. Michael Lee also reminded visitors and students to uphold the importance of continual introspection and self-care in the artistic growth process.

“Self-care fuels our cogs; maintaining our health and well-being is as much a priority as developing our skills,” he said. “Even if we are focusing on our work, precisely because we want to do good work, we need to keep ourselves in our best condition so that we can continue to conquer daily tasks, milestones and challenges.”

Fun facts

- Random Blends 2015 is the annual exhibition’s seventh installation, although it is the first to directly honour Singapore’s birthday.
- It is the third time that Random Blends has collaborated with the ArtScience Museum.
- ‘Interfuse’, the fascinating music matrix, was a brainchild of crowdsourcing. The idea arose from a midterm group project on the use of estimotes to create an interactive user experience, which was undertaken by the NM4226 HCI and Interactive Arts/Entertainment Design class.
- Given the heightened scale of the exhibition this year, the installations took eight full hours at the ArtScience Museum to set up – almost one entire day.
- After children in tow with their caregivers became a surprisingly large cohort of guests at last year’s event, this year’s organising team decided to cater activities specifically for them.
- One such activity arising was a dedicated area for children to doodle Singapore-related artwork on pre-collected, empty milk cartons. 150 cartons were collected in all. Many colourful images of Singapore’s skyline, and founding father Lee Kuan Yew’s likeness, were seen sketched on these cartons.

A child leaves his mark on a milk carton, and so contributes to an exhibit of 150 cartons.
Lately, there is a lot of talk about “flipped classrooms”. For many, this means that students are assigned to watch a video of a lecture before attending a teacher-led session. The lecturer then engages the students in different kinds of activities rather than lecturing to them in person.

But the essence of a flipped classroom is that students prepare in advance for the teacher-guided session. And then, rather than attending a lecture, they attend a session where they actively deepen and apply what they learned during their preparation. Today’s students may be so used to slide-based lectures which summarize and explain the week’s readings that they do not realize the description of a flipped classroom above is the way education has been conducted for thousands of years.

The differences include the media for class preparation (e.g., videos, interactive web sites), the size and reach of the classes, and, crucially, the model of how learning occurs.

Similar to educational experiments elsewhere, CNM has been exploring different variations of the traditional lecture and module structure. Some modules are using online tutorials, some are doing different variations of the flipped classroom, some will be in the form of MOOCs (massive open online courses), and some are exploring different ways to encourage and facilitate peer instruction.

Many discussions of these innovations focus on the use of new technologies. But equally important are innovations in our understanding of learning itself. For example, although modules always have some form of student-student interaction, one innovation in recent years is “peer instruction”. This involves students who understand confusing material discussing and explaining the material with students who do not. Students who have recently mastered the material are more likely to remember what was confusing -- and are able to explain the concepts in terms that are more meaningful to their peers.

So, students in CNM modules are increasingly beginning to experience situations in which they are being asked to discuss more than their opinions of the material, but to actually help each other understand it. Of course, this approach raises many new challenges in terms of how to structure modules, how to identify fundamental student confusions, and how to provide students with appropriate guidance and feedback. But when done well, the benefits of peer instruction are an important complement to other educational innovations.

The future of formal education is likely to involve near-universal online access, artificial intelligence, new forms of adaptive educational content, and new models of learning. The resulting change will be profound: increased use of automated instruction and evaluation, online human-human collaboration, and, ultimately, online human-AI interaction. And, in ways we are only beginning to imagine, new roles for human teachers.

Students who wish that teachers would just continue to lecture should realize that they are living in a time of technological and pedagogical transition. They should not be surprised if their children find the university of today as technologically and pedagogically old-fashioned as they find the idea of repeating after a teacher who is asking students to flip through their textbooks in a one-room schoolhouse.
Armed with numerous study-abroad opportunities and growing wanderlust, more CNM students now seek to immerse themselves in diverse cultures, often experiencing exotic languages in the process. Here’s one language to add to their bucket list that they can tick off on campus: JavaScript.

Associate Professor Lonce Wyse, who believes that the basic ability to make web media should be akin to writing, will in this semester institute CNM courses that focus on media creation – via digital languages such as Javascript, HTML and CSS.

But it’s not simply about learning to count from one to five. Since Prof. Wyse believes that code is a tool, not an end in itself, he will in his courses provide code templates only as a starting point. More importantly, he aims to familiarise students with the web ecosystem that feeds creative online content.

One of his two newly introduced courses adopts a flipped classroom methodology, where students will watch online video lectures and discuss their insights in offline tutorials, while the other is a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) – where all learning occurs online in an open-access, Web-based habitat.

The MOOC, titled “Fundamental Web Concepts For Making Browser-based Media Artwork”, allows people from all over the world to access course materials and conduct their own learning. To film the online course materials, Prof. Wyse travelled to Los Angeles, the headquarters of a new arts-oriented MOOC platform company, Kadenze. However, precisely due to the MOOC’s geographic flexibility, students in the different locales will not be able to reap the benefits of working with peers in a real-life environment.

The flipped classroom approach, applied to Prof. Wyse’s new module Computational Media Literacy (NM2207), solves this problem. The course, which focuses on more general media creation, allows students to apply their online lessons to interactive hands-on activities. Since the ultimate goal is for students to collaborate to develop the best media content possible, the challenge then is to set up situations in which this happens naturally. While Prof. Wyse and other tutors will be present to guide the class, the students will be largely teaching each other.

Is there a market here for such independent and peer-led learning? It appears so. The flipped classroom methodology has been introduced by, among others, CNM Profs Dr. Lim Sun Sun (NM2302, NM2209), Dr. Kevin McGee (NM2212), and Dr. Denisa Kera (NM3205). It has proved extremely successful, with students complimenting the rich experience.

Certainly, students have a new, pivotal responsibility to take control of their own learning. Should they neglect the course materials, they would likely be unable to engage deeply with the learn-by-doing tutorial that follows.

One of the main challenges for teachers of large modules is to identify and address fundamental student misconceptions about the material. Unlike standard lectures, it is easier to identify potentially confused students in courses adopting a flipped classroom style, but harder with MOOCs. So, in each case, this requires teachers to think differently and develop their large modules in different ways.

Such quirks have to be ironed out before the flipped classroom and MOOC approaches can truly revolutionise the education landscape. But in the meantime, students can start to acquaint themselves with the coding and web-based culture that is the lifeblood of today’s new media. Fluency in such a culture will reward them in the computer civilisation.

By Esther Ng

Flipping conventions
The CNM department has grown steadily over the years, with new and exciting modules introduced yearly. In AY2014/2015, the department increased its commitment to communication and social change with modules such as NM4230, Communication for Social Change, taught by Dr. Leanne Chang. This module was offered as a special topic some years back, but returned as a full-fledged module in Semester 1 of this academic year.

Making social change with a participatory approach

This class paid strong attention to participatory communication, and in-class discussions challenged the traditional communication approaches in development, which are based on modernisation theories and information-persuasion strategies largely used by governments and industrial sectors.

In a bid to take a step towards communication for social change, students were challenged to create community-based development projects, and to apply communication principles and theories in them. Furthermore, these projects were required to employ the participatory approach.

Bent on making meaningful social impact, project teams chose different subaltern groups to focus on, and set out to speak with at least 15 individuals from the respective groups chosen. These efforts at primary research helped tease out underlying problems the groups faced, and aided in forming more directed solutions.

The teams chose to focus on elderly hawker centre cleaners, elderly people who live alone, migrant workers, at-risk youths, transgender individuals, and caregivers of persons with Down Syndrome.

One of the many meaningful and interesting solutions proposed was to reach out to at-risk youths through sports. The teams that met with elderly hawker centre cleaners and transgender individuals also uncovered numerous multi-tiered issues that people in these groups dealt with daily, most of which are easily overlooked by society.

Indeed, this class equipped its students with the tools to be communicators who can effect social change.

Working with the camera

For years, the CNM department has built its strengths in modules on media studies and communication management, as well as numerous design-related modules.

In Semester 2, CNM introduced two classes on photography, video and film-related aspects of media, both of which were run by Mr Kenneth Tan. These were NM3230 Photographic and Video Storytelling, and CNM’s new capstone module, NM4883D New Media Production and Public Engagement. Through these production-focused courses, Mr Tan hoped to expose students to the technicalities of content creation and visual image communication.

Engaging the public

NM4883D was designed to provide practical experience in online public engagement. It facilitated a unique partnership between CNM and Inconvenient Questions, an industry start-up and socio-political broadcast media site. Students worked with the Inconvenient Questions team and produced voice-of-the-population videos, or voxpop videos, which were featured on the site. They also had the chance to write social commentary articles on current affairs, and the best ones were published.

Inconvenient Questions, helmed by veteran TV current affairs anchor and former NMP Viswa Sadasivan, is a new media platform for the public. It provides opportunities for the public to raise questions, inconvenient or otherwise, and interact via comments and by up- or down-voting others’ questions. The questions could potentially reach senior policymakers, or important stakeholders in the issues.

Every fortnight, these stakeholders are invited to debateIQ, a panel discussion moderated by Sadasivan and filmed in the NUS UTown Presentation Space. Students from the module sat in for the main debates and observed, from the control room, how the debate was filmed. >>

New modules, new skills, new perspectives

By Trudy Chua, Derrick Ng and Lu Kejia

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Hot topics in previous panel discussions include: the shooting of staff at French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, a post-Budget 2015 discussion that included Senior Minister of State Josephine Teo, the right to free speech in Singapore that included Minister for Law and Foreign Affairs K. Shanmugam, and an “IQ-live” chat session with Minister in the Prime Minister Office’s, Masagos Zulkifli.

“Overall, I thought it was an interesting and challenging module and I acquired good skill sets, not only in production, but also in soft skills like the way to frame an engaging story,” said final-year CNM student, Esther Ng.

“I think we should have more modules like this since it provides a better rounded education,” she added.

Taking the class outdoors

Just like the new capstone module, the Photographic and Video Storytelling module extended the classroom out into the world. From photojournal assignments to video works, students had to venture beyond NUS to take photographs and create videos for their assignments.

NM3230 focuses on using digital tools to capture, edit, and present images for storytelling and as data. It revolves around the study and use of visual images for research and communication, placing importance on knowing the mechanisms behind communication with visual imagery in the digital age.

Students learnt to create compelling and structured storylines, and were exposed to potential narrative mistakes and ways to avoid them.

If you are considering a career in video and film-related fields of media, these modules might just be for you!

Other new modules

Apart from the three modules featured in the main article, CNM introduced six modules over the last two semesters. They are:

- **NM2301 Persuasive Communication: Theory and Application**
  This module’s main focus is to understand various theoretical approaches to persuasive message design, cognitive processing and attitude change.

- **NM3238 Software Studies**
  Software has become a part of almost every aspect of our lives. This module approaches software from the humanities and social sciences perspective to critically examine the relationship between culture and software.

- **NM4883C Communication and Asian Holistic Healthcare**
  Using a social construction of health perspective, this special topics honours seminar explores the major holistic, traditional, and complementary medicines that originated in Asia and are widely used in Singapore.

- **FMA1203C FS: Smart Cities**
  Students learn about smart city planning, design concepts, technology enablers and implementation considerations for smart city living.

- **FMA1204C FS: Saving Face**
  This module explores the ways we establish and manage identity through communication, and guides students to develop positive facework skills in a variety of scenarios.

- **NM5771 Networked Society**
  This module analyses the interplay between new communication technologies and society, focusing on the triple revolution: the Internet, mobile phones and social networks.
Listening to their voices: the “Respect Our Rights” campaign

BY MOHAN J. DUTTA AND SATVEER KAUR

In 2014, CARE launched and ran the successful “Respect our Rights” (http://www.respectfdwrights.com) campaign in collaboration with the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME).

A campaign conceived and designed by an advisory board of foreign domestic workers, “Respect Our Rights” generated national attention and fostered participatory space for conversations. The campaign was run on cable television, newspapers, and public spaces, opening up the national conversation to voices of foreign domestic workers in Singapore, who are otherwise erased from the discursive space. The campaign also included a strong social media component and was highlighted by StarHub as a case study, generating more than 1.98 million impressions.

Targeting everyday Singaporeans who hire and interact with foreign domestic workers (FDWs), the campaign addresses the key problems faced by these workers in Singapore. These problems include:

- Illegal deployment (violation of contract if the domestic worker is made to work in multiple households or at the employer’s place of business).
- Inadequate access to food (violation of contract if the employer does not provide adequate food to the worker).
- Insufficient rest (violation of contract if the FDW has fewer than 8 hours of rest daily).
- Inadequate medical care (violation of contract if the worker does not get medical attention when required).
- Right to wages (deception and violation of contract agreement if the FDW is not paid what she was told or is not paid on the same day of every month).
- Inadequate rest days (mandatory rest day set by Ministry of Manpower unless employer-employee have made special arrangements including monetary compensation).
- Physical, verbal and sexual abuse (punishable criminal offences).

The culture-centered approach emphasizes participatory and co-constructive dialogue with the domestic worker community in Singapore, developing solutions through participation of community members, seeking to develop health solutions in relationship with local communities. Avenues of change are fostered through the participation of the disenfranchised in voicing their health needs and in putting forth policy and intervention solutions for addressing these needs.

During the research process grounded in a continued partnership with an advisory group of domestic workers who guided the design, it became apparent that the FDWs’ expectations of health experiences were far different from our own. The domestic workers defined health to mean the right to food, appropriate accommodation, the right to rest, the right to sleep, the...
The “Respect Our Food Rights” campaign was launched by CARE on June 11, 2015, based on collaborative research conducted with an advisory board of Bangladeshi migrant construction workers and HealthServe, an NGO that serves the health needs of migrant workers. The ongoing campaign was designed and co-constructed by an advisory board of Bangladeshi construction workers.

The central theme of the campaign is to shed light and raise awareness regarding access to decent and quality food for migrant construction workers (MCWs) in Singapore, generating considerable media coverage in The Straits Times, Today, and online blogs.

Sixty-five MCWs collaborated with a research team by lending their voices to tell stories of poor quality food being provided to them by catering companies. The campaign was conceptualized and designed collaboratively by them and by CARE researchers and facilitated by a dedicated HealthServe team who also provided the premises for advisory board meetings with the workers. In addition, guided by the key constructions of the advisory board, a survey was launched among Bangladeshi migrant workers to understand their experiences of health and food.

The survey, conducted with 500 Bangladeshi workers, documents their inability to access quality, hygienic and healthy food. Survey responses also point toward the potential solutions desired by the workers, such as greater monitoring and enforcement of food safety standards for male migrant workers. Particularly important are the rights to appropriate medical care and the right to their expected wages. The absence of these basic rights was understood as being detrimental to their physical and mental health. The advisory board collaborated with us in making sense of the meanings within a broader framework of rights of domestic workers and dignity of domestic work.

The research team engaged the domestic workers in dialogue via 31 in-depth interviews, three focus groups and eight advisory board meetings to co-construct their experiences of living and working in Singapore, especially in the context of health and health care. These experiences opened up participatory spaces in national discourse, so that policies and interventions can be developed for addressing the health needs of FDWs. Additionally, these dialogues helped design and implement surveys to measure the effectiveness of the campaign.

All materials developed for this campaign were based on the participatory spaces opened up with the domestic workers to exercise their voice, ideas and agency in enacting change locally, constructed within the overarching framework of meanings of health. Objectives, storyboards, media choices, slogans, taglines and materials in the campaign were grounded in the interpretations, active participation, and imagination of foreign domestic workers.

Stories of hope: “Respect Our Food Rights” campaign

By Mohan J. Dutta, Julio Etchart, Monishankar Prasad and Satveer Kaur

The “Respect Our Food Rights” campaign was launched by CARE on June 11, 2015, based on collaborative research conducted with an advisory board of Bangladeshi migrant construction workers and HealthServe, an NGO that serves the health needs of migrant workers. The ongoing campaign was designed and co-constructed by an advisory board of Bangladeshi construction workers.

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monitoring and evaluation of the quality of food delivered by caterers.

- Increased monitoring of licenses given out to catering companies as well as greater monitoring of unlicensed caterers operating in the dormitories.

- Greater monitoring of food delivery processes so middle men can be removed from the food delivery process.

- More provisions for employing companies to deal directly with catering companies to provide food to workers.

- Building infrastructure for cooking and refrigerating food at dormitories that house workers.

The mass media campaign comprises several collaterals including bus and MRT advertisements, TV commercials, a dedicated website, social media outreach and a documentary film.

Respect Our Food Rights is a 12-minute documentary featuring the lives and stories of Bangladeshi migrant construction workers living in Singapore. These are stories of disappointment, expectation and aspiration. Co-constructed by the voices of these workers, the documentary ends by encouraging Singaporeans to advocate for better food access for the invisible backbone of the Singaporean construction sector.

The campaign is aimed at raising awareness of the specific issues of poor food quality faced by MCWs employed in Singapore. Guided by the culture-centered approach (CCA) pioneered by Prof. Mohan Dutta, the workers were central to the decision-making processes in framing core messages and helping to design the above-mentioned collaterals. This is CARE's second ethnographic documentary film which follows the success of the "Respect Our Rights" campaign co-created in collaboration with Foreign Domestic Workers: www.respectfdwrights.com

Both projects have been guided by key principles of the CCA method, where subaltern communities are their own problem configurators and solution providers. CARE, in partnership with HealthServe, has helped to co-create environments where the migrant construction workers can come together to develop solutions to problems during their employment stints in Singapore.
According to the American Cancer Society, 43.31% of all men and 37.81% of all women are likely to develop cancer during their lifetime. Due to the prevalence of cancer, people are exposed to a lot of cancer information, which has been made possible by the current media environment. As a media scholar (and a former journalist), I have been wondering how cancer information influences our thoughts and feelings about cancer. For example, Angelina Jolie, an American actress, wrote a story in New York Times about her surgery to prevent breast and ovary cancer. When you read the article, you might think about your chance of getting such cancers more than before, and you might take some actions like her.

Previous studies in communication have shown that information exposure can lead to preventive or screening behaviours in the health context. For instance, especially about cancer, many studies have demonstrated that seekers of cancer information are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables, exercise regularly, and undergo cancer screening. Yet, studies have not fully examined HOW information brings about positive health outcomes. My research has been trying to fill the gap by studying psychological effects of cancer information, such as cancer worry (i.e., worry about individuals’ own chance of getting cancer) or cancer risk perception (i.e., perceived vulnerability of getting cancer) that can be the antecedent of cancer-related behaviour.

Related to this topic, my dissertation project examined the psychological mechanism underlying the effects of cancer information on screening intention. I conducted a longitudinal study among Korean people aged 40 or older, specifically about stomach cancer, which is the most common type of cancer in Korea. Consistent with my expectation, exposure to cancer information was positively associated with cancer fear, cancer worry, and cancer risk perception. Cancer worry and cancer risk perception increased the intention to get screened for stomach cancer, but cancer fear decreased the intention. In other words, those who have fear about a certain disease are less likely to undergo cancer screening.

Another related construct is cancer information overload, which refers to an individual’s tendency to feel confused and overwhelmed by cancer information. In this age of information explosion, we tend to think that too much information causes information overload. Although information overload is related to both quality and quantity of information, in the context of cancer, my research has found that more exposure to cancer information is not associated with cancer information overload. On the contrary, those who sought less cancer information tended to feel overloaded by cancer information. Also, those with cancer information overload were more likely to avoid cancer information. That is, cancer information overload is not a result of too much exposure, but due to the lack of ability and motivation to learn from cancer information.

Importantly, prior studies commonly suggest that cancer information acquisition is the key for cancer control, but we need to reconsider the quality of cancer information. Media reports about cancer should not emphasize the fear of cancer, but help people to logically think about their risk of getting cancer. In addition, media and healthcare professionals should deliver clear messages about cancer prevention, because when cancer does not seem preventable, we would have fears about it and feel overloaded with information, which leads to information avoidance and less screening behaviour.

Understanding how information results in positive health outcomes for cancer control

By Jiyoung Chae

According to the American Cancer Society, 43.31% of all men and 37.81% of all women are likely to develop cancer during their lifetime. Due to the prevalence of cancer, people are exposed to a lot of cancer information, which has been made possible by the current media environment. As a media scholar (and a former journalist), I have been wondering how cancer information influences our thoughts and feelings about cancer. For example, Angelina Jolie, an American actress, wrote a story in New York Times about her surgery to prevent breast and ovary cancer. When you read the article, you might think about your chance of getting such cancers more than before, and you might take some actions like her.

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According to the American Cancer Society, 43.31% of all men and 37.81% of all women are likely to develop cancer during their lifetime. Due to the prevalence of cancer, people are exposed to a lot of cancer information, which has been made possible by the current media environment. As a media scholar (and a former journalist), I have been wondering how cancer information influences our thoughts and feelings about cancer. For example, Angelina Jolie, an American actress, wrote a story in New York Times about her surgery to prevent breast and ovary cancer. When you read the article, you might think about your chance of getting such cancers more than before, and you might take some actions like her.

Previous studies in communication have shown that information exposure can lead to preventive or screening behaviours in the health context. For instance, especially about cancer, many studies have demonstrated that seekers of cancer information are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables, exercise regularly, and undergo cancer screening. Yet, studies have not fully examined HOW information brings about positive health outcomes. My research has been trying to fill the gap by studying psychological effects of cancer information, such as cancer worry (i.e., worry about individuals’ own chance of getting cancer) or cancer risk perception (i.e., perceived vulnerability of getting cancer) that can be the antecedent of cancer-related behaviour.

Related to this topic, my dissertation project examined the psychological mechanism underlying the effects of cancer information on screening intention. I conducted a longitudinal study among Korean people aged 40 or older, specifically about stomach cancer, which is the most common type of cancer in Korea. Consistent with my expectation, exposure to cancer information was positively associated with cancer fear, cancer worry, and cancer risk perception. Cancer worry and cancer risk perception increased the intention to get screened for stomach cancer, but cancer fear decreased the intention. In other words, those who have fear about a certain disease are less likely to undergo cancer screening.

Another related construct is cancer information overload, which refers to an individual’s tendency to feel confused and overwhelmed by cancer information. In this age of information explosion, we tend to think that too much information causes information overload. Although information overload is related to both quality and quantity of information, in the context of cancer, my research has found that more exposure to cancer information is not associated with cancer information overload. On the contrary, those who sought less cancer information tended to feel overloaded by cancer information. Also, those with cancer information overload were more likely to avoid cancer information. That is, cancer information overload is not a result of too much exposure, but due to the lack of ability and motivation to learn from cancer information.

Importantly, prior studies commonly suggest that cancer information acquisition is the key for cancer control, but we need to reconsider the quality of cancer information. Media reports about cancer should not emphasize the fear of cancer, but help people to logically think about their risk of getting cancer. In addition, media and healthcare professionals should deliver clear messages about cancer prevention, because when cancer does not seem preventable, we would have fears about it and feel overloaded with information, which leads to information avoidance and less screening behaviour.
Our CNM faculty made a mark at various international conferences and forums in the last academic year either as event organisers or as noteworthy speakers (e.g. keynote or opening plenary speakers). Here, we highlight our faculty’s significant contributions at such events.

Witty insights on youth and communication technology

Associate Prof Lim Sun Sun gave the opening plenary speech at this year’s International Communication Association (ICA) conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Her insightful talk on Young people and communication technologies: Emerging challenges in generational analysis was filled with humour, and generated much buzz at the conference.

In her speech, A/P Lim, who is also Assistant Dean of Research, said that research that took a generational analysis approach was useful but rapid changes in the media landscape posed challenges to this approach. She focused on three such challenges for generational analysis using examples from her research:

1. How finely should researchers calibrate and delineate media generations in view of the fact that new innovations are introduced and embraced at an accelerating pace.

2. How to meaningfully characterize a generation while balancing the need to be pithy yet not being reductionist, and

3. How to identify sustainable intergenerational bridges for communication.

Her suggestion for researchers to respond to these challenges was to keep up with trends in communication technology and media innovations, to avoid homogenization of media generations, and to constantly reexamine definitions of the media generations in terms of temporal demarcations, dominant media practices and key technological transitions.

A/P Lim’s other key speeches:


- Opening plenary panel speaker, Association of Internet Researchers Annual Conference, Daegu, Korea. Oct 2014

Associate Professor Lim Sun Sun at the ICA conference. Photo by Jake Gillespie
Examining citizen science and open science issues

Dr Denisa Kera is regularly invited to present her research on open science and citizen science issues from the Science, Technology and Society (STS) perspective. In the past academic year, she was a key speaker at several events. She also received a two-year grant from the Canadian IDRC (International Development Research Centre) as part of its new OCSDNET programme (Open and Collaborative Science in Development Network).

Her project was one of only 14 funded from a pool of 90 submissions, and the only one in Southeast Asia. In addition, Dr Kera continues to be active in designing laboratory equipment with open hardware and supporting research and development in the Global South.

Critical questions about frameworks in modern society

CNM Head Prof Mohan J. Dutta was invited to be the keynote speaker at numerous international conferences over the past year.

One such event where he gave the keynote address was the International Communication Association Regional Conference in Brisbane in October 2014.

The three-day conference, with nine concurrent sessions and more than 140 presentations, explored topics in the geo-economic sectors, the digital economy and in social media.

In his talk, Prof Dutta critically examined the perceived communication framework in a modern society, noting that democracy, capitalism, technology and science powered the state, civil society and the market. He scrutinized the tools and instruments of modernity and how they interpenetrated global boundaries. He also examined the relationship of such frameworks with Asian societies.

Prof Dutta expressed his concern about increasing global inequalities and how “public-private partnerships” are used to marginalise important public sector services.

“This has become a narrative for taking over public health, and turning it over to the owners of private health,” he said.
Helping citizens deliberate on policies online

BY ZHANG WEIYU

How can we garner the wisdom of the crowd to contribute to challenging policy issues such as the population policy in Singapore? Associate Professor Zhang Weiyu, along with a team of computer scientists and policy researchers, are trying to build a digital platform as well as a deliberative process to tackle the challenge. Combining in-depth theoretical thinking and innovative human-computer interaction design, citizens are expected to be able to enjoy a new way of getting engaged in the governance of their own country.

Impact

The research team has involved the National Population and Talent Division in its design of a digital platform, in order to make the platform useful for both citizens and policy makers. A/P Zhang has also been one of the key organizers of a special interest group on online deliberation in the 2015 annual conference of Computer-Human Interaction (CHI 2015), a first attempt of its kind that led to the establishment of an online community dedicated to the same topic. The team has also published relevant studies in CHI 2015, and the International Conference for E-Democracy and Open Government Asia 2014.

Understanding culture and context of sex workers in Nepal

BY ICCHA BASNYAT

It is estimated that about 50% of sex workers in Nepal have returned from being trafficked to India, while an estimated 100,000 are still working in India's brothels (World Bank, 2012). What about the remaining 50% – how and why do they enter sex work? What are the contexts within which women become sex workers?

My recent work attempts to answer these questions by focusing on the lived experiences of street-based female sex workers, in Kathmandu. This work illustrates that the context of sex work is defined by limited access to education, resources, and jobs due to violence, oppression, patriarchy, and poverty. Sex work exists at the margins of society. However, the sex workers reconstitute sex work as a viable form of work that provides food and shelter for their children and allows them to fulfill their duties as mothers. Sex workers’ identity is foremost mothers. Mothers trapped between lack of access and education, and the desire to ensure sustenance and a better future for their children. This finding has been published in journals such as Culture, Health & Sexuality and is forthcoming in Qualitative Health Research.

Impact

Findings from this study can provide ways in which we move away from traditional, top-down, pre-defined linear individual behaviour-change health campaigns. This shift enables us to reconstitute health within a participatory bottom-up approach that includes the voices of participants. Inclusions of traditionally excluded voices allow us to situate social change within their own contexts and needs aimed at improving health outcomes.
New books by CNM faculty

Asian Perspectives on Digital Culture: Emerging Phenomena, Enduring Concepts

Edited by Sun Sun Lim, Cheryll Soriano, Published by Routledge

In Asia, amidst its varied levels of economic development and diverse cultural traditions and political regimes, the Internet and mobile communications are increasingly used in every aspect of life. Yet the analytical frames used to understand the impact of digital media on Asia predominantly originate from the Global North, neither rooted in Asia’s rich philosophical traditions, nor reflective of the sociocultural practices of this dynamic region.

This volume examines digital phenomena and their impact on Asia by drawing on specifically Asian perspectives. Contributors apply a variety of Asian theoretical frameworks including guanxi, face, qing, dharma and karma. With chapters focusing on emerging digital trends in Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, Korea, Philippines, Singapore, and Taiwan, the book presents compelling and diverse research on identity and selfhood, spirituality, social networking, corporate image, and national identity as shaped by and articulated through digital communication platforms.

Cheryll Soriano is a CNM alumnus who is currently Associate Professor of Communication at De La Salle University, Philippines.

Mobile Communication and the Family

Edited by Sun Sun Lim, Published by Springer

This volume focuses on families from a spectrum of socio-economic profiles including nuclear, multi-generational, single-parent, transnational, media-rich and media have-less families, bringing out the unique circumstances that shape their technology domestication practices. Themes that are explored include the pressures of negotiating work-family boundaries with the intensifying use of mobile communication, the challenges of parental mediation of children’s technology use in the face of the growing portability of media devices, shifts in communication practices with the rising number of transnational households arising from migration, and digital divides within multi-generational families.

Neoliberal Health Organizing: Communication, Meaning, and Politics

By Mohan J. Dutta, Published by Walnut Creek, Left Coast Press

Mohan J. Dutta’s Neoliberal Health Organizing: Communication, Meaning, and Politics closely interrogates the communicative forms and practices that have been central to the establishment of neoliberal governance. In particular, he examines cultural discourses of health in relationship to the market and the health implications of these cultural discourses.

Using examples from around the world, he explores the roles of public-private partnerships, NGOs, militaries, and new technologies in reinforcing the link between market and health. Identifying the taken-for-granted assumptions that constitute the foundations of global neoliberal organizing, he offers an alternative strategy for a grassroots-driven participatory form of global organizing of health.

This inventive theoretical volume speaks to those in critical communication, health research, social policy, and contemporary political economy studies.
We are all wired to interact and network

The CNM department hosted Canadian-American sociologist and Lim Chong Yah Professor Barry Wellman for six weeks from January 2015. Prof. Wellman is the director of NetLab at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Information. His research spans a range of topics in networks, including virtual community, the virtual workplace, social support, community, friendship and social network theory and methods. During his time at CNM, Prof. Wellman taught a module Networked Society (NM5771) and gave two talks. Here he shares his thoughts about research and why the self-sufficient individual is a specious entity.

Background

My research on social networks was inspired by my professors at Harvard Graduate School. Harrison White was the best network analyst who taught us about looking at peoples’ connections. Other mentors included Charles Tilly, who was an urban historian who had taught that the relational ties people had, went beyond the group and the neighbourhood, into networks.

I realized how true this was when I joined a “Save our Neighbourhood” meeting, held to stop the Spadina Expressway from cutting through downtown Toronto. At first sight, the group appeared just like groups from other cities fighting to preserve neighbourhoods against cars. But as I looked harder, I realized that many of those activists in that room did not even live in downtown Toronto. They were not a little neighbourhood group at all. They were a network of community activists who had come from all over Toronto.

Network society

My approach to research is a dance between theory and evidence collection. I usually start with basic questions; refine these through interviews before getting out more precise questions through quantitative research like in-person surveys.

A utopian networked society would be people having multiple, partial and dynamic connections that change formations according to the needs of the individuals and their groups; so that whole networks move forward as people support one another in large, diverse, dense and ever-morphing patterns of interactions.

I am worried about surveillance by governments and large companies, and people not being connected to one another in person. That said, in practice, everyone is connected in flexible and multiple ways, and not captured by any one group. Instead, they just build computer assistance into their networked selves. The best relationships combine face-to-face and online, and grow the important social capital fostered in these interpersonal ways.

The best ways to keep a relationship are mutual exchange and not to make too many demands on the other person. This axiom is borne out in American anthropologist Elliot Liebow’s study of the street corner culture of poor black men in Washington DC in the 1960s. Liebow found that sustainable relationships among the urban poor were those that featured a give-and-take reciprocity.

Being self-sufficient is a myth. In Chapter 2 of Networked Society, we observed that even a ‘rugged individualist’ like golf superstar Tiger Woods admitted that he was “connected and constructed by his membership in multiple social networks” (p. 39).

A neuropsychologist has even argued that the brain craves social interaction. In other words, we are wired to interact and move in networks. Even amongst those who think they are free agents; they should realize that their decisions are situated in the environment that shapes them.
Revealing social injustice through insights on communicative processes

By Dr Asha Ratha Pandi

Professor Charles Leslie Briggs, the Alan Dundes Distinguished Professor of Folklore at University of California, Berkeley, is a globally renowned leader in medical anthropology. Exploring the intersections of communication and biomedicine, he offers insights into communicative processes through which meanings are assigned to biological phenomena and ways in which these meanings are mobilized within the broader structures of power.

Background

I am from the United States of America, born and raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I was trained as an undergraduate in a combination of philosophy, psychology and anthropology. At the University of Chicago, I explored linguistics and social/cultural anthropology.

I am interested in issues of language and inequality as well as linguistic and medical anthropology. When people talk about language, health seldom comes up. I am interested in that gap and trying to create productive dialogues. Health communication, in my view, lies at the centre here.

My research focuses on how people use the different communicative forms to shape their own identities and their positions within the world, particularly as people who are denied their own history. There were powerful ways that people talked about collective views of working the land and fighting for community rights.

Health news, communication process & social change

In 1986, I began conducting research with the Warao - an indigenous people of eastern Venezuela. Health conditions there were very bad due to the lack of potable water and sewage facilities. In 1992-1993, a cholera epidemic killed hundreds of people there. Arriving in the middle of the epidemic, I decided that if my research was ever going to be of real value, that was the moment.

I began working with Dr. Clara Mantini, a Venezuelan public health physician, to set up small health projects. We learnt that the public health officials had collaborated closely with journalists in “educating the public” about cholera. However, they constructed a narrative that blamed low-income residents of urban barrios (informal communities), street vendors of food and drink and indigenous people for being cholera vectors. This story deepened stereotypes and social inequalities. The high morbidity and mortality reflected structural conditions, but the end result was that people were stigmatized and blamed for the massive deaths. Our book, Stories in the...
Fresh insights through academic exchange

By Pang Huisy

In the past year, CNM has hosted a number of academic and industry experts who focus on social impact and change. These visitors generously shared their expertise by way of teaching CNM modules, giving talks and through informal interactions, which resulted in valuable exchange of knowledge, fresh collaborations and new perspectives for all involved.

A/P Sameer Deshpande
University of Lethbridge (Canada)

Sameer Deshpande passionately advocates that the social marketing framework, when well strategized and implemented, is an effective and efficient approach to solving societal problems (e.g., obesity) that are caused by poor behavioural choices (e.g., sedentary behaviour).

In a recent systematic study on efforts to promote physical activity, Sameer and his masters’ student, Yuan Xia, found that the higher the presence of social marketing benchmarks, the higher the likelihood of campaign success. They concluded that social marketing enables managers to achieve physical activity change objectives. Sameer has similarly applied this framework to address public health and environmental challenges in Canada, India, the U.S., and the U.K.

Mr. Sameeo Sheesh
BRAC University (Bangladesh)

Hailing from the Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University in Bangladesh, Mr. Sheesh explores religious conflict sensitivity, peace education as well as new media and social movement. During his visit to NUS, Mr Sheesh worked with the Center for Culture-Centered Approach to Research and Evaluation (CARE), on religious sentiment against the Ganojaagaron Moncho movement in Bangladesh. He also gave a talk titled, ‘Religious Conflict Sensitivity’, social movement and new media: A critical analysis of Ganojaagaron Moncho movement in Bangladesh.

Professor Rich Ling
Nanyang Technological University (Singapore)

Professor Ling is the Shaw Foundation Professor of Media Technology at NTU, Singapore, and also holds an adjunct position at the University of Michigan, USA. Having studied the impact of mobile communication for the past 20 years, Professor Ling shared his expert knowledge with the NUS community last year in his talk Mobile Communication: A transformative technology and a probe with which to illuminate social processes. His talk encompassed a wide range of topics -- from ethnographic analysis of the mobile phone to analysis of the transition to digital news -- and was intended to help policy makers and business leaders understand the impact of mobile communication on traditional culture and the conceptualization of core social cultures.

Professor Joseph B. Walther
Nanyang Technological University (Singapore)

The Wee Kim Wee Professor in Communication Studies at NTU, Professor Walther’s works explore the interpersonal dynamics of communication. During his visit to NUS, he gave a talk on Interpersonal online Interaction and Hyperpersonal Attributions, where he explored affection experienced by individuals in the cyberspace, such as online chatting and online dating.

Professor Ajay Kapur
California Institute of the Arts (USA)

The Director of the Music Technology program (MTIID) at the California Institute of the Arts, as well as the Associate Dean for Research and Development in Digital Arts, Professor Kapur’s research combines computer science, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, music and psychology with a focus on intelligent music systems and media technology. During his visit to NUS, Prof Kapur talked about the new methods of music composition in the last decade, especially the influences from Asian music in his talk titled An Asian perspective to design: How we use technology to enable musical expression. He has published over 100 papers on musical technology and the many manifestations that arose over the history of music composition.

Dr. Nina Springer
LMU Munich (Germany)

Dr Springer is a research associate and programme coordinator from the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. She specializes in political communication, online communication and journalism. During her visit to NUS, she was a guest lecturer for two modules: the Graduate Research Seminar (NM6770), and State and Society in an Information Age (NM5201). She said that her experience with NUS had given her new perspectives on her area of research.
The Art/Science Residency (ASR) funds artists to spend a semester at NUS collaborating with researchers on their projects, working with students on class and individual projects, and giving lectures and workshops on campus. In addition, the ArtScience Museum hosts artist talks and shows in their galleries for events such as their Sunday Showcase, Conversations talks and panel sessions, as well as artists showcases.

The programme has its roots in the International Symposium of Electronic Arts, which was hosted in Singapore in 2008 with an organizing committee that included several CNM community members. The 16 artists who formed the main juried show at the National Museum, each spent three months working in collaboration with different NUS research labs including the IDMI Arts and Creativity Lab, the Mixed Reality Lab and the Aquatic Research Center. That year, the Artist in Residence programme was directed by CNM Associate Professor, Lonce Wyse, and funded by the Office of the Deputy President, Research and Technology.

Over the years, the ASR programme has supported another 10 artists with funding from the National Arts Council (NAC), and since 2013, is a partnership with the ArtScience Museum. CNM alum Margaret Tan (PhD, 2011), Director of Programmes at Tembusu College, became the Co-Director of the programme in 2013. Tembusu College also supports the artists with housing, and has coordinated courses and student projects with the resident artist, thus providing a rich learning experience for students.

The work of many media artists today engage with social, political and environmental issues in various ways. Among the ASR artists who have confronted social issues head-on through their work are Catherine Young, whose work Senseapocalypse (at Future Cities Lab) explored designing clothing daily artefacts for a post-apocalyptic world, Marc Bohlen (at the Acoustic Research Center), whose Water Bar used culturally significant minerals from around the world, and up-to-the-minute news about water to control the filtering process for drinking water consumed by visitors. Catherine Kramer and Zack Denfeld’s Utopian Cuisine in the Anthropocene: Four Food Futures for Singapore (with Tembusu’s Asian Biopoleis) involved locally-rooted awareness-heightening workshop, The Future of Food Design. Michael Doherty’s Urban Food Technologies Lab explored hydroponic gardening techniques and technologies for urban environments.

The most recent visiting artist was Italian artist TeZ (Maurizio Martinucci), who established research connections with the IDMI CUTE Lab (directed by Ellen Do) and the Acoustic Research Lab (headed by Mandar Chitre) as he developed prototypes of underwater drones as part of his artistic research on the interface between humans and water environments.

CNM plans to continue its support of the ArtScience Residency programme. Associate Prof. Wyse explains, “Artistic practices are integral to the kind of innovative approach to media social engagement we encourage our students to explore.”

Emotional involvement with a social issue can also bring a more sustainable engagement and meaningful change. This leads us to realize that we need to factor in emotions seriously while analyzing people’s involvement in any social and political cause.

Dr Taberez Ahmed Neyazi
Jamia Millia Islamia (India)
Can emotions affect one’s participation in social cause or issue? Researchers have found that different emotions cause different responses in people, depending on the context, and enable them to take action. For example, regular exposure and attention to media messages on environmental damage caused by unbridled development might change one’s emotions, from being happy to being concerned and angry, and prompt one to act.

Media artists confront social issues in Art/Science programme

By Prof Lonce Wyse

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Dr Taberez Ahmed Neyazi

TeZ at his workbench in Tembusu College.
Welcoming new CNM staff

Azeemah Binte Mustafa has recently joined CNM as a Research Associate and works on the research project titled Deliberative Governance: Developing a Digital Platform, lead by Associate Professor Zhang Weiyu.

She holds a Master degree in Human Sciences specializing in Organizational Communication from the International Islamic University Malaysia. Prior to her appointment, she served various non-governmental organizations including the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and played a leading role in community building projects in one of the largest Islamic organizations in Singapore. She has managed several research centres in Singapore such as the Centre for Research on Islam and Malay Affairs and Centre for Specialization in working with Malay/Muslim. Azeemah was a recipient of the Al Ghazali Best Student Award at the 25th Convocation Fiesta of the International Islamic University Malaysia.

Loil Sze Ming is an alumna of CNM, who graduated with a Bachelor in Social Science in July. She hopes to further her studies and pursue a career in academia. Seeking to gain more experience, she has joined the CNM Department as a full-time Research Assistant working with Associate Professor, Dr Lim Sun Sun. Sze Ming's research interests include education policies, communication and culture, human rights and ethics of technology development and use.

In her free time, she reads, and sketches the characters, events and concepts that stand out most to her. She also enjoys traveling and long walks. One could say she indulges in escapism in her free time.

Aishwarya Maythil joined CNM as a Senior Executive in February this year, and is responsible for the department’s marketing & communications efforts, outreach activities and alumni relations. She holds a Masters in Design for Communication, and has several years of experience in similar roles in various organisations in the non-profit and private sectors.

Prior to CNM, she was with the NUS Business School, managing the corporate communications and events for a research centre, where she also had the opportunity to be part of research projects in the areas of corporate governance, sustainable business and gender diversity in organisations. She has also co-authored research publications for the research centre. Her professional interests include organisational development, sustainability, strategic and integrated marketing communications.

Munirah Binte Bashil was an alumna of History graduating with a Bachelor in Arts in 2014 and recently joined CARE as a research assistant. Before this, she was working at the National Gallery as a research assistant, where she discovered her passion for research. Her passion for social change culminated ever since she started tutoring pupils from lower income families on a weekly basis and since then, she has been striving to impart knowledge and hopefully make a difference to their lives.

Munirah’s research interests include health communication, social change, intercultural communication and human rights. Her current project focuses on engaging with the Singaporean Malay community in educating and promoting a healthy lifestyle to prevent/manage cardiovascular diseases.

During her free time, she enjoys reading, learning something new and making people laugh.
All the best to colleagues who have left

Assistant Professors Ingrid Hoofd and Giorgos Cheliotis left CNM in late 2014. Here they share their thoughts and feelings about their time at CNM.

Dr Ingrid Hoofd

I have been in CNM for close to nine years! My first semester was as an adjunct, and after that as an Assistant Professor for 8½ years.

What will definitely stay with me is the collegiality and warm atmosphere within CNM. It really felt like a community despite all our differences in research approaches. I also learnt a lot from being in a predominantly social science department; although I had to get my deep intellectual dialogues mostly from outside the department, being in CNM gave me a lot of insight and appreciation of that field as well. And as the lone humanist, I also had a lot of freedom to shape my own research and the humanities bit of the curriculum.

I am heading for Utrecht University in the Netherlands, where I will be at the Department of Media and Cultural Studies in the Humanities Faculty, specifically their subdivision New Media & Digital Culture. To all NM students: Come do an exchange semester there, or check out their postgraduate degrees!

Dr Giorgos Cheliotis

I am returning to Greece to look after my ailing mother, and to recover from health issues I myself have been facing because of the climate here. That said, I for one know I will miss the tropical storms, rich flora, and abundance of tropical fruit!

I am grateful for the opportunity to spend all these years at CNM. Coming from a computer science background, I must admit I knew little of the communications field when I first joined. I have learnt a lot since. In fact, much of my recent work is attempting a synthesis across disciplines, taking things I have learnt about reliability and validity assessment in the social sciences and applying them to the methods that primarily, computer scientists use to observe online populations.

My time with CNM has been an important milestone in my career and I’m sure it will continue to influence me for a long time to come. I wish you all the best in your careers and hope that our paths will cross again in the future!

'Social change' at home for CNM staff

It was a year of social change – of a different sort – for three CNM faculty who welcomed a baby into their respective families. Assistant Prof. Elmie Nekmat celebrated the birth of his third daughter, Aryaa Tian Ya in August last year. In February this year, Assistant Prof. Iccha Basnyat gave birth to her second child, Kairav Lal while Ms Jodie Luu Tran-Huynh Loan welcomed her baby, Ethan, in June. Meanwhile, CNM PhD student Zhao Xiaoman had a double celebration on April 1 as she welcomed her son, Benjamin Fan Mocun just two days after passing her Qualifying Exam. Our warmest congratulations to all!
She spoke in hushed tones, her countenance severe and concerned. “You must not continue!” she urged in Swahili. “They are kidnapping people for hostages…”

We were entering the United Nations’ red-zone in the Democratic Republic of the Congo at a tenuous juncture. There were rumours of an impending war between the UN and a major rebel army. Hostages were used for bargaining power…

Such unnerving warnings are not uncommon when working in a warzone. This lady was our regular cheese vendor. At US$2 each, we would purchase wheels of cheese from her as gifts for our village chief. Her village marked the half-way point of our 8-hour journey deep into the heart of the Eastern Congo jungles – an area overrun with rebel armies.

In a blur of surreal activity, everyone turned mechanical, removing SIM cards from our phones (to avail our phones as valuables if there was a demand), hiding away our passports… We said a prayer together and prepared our hearts for the journey ahead. Some days I wondered if I would meet my Maker soon; thankfully I lived to write this article!

After another four hours of the bone-rattling drive through bombed-out dirt roads; we met the smiling face of our village chief and his family. With tears and relief in his eyes, he gratefully crushed us in a fatherly embrace, repeatedly murmuring, “thank you for coming”. If home is where the heart is, then I’ve made it home.

I work for a humanitarian organisation called Justice Rising. We are focused on rebuilding war-torn communities working on the front line of social change.
> communities similar to this village. Whether it is building schools, centres for rape victims, rehabilitating child soldiers, engaging in trauma counseling or simply sitting in the dirt and listening; our desire is to restore hope to the broken.

Over the last three years I've found myself in the backwaters of a digital age. I chuckle when I look at my “outdated” second-hand iPhone 4, and shudder when I think that some would kill to have it. In a land where electricity is scarce and moving pictures are greeted with awe; I find my CNM education strangely relevant.

I count my undergrad years a crucible where my passion for people was galvanised. I may not work on the media front, but I learnt to appreciate the ingenuity of people, to honour cultures. I had precious opportunities to work closely with professors like Dr. Lim Sun Sun; thinkers who were about bridge-building, facilitating understanding between people groups, representing marginalised needs rightly… Beyond the robust content, there was always a generous and dauntless ethos communicated in CNM.

The most useful module for my circumstance would arguably be Dr. Iccha Basnyat’s Health Communications class. I recall how every lively debate about community transformation seemed to end with one conclusion: we need to employ a culture-centred approach!

This nugget of wisdom resonates deeply in many situations in my work. Take for instance, a successful initiative named Listening Corners. The premise was simple: Each school would be assigned a friendly counsellor, and students were invited to share anything on their hearts with the explicit promise of confidentiality.

The results were shocking. Children, some barely 13 years old, were telling of how they had witnessed the massacre of their families. Others tearfully recounted how they were forced to pull the trigger on their neighbours. These children had escaped from the villages into the city, burying the trauma deep within. They were fearful of being ostracised for their actions. The unimposing Listening Corners brought solutions to problems no one knew existed! Such powerful healing came through merely listening. Although simple, the programme made a deep impact in creating social change.

People matter. Today I pay tribute to a community of people who hold this very conviction. Thank you CNM for expanding our worldview and equipping us to make a difference.
Empowering women in science and tech

BY MANALI MEHTA

Liyana Sulaiman (Class of 2011) describes herself as a “creatist” – one who is not merely a passive consumer of products, but an active innovator who strives to improve established innovations.

She is the managing director of the Singapore chapter of Girls in Tech, a global non-profit organisation that works to empower women in the technology industry. The organisation provides a platform for women to come together and share ideas on technology. It aims to effect social change by offering women opportunities to progress and excel in today’s world.

Sulaiman is also a member of the Singapore Science Centre Steering committee, which conceptualises innovative ways to communicate science at the new Singapore Science Centre, which is slated to open in 2020.

She explains that delivering science to the masses is not only about what information we can present but also about how innovative we can be when presenting the information to the audience. She adds that science communication not only encourages the audience to learn information but to understand how it impacts them.

In her free time, she volunteers as an ambassador for the United Nations Women STEM, which seeks to encourage females to take up careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

Her CNM journey

Part of the pioneer batch to graduate from NUS with a major in Communication and New Media, she says that CNM stands apart from other mass communication schools.

“We’re a new breed of communications that helps many disciplines come together,” she says.

Sulaiman’s journey post-graduation has been challenging. On entering the job market, she made personal sacrifices to follow her vision of making social change instead of pursuing a conventional (read: comfortable) job. Yet, she has no regrets about her career choices, and uses each challenge to push herself to improve and create something new.

Advice to CNM students

Her advice to striving CNM majors is: “Stay curious and ask why. Because when you ask why, you will eventually ask yourselves why not?" 

Ms Liyana Sulaiman speaking at the TED x NUS talk.
It is yet to be seen what impact my research work may have on my chosen field of study. Hopefully it holds potential to add to the dialogue which exists concerning the nature of practice as research in the arts in relation to knowledge acquisition, transmissibility and the ability to gain new knowledge from areas where we continue to lack information.

In my current choreographic work, I continue the investigation of movement as my chosen communication medium. I do this primarily for the creation of personal, hopefully authentic, artistic statements. Any social good that may come of this is a welcome secondary consequence and benefit of the creative process.

As I leave the CNM Department, I would like to thank all those who made my journey possible and meaningful!

Dr John Mead

Dr Mary Lee