

# SPECIAL ISSUE CALL FOR PAPERS

## Environmental Communication

### A Journal of Culture and Nature

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#### Guest editors:

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### Climate Change Communication & the Internet: Challenges and Opportunities for Research

The new communicative landscape shaped by the Internet has had profound implications for communication research on climate change and environment. Internet-based platforms with attributes of interpersonal and mass communication have opened up new areas for studying public engagement with climate science. This is particularly important in the context of contemporary audiences as active co-producers of media content. The emergence of tools that enable searching, aggregating, and analysing online data allows communication researchers (and in fact anybody who is interested) to examine the dynamics of climate change-related debates with an unprecedented breadth and scale. At the same time, however, these developments have brought new challenges for the study of (1) content, context and influence of climate change representations and (2) the role of different stakeholders from science, politics, and the economy in these online debates. Multiple web-based channels and platforms (including, for example, smartphones and tablets) often make it difficult to assess how and by whom the online content is accessed, used, and co-produced. Increasingly sophisticated algorithms used by service providers may also begin to shape and guide searches and therefore patterns of communication and public understanding. Although there are software packages that can quickly process patterns across the universe of Big Data, the de-contextualised nature of results remains a key problem.

This special edition of *Environmental Communication* will be an opportunity to discuss the role of the Internet in our efforts to engage with multiple audiences and evaluate how different stakeholders participate in online debates. It will provide a forum for both academics and communication practitioners to discuss existing and emerging practices of online climate change communication (including comparison between the older traditional and newer forms of journalism) and methods for assessing them.

Mixed methods research combining different quantitative and qualitative frameworks to examine online communication on climate change, or to compare online and offline communication, is of particular interest to this special edition. We welcome papers that address conclusions to be drawn from existing research on climate change communication in the changing media landscape and reflect on the next steps to develop this field.



#### Suggested areas of focus include, but are not limited to:

- How can we assess the influence of online communication on public perceptions of climate change?
- How do web-based data affect research questions on environmental issues in the social science and the humanities?
- What are the challenges and opportunities in using online search technology to learn about changes in public opinion about climate change?
- How has the Internet and social media in particular changed the communication practices of environmental NGOs (e-campaigning)?
- How has the Internet impacted the way government departments and expert bodies on climate change connect with audiences?
- How do journalists use social media and blogs to report on climate-related news?
- What are the strengths and limitations of using online platforms and channels in climate outreach and education projects?
- What can we learn from the role of the Internet in controversies such as 'climategate'?

### SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

**Deadline for submissions:** 1st November 2013.

**Word limit:** 8,000 words (including references)

**Queries:** nk158@leicester.ac.uk

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