

## Editors' Introduction

Elizabeth Evans

*University of Nottingham, UK*

Daniela Treveri Gennari

*Oxford Brookes University, UK*

Bridgette Wessels

*University of Glasgow, UK*

This is the first issue that we have produced as the new editorial team and we would like to extend our thanks to Sue Turnbull and the rest of the *Participations* board for guiding us through the handover process. We would also like to thank Micheal Pidd for his frankly superheroic work in transferring the journal website to a new, secure home at the University of Sheffield's Digital Humanities Institute. The new site will not only keep the journal's archive safe, but also provides opportunities for future expansion and innovation.

This issue breaks from the standard *Participations* format and consists of two special sections. The first is a tribute to *Participations*' founding editor, Martin Barker. In order to ensure this section – and Martin's work – is given the focus it deserves we are not publishing any general articles in this issue. Martin's contribution to the field cannot be overstated and the articles in this special section are testament to that. Some reflect on his scholarly contribution to fields including film studies, comic book studies, fan studies and porn studies as well as the impact of his work across academia and screen industry policy. Other contributions reflect on Martin's role as a mentor who has supported countless scholars to find their own voice and place within academia. The second section published here, 'Books on Screen', is the last themed section accepted for publication by Martin before he stepped down as editor and sits as an exemplar of what he wanted *Participations* to be.

Martin's importance to the field is exemplified by his contribution to *Participations*. As its co-founder, he saw the need for a publishing home for audience researchers across all disciplines. Many of us may have experienced a lack of understanding about audience research, either in other publishing outlets or in our own departments, or questions about its place within broader academic disciplines that rely on very different methodologies. Martin designed *Participations* to be a space where audience research was fundamentally valued and

where the centrality of methodological questions could be recognised. The interdisciplinary focus of the journal was predicated on a fundamental connection between work that explores how culture is experienced, interpreted, valued and embedded into daily life, no matter which cultural sphere or sector it was focused on. This interdisciplinarity reflects Martin's own curiosity and wonder for not only all manner of cultural object, but also the scholarship that emerges around them.

Martin oversaw the journal through 18 years and 38 issues. The scale of his work is only emphasised by the journal's status as both open access and independent of any commercial press. Despite this increasing the workload of the editor, this has ensured that the journal remains a fully accessible archive of the very best of audience research scholarship over the past two decades and will continue to act in this way in the future. His publishing philosophy was defined by a focus on respect, openness and supportiveness. The journal remains unusual in operating an open reviewing policy, something initiated by Martin and a key characteristic of his approach to publishing. He would regularly work with authors on their submissions prior to a peer review process in which authors and reviews are known to each other. This has created a supportive process that demonstrates how peer review can be used to develop and nurture ideas, rather than as a way to criticise or nitpick. Martin's only request when stepping down as Editor-in-Chief was that the journal continues its open review policy and we intended to honour his wishes.

At the heart of Martin's founding of *Participations* was the sense that audience researchers can and should form a community. As we consider how *Participations* may evolve in the future, we hope to retain this focus and as such welcome suggestions on how the journal (and the scholars represented through its editorial board, reviewers and authors) could serve this community. Publishing scholarly work is part of this, but there is more that we can do. One example of this is the journal's new section called 'Conversations'. This is aimed to encompass work that does not fit the traditional academic article model, that may be more explicitly based on debate, reflection and discussion than formal arguments. Conversations are fundamental to the study of audiences and much of our work as academics, researchers and teachers. We hope to make these conversations an equally fundamental part of the journal's identity. We therefore welcome submissions to this section in a number of different formats that could include roundtables, interviews, audio or audio-visual formats, datasets or any other alternative way for sharing ideas. If you would like to submit to this section, or have any suggestions for how *Participations* could further serve the audience research community, please contact the Editors at [editors@participations.org](mailto:editors@participations.org). Together, we aim to continue Martin's legacy long into the future.