

PREFACE

Since early 2020, the Covid-19 epidemic has had a persistent impact on our everyday lives, raising our concerns about the value of humanity such as family, friendship, and society, as well as affecting business, healthcare, and education, particularly in the field of communication and media. Not only have the mass media been used to report correct information about the pandemic. Information is either trusted or contested, citizens' movements are increasingly mediated and monitored, and political systems, civil liberties, and governmental responsibilities are hotly debated.

Amidst all of these social and political upheavals and the changing media landscape, the *Southeast Asian Media Studies Association* (SEAMSA) is delighted to present the special edition of *Southeast Asian Media Studies Journal* (SEAMSJ) titled "Communication Outbreaks" (Vol. 3, No. 1, 2021). The special issue includes six research articles that cover a broad range of media and communication topics related to the global health crisis, including the mediation of digital technologies, the evolving roles of social media platforms and online messaging groups, intersections between digital governance and nationalism, activism through social media, and many more. The research articles are followed by two additional essays about the media and our personal experience of anxiety and detachment as a result of the pandemic.

This is the fourth journal issue published by SEAMSA. Under the former journal name *Southeast Asian Media Studies*, the association previously published a trilogy of special issues focusing on "Singapore and the Philippines" (Vol. 1, No. 1, 2019), "Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam" (Vol. 1, No. 2, 2019), and "Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia" (Vol. 2, No. 1, 2020). The name has been significantly expanded since previous year to the *Southeast Asian Media Studies Journal* (SEAMSJ). Despite the fact that SEAMSJ is still in its early stages, the first issues have demonstrated the journal's capacity to publish high-quality, up-to-date research important to academics, media practitioners, and the general public in Southeast Asian nations and beyond.

SEAMSA strives to be at the forefront of Southeast Asian media studies, with a focus on Southeast Asian media frameworks, perspectives, theories, and practices. The newly elected Executive Council has committed its entire support and dedication to elevating the journal to a higher level as an international and top academic publication. The width and depth of the present issue reflect these aims and objectives commendably. It is the first issue of a new trilogy that will contain the future issues "Critical Mass Media Histories" (Vol. 3, No. 2, 2021) and "Glocalization" (Vol. 3, No. 3, 2021), which will contain ten new scholarly articles on Southeast Asia mass media. The Call for Papers for the next two issues, "Histories, States, Theories, and Futures" (Vol. 4, No. 1, 2022) – which echoes the theme of the

association's well-received inaugural *2021 International Southeast Asian Media Studies Virtual Conference* (ISEAMS), held last February – and "Digital Media Culture in Southeast Asian Societies" (Vol. 4, No. 2, 2022), have recently been released. Both issues will be guest-edited by experienced scholars of media and communications.

The quality compliance and the finishing of this issue were made possible by a number of committed academics. First and foremost, Cecilia Fe Sta. Maria-Abalos and Jason P. Telles deserve a particular thank you. Dr. Abalos, a lecturer at the University of the Philippines Baguio and the guest editor of the first SEAMSA journal issue in 2019, has worked tirelessly to help the authors in the development of their papers in her capacity as guest editor. Mr. Telles worked with our international reviewers to coordinate the double-blind peer-review process and redesigned the journal's layout design. Diane Moya, a graphic designer, is responsible for the new SEAMSA logo and the SEAMSJ cover page. Also, the twelve authors who contributed their research and stayed committed throughout the long process to produce this an intriguing publication deserve particular recognition. The authors come from a variety of backgrounds and represent a good mix of experienced and aspiring researchers from reputable universities in Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. We are also grateful to the twenty international reviewers for their detailed comments on the quality and potential of the submitted manuscripts, constructive criticism, and valuable feedback to the authors. Finally, we appreciate the contributions of Assistant Editors Dr. Syamsul Z. Subir, Dr. Orville B. Tatcho, Mr. Herwin B. Cabasal, and Mr. Jason P. Telles, who provided valuable revisions and recommendations for improvement and tweaking of the papers.

Please take note of the following: First, all contents of the current and past issues are downloadable for free in the journal section of the SEAMSA website. Visit <https://seamsa.org/journal-issues>. Second, for more information about SEAMSA and SEAMSJ, please refer to the final sections of this issue or visit <https://seamsa.org>. Finally, we are pleased to inform that SEAMSJ has been placed on the list of Media Studies journals by the *International Association for Media and Communication Research* (IAMCR), the preeminent worldwide professional organization in the field of media and communication, effective July 2021. Visit <https://iamcr.org/open-access-journals> for more information.

The scholarly articles below should provide plenty of food for thought on the mediated proliferation and dissemination of knowledge, as well as the linkages between the mainstream media and the Covid-19 epidemic.

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