

# Rachel Plotnick

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Indiana University Bloomington  
The Media School  
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## **CURRENT APPOINTMENT**

Indiana University, Bloomington, IN • 2018-present  
Assistant Professor, Cinema and Media Studies  
The Media School  
College of Arts & Sciences

## **PREVIOUS APPOINTMENT**

University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, NC • 2013-2018  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Communication Studies  
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

## **EDUCATION**

Northwestern University, Evanston, IL • 2008-2013  
Ph.D., Media, Technology and Society  
School of Communication  
Dissertation: *Signal and switch: a cultural history of the push-button interface*  
Committee: Jennifer Light (chair), Pablo Boczkowski, Lynn Spigel

Georgetown University, Washington, DC • 2005-2007  
M.A. with Distinction, Communication, Culture and Technology  
Thesis: *Cancertainment: how comics and the Internet are changing the face of cancer*

Indiana University, Bloomington, IN • 2001-2005  
B.A. with High Honors, English with Certificate in Journalism

## **BOOK**

Plotnick, R. (September 2018). *Power button: A history of pleasure, panic, and the politics of pushing*.  
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

## **REFEREED JOURNAL ARTICLES**

Plotnick, R. (2017). "Force, flatness and touch without feeling: Thinking historically about haptics and buttons." *New Media & Society* [special issue on haptic media studies].

Plotnick, R. (2015). "What happens when you push this? Toward a history of the not-so-easy button." *Information and Culture: A Journal of History*, 50(3), 315-338.

Plotnick, R. (2012). "At the interface: the case of the electric push button, 1880-1923." *Technology and Culture*, 53(4), 815-845. \* **Recipient, IEEE Life Members' Prize in Electrical History, Society for the History of Technology, 2013**

Plotnick, R. (2012). "Touch of a button: long-distance transmission, communication and control at world's fairs." *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 30(1), 52-68.

Plotnick, R. (2012). Predicting push-button warfare: U.S. print media and conflict from a distance, 1945-2010. *Media, Culture & Society*, 34, 655-672.

Plotnick, R. (2010). "Computers, systems theory, and the making of a wired hospital: a history of Technicon Medical Information System, 1964-1987." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 61(6), 1281-1294. \* **Recipient, Best History Paper Award, American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T), 2009**

### **BOOK CHAPTERS AND ESSAYS**

Plotnick, R. (2015). "Panic button: Thinking historically about danger, interfaces, and control-at-a-distance." In R. McDougall (Ed.), *Communication and Control: Tools, Systems, and New Dimensions*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Plotnick, R. (2015). "Rubbing readers the wrong way? Materiality and the case of ink rub-off." *American Journalism*, 32(2), 221-232.

### **WORKS IN PROGRESS**

Plotnick, R. (Manuscript in Preparation). "The unclean human-machine interface." In O. Touloumi and T. Vardouli (Eds.), *Computer Architectures*. Routledge [Research in Design, Technology and Society Series].

### **GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS**

- University of North Carolina at Charlotte Faculty Research Grant (\$5970), 2015-2016
- IEEE Life Members' Prize in Electrical History, Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) (\$500), 2013
- Top Reviewed Papers Panel, Critical/Cultural Studies Division, NCA, 2013
- Top Graduate Student Papers Panel, Critical/Cultural Studies Division, NCA, 2012
- Northwestern University Graduate Research Grant (\$2059), 2011
- The Bakken Museum and Library of Electrical History Travel Research Grant (\$250), 2011
- Top 4 Student Papers Panel, Association for the Rhetoric of Science & Technology, NCA, 2010
- Smithsonian National Museum of American History/Lemelson Center Travel Research Grant (\$1500), 2010
- Best History Paper Award, American Society for Information Science & Technology (ASIS&T), 2009
- SHOT Conference Travel Grant (\$360), 2009
- Merit Scholarship (\$22000), Georgetown University, 2005-2007
- Phi Beta Kappa, 2005
- First Place, Richard L. Edwards Prize in English, 2004
- Janet Frazee Hayes Scholarship for Academic Achievement, 2002

### **PRESENTATIONS**

#### Refereed

"Typewrite Anywhere: Gendered Mobilities of Typewriting." Southern States Communication Association (SSCA), Annual Meeting, Nashville, TN, Spring 2018.

"In Search of Touch: Some Thoughts on Locating Hands, Fingers and Their Traces." Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS), Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, Spring 2017.

"Pixels to print: Imagining an Internet made of paper." Society for Social Studies of Science (4S), Annual Meeting, Denver, CO, Fall 2015.

“Printing the Web: From ‘Yellow Pages’ to art installations.” International Communication Association (ICA), Annual Convention, San Juan, PR, May 2015.

*Chair and co-organizer for panel, “Toward Multiplicity and Complexity: Examining World Wide Webs”*

“Rubbing readers the wrong way? Materiality, tactility, and the ‘problem’ of ink rub-off.” American Journalism Historians Association (AJHA), Annual Convention, Minneapolis, MN, October 2014.

“A race of push-buttoners: cultivating and constraining the senses of youth.” International Communication Association (ICA), Annual Convention, Seattle, WA, May 2014.

*Chair and organizer for panel, “Communication and the Senses: Thinking Historically”*

“Communication at a touch: Thinking historically about the push-button interface, 1885-1915.”

National Communication Association (NCA), Annual Convention, Washington, DC, November 2013. **\* Top Reviewed Papers, Critical and Cultural Studies Division**

“‘Shocking’ electrical experimentation: Communicative surfaces of power, control and sensory experience.”

National Communication Association (NCA), Annual Convention, Orlando, November 2012.

**\*New Voices in Critical and Cultural Studies Scholarship panel (top graduate student papers)**

“Making the portable typewriter personal: Reconciling definitions of human/machine writing.”

National Communication Association (NCA), Annual Convention, Orlando, November 2012.

“Don’t be a button-presser: Fears of automaticity at the pushbutton interface.” Society for the History of Technology (SHOT), Annual Conference, Cleveland, November 2011.

“Push to talk: A history of pushbutton devices as early communication and control technologies.”

International Communication Association (ICA), Annual Convention, Boston, May 2011.

“Framing visions of push-button warfare: Mass media and the technology of battle, 1945-1999.” ICA Pre Conference, Communication History Interest Group, Boston, May 2011.

“Touching the button: World’s fairs and disciplining technology, 1876-1933.” National Communication

Association (NCA) Annual Convention, San Francisco, November 2010. **\*Top 4 Student Paper, Association for the Rhetoric of Science and Technology Division**

“Computers, systems theory and the making of a wired hospital: A history of Technicon Medical Information System, 1964-1987.” Society for the History of Technology (SHOT), Annual Conference, Pittsburgh, October 2009.

#### Invited

“Dirt, Dust, Fingerprints: A History of ‘Clean’ Computing at the Messy Human-Machine Interface.”

Computational Media Workshop. National Communication Association (NCA), Annual Convention, Las Vegas, NV, November 2015.

Respondent: “Critical Urban Studies Panel.” National Communication Association (NCA), Annual Convention, Chicago, IL, November 2014.

“Predicting push-button warfare: U.S. print media and conflict from a distance, 1945-201.” Media, Technology and Society Department, Prospective Students’ Weekend, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, February 2013.

“Touching the button: World’s fairs and technologies of control, 1876-1933.” Medium to Medium Symposium, Screen Cultures Department, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.

“Computers, systems theory and the making of a wired hospital: A history of Technicon Medical Information System, 1964-1987.” American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T), Annual Convention, Pittsburgh, October 2010.

“Dad's cancer: A multimedia illness experiment,” Multimedia project, Georgetown University Round Table (GURT) on Language, Narrative, Identity, Interaction, Society and Culture, Washington, DC, March 2008. <<http://www.gnovisjournal.org/node/74>>.

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

Indiana University Bloomington, 2018-present

### **Assistant Professor**

- Intro to Media and Society
- Digital Media and Society

University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 2013-2018

### **Assistant Professor**

- Contemporary Viewpoints in Communication Theory [grad]
- Cultural History of New Media [grad]
- Digital Media and Society
- Introduction to Communication Theory
- Introduction to Communication and Mass/New Media

Northwestern University, 2009-2013

### **Instructor**

- Imagining the Future of Technology
- Technology: Fantasies and Fears

### **Teaching Assistant**

- Theories of Argumentation

- Persuasive Images
- Development and Marketing of Popular Culture

## **SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION**

- Reviewer
  - *Technology and Culture* journal, 2017 and 2015
  - *Critical Studies in Media Communication* journal, 2012
  - *New Media and Society* journal, 2012
- Referee
  - International Communication Association, Communication History Interest Group 2012-2015
  - National Communication Association, Critical/Cultural Studies Division 2012-2015

## **UNIVERSITY SERVICE**

### University of North Carolina at Charlotte

- Search Committee Member (assistant professor search), Fall 2017-Spring 2018
- Ad Hoc Committee (charged with reviewing undergraduate major requirements), Fall 2017
- Search Committee Member (external department chair search), Fall 2015-Spring 2016
- Master's Program Assessment Committee (reads and evaluates research methods, theses, and directed projects), Spring 2016
- Advisory Committee (representative for untenured faculty), Spring 2014-Fall 2014, Fall 2015
- Speaker, UNCC Women's Leadership Development Conference, March 2015
- Undergraduate Curriculum and Assessment Committee, Fall 2014-Fall 2015
- Ad Hoc Committee (charged with reviewing M.A. thesis requirements), Fall 2013-Spring 2014

### Northwestern University

- Organizer of Media, Technology and Society Graduate Workshop (coordinated speakers, student workshops and other activities for graduate students; managed a budget of \$1000), 2009-2010

## **ADVISING**

- Committee Chair, Master's Students
  - Myasia Burns (thesis), Spring 2015-Spring 2016
  - Emily Crawford (thesis), Spring 2015- Spring 2016
  - Alicia Emmons (directed project), Spring 2015-Spring 2016
- Committee Chair, Undergraduate Students
  - Tynaiza Whitaker (honors thesis), Fall 2015-Spring 2016
- Committee Member
  - Robin Cavin (comprehensive exams), Spring 2015
  - James Hooks (directed project), Fall 2014-Spring 2015

## **MEMBERSHIPS**

American Society for Information Science and Technology  
International Communication Association  
National Communication Association  
Society for Cinema and Media Studies  
Society for the History of Technology  
Society for Social Studies of Science (4S)