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[Book Review] Heinz Bonfadelli, Birte Fähnrich, Corinna Lüthje, Jutta Milde, Markus Rhomberg and Mike S. Schäfer (eds), Forschungsfeld Wissenschaftskommunikation

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Heinz Bonfadelli, Birte Fähnrich, Corinna Lüthje, Jutta Milde, Markus Rhomberg and Mike S. Schäfer (eds) *Forschungsfeld Wissenschaftskommunikation*. Berlin: Springer, 2017. 476 pp., €64.99, ISBN: 978-3-658-12897-5

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The aim of this volume is to map the growing research field of science communication through 24 chapters by 28 well-known scholars in the field of communication science in the German-speaking world. In line with an earlier edited volume by Schäfer et al. (2015), the editors adopt a concept of science communication as 'all forms of communication focused on scientific knowledge or scientific work, both within and outside institutionalised science, including its production, content, uses and effects'.

In their introduction (Section 1), the six editors emphasise their aim to cover 'the entire breadth of the research field and to provide an overview of the current status of debates in the disciplinary field'. Section 2 explores 'Historical and Theoretical Foundations'. Sections 3, 4 and 5 are dedicated to communication within, from and about science. With a total of six contributions in Section 6, the 'subject areas of science communication' are covered comprehensively, from risk communication to health communication to media coverage of social sciences and humanities. In the final Section 7, three different perspectives on the future of science communication are presented: a communication science perspective (Rhomberg); a journalism research perspective (Wormer) and a practical science communication perspective (Könneker).

Even if it is not designated as such, this volume has the character of a handbook. A separate keyword index to search for specific topics, names or concepts would have been helpful in this regard. Also to be desired is a final chapter by the editors as a meta-reflection on all the contributions pointing to trends in science communication research in German-speaking countries, particularly within international perspectives.

Concerning trends, it is somewhat surprising for a volume that appeared in 2017 that digitalisation is only marginally treated. One single chapter presents empirical findings and approaches of online communication research (Schäfer). If one really takes the progressive digital transformation seriously, the question arises whether the categories within which science communication have been described and is pursued are still suitable. Although the problem of 'blurring boundaries' in the digital age is mentioned at the beginning, the structure of this volume is based on the notion that internal communication can be clearly distinguished from external communication, as can science, public relations (PR) and journalism. But where in this framework can social media be located? When scientists post about their new publications on Twitter, is that communication within, from

or about science? And doesn't the implementation of Altmetrics in the scientific publication system mean that PR activities can hardly be distinguished analytically from what is considered science as a specific kind of communication?

The mapping of the field presented here can be interpreted as a form of agenda setting of the newly founded Science Communication section within the DGPuK (German Communication Association) in which most of the authors and editors are involved. As important as such an institutional anchoring is, one cannot avoid the impression that science communication research is in danger of becoming entangled in a circle of self-referentiality. This is also seen in the so-far failing participation of the science communication community in recent debates on the future orientation of communication science in Germany.

One such debate was triggered by Andreas Hepp (2016) who made a plea to move away from a fixation on public communication in order to explore the questions of mediated communication in the data-driven age. A much closer examination of what mediatisation actually implies would not only benefit the research field of science communication but also communication science through the insights of one of its flourishing sub-fields. The research field of science communication would also benefit from many more disciplinary perspectives in which some of the research gaps identified in this volume, for instance, on internal science communication, may already be addressed, for example, in science and technology studies (STS), sociology, history of science or media studies.

It is important to emphasise that these comments are by no means aimed at reducing the work in any way, but at pointing out development prospects and opportunities for cooperation in a field of research that is growing and also becoming more and more politically relevant. This volume offers a concise overview of the field of science communication from a communication science perspective. Almost all chapters in this volume provide clear and accessible discussions of their subject matter, along with valuable lists of references for further reading and research. It is ideally suited and recommended for basic and advanced courses in communication sciences as well as for the training of leaders in science communication.

References

Hepp A (2016) Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft in datengetriebenen Zeiten. *Publizistik* 61: 225–246.

Schäfer MS, Kristiansen S and Bonfadelli H (2015) *Wissenschaftskommunikation im Wandel*. Cologne: Herbert von Halem Verlag.