

Rachel Plotnick

University of North Carolina at Charlotte
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CURRENT APPOINTMENT

University of North Carolina at Charlotte • 2013-present

Assistant Professor
Department of Communication Studies
College of Liberal Arts and 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

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Histories of Information, Communication and Media Technologies
- Human-Machine Relationships
- User Interfaces
- Technology and the Senses/Sensory Experiences
- Science, Technology and Society

REFEREED JOURNAL ARTICLES

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

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

Plotnick, R. “Panic button: Thinking historically about danger, interfaces, and control-at-a-distance.” (Forthcoming). In R. McDougall (Ed.), *Remote Control*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

- IEEE Life Members’ Prize in Electrical History, Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) (\$500), 2013
- Northwestern University Graduate Research Grant (\$2059), 2011
- The Bakken Museum and Library of Electrical History Travel Research Grant (\$250), 2011
- Smithsonian National Museum of American History/Lemelson Center Travel Research Grant (\$1500), 2010
- 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

“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**

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

“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

“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, February 2013.

“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

University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 2013-Present

Assistant Professor

- Cultural History of “New” Media
- 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
 - *Critical Studies in Media Communication* journal
 - *New Media and Society* journal
- Referee
 - National Communication Association
 - International Communication Association

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

University of North Carolina at Charlotte

- Advisory Committee (representative for untenured faculty), Spring 2014-present
- Undergraduate Curriculum and Assessment Committee (evaluates curriculum and makes recommendations for changes), Fall 2014-present
- Master's Program Assessment Committee (reads and evaluates research methods, theses, and directed projects), Fall 2014-present
- Ad Hoc Committee (charged with reviewing M.A. program 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 on a weekly basis; managed a budget of \$1000), 2009-2010

MEMBERSHIPS

American Society for Information Science and Technology

International Communication Association

National Communication Association

Society for the History of Technology