

Foreword

The Mass communication and media research associations of the Nordic countries have held conferences every second year since 1973. The twelfth conference in the series was held in Helsingør, Denmark, 12th-15th August 1995, in beautiful Nordic summer weather. The conference was hosted by our Danish colleagues through their organization, SMID (Sammenslutningen af Medieforskere i Danmark),

As usual, the conference included three plenary sessions with keynote speakers, working groups and *several ad hoc* working groups, meetings of the respective national associations, and a social and cultural programme.

The conference programme presented the theme of the plenary sessions, *Visual Media in Our Cultures* as follows:

The year 1995 marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the first public cinema screening. Since then, film has had a cultural impact of nearly the same magnitude as the invention of the printing press. Film and, later, television represent something totally new in relation to the media before them (books and newspapers). A difference in aesthetics, technique of production and a form capable like no other of imitating reality the moving picture, which since 1929 has been allied with sound.

Nationally and internationally, visual media are accorded central political and economic importance, with television perhaps the most important element of modern society. In the cultural sphere, evaluations are far more mixed. To many, visual media, particularly television, are embodiments of a cultural decline, from visual art to mass media. Regardless of one's views, one has to acknowledge that modern visual media have a range and intensity of penetration – geographically, socially and psychologically – that far exceeds anything we have known before. Today, it is hard to imagine modern society, in either political or cultural respects, without film and television playing their central roles.

As usual, the main business of the conference took place in the working group sessions. Papers were presented and discussed in twenty groups:

1. Media education (4 papers)
2. Local and regional media (4 papers)
3. Mass media images and visual rhetoric (6 papers)
4. Reception research and receiver research (11 papers)

5. Masculine/feminine in the media and in reception (9 papers)
6. Children, youth and the media (7 papers)
7. Public relations (2 papers)
8. Market communication: Information and aesthetics (5 papers)
9. The language and rhetoric of the media (12 papers)
10. Popular culture (7 papers)
12. Historical perspectives on the media (9 papers)
13. Quantitative and integrated measures (1 paper)
14. The media's representation of reality – the aesthetics of realism (7 papers)
15. Media and political communication (7 papers)
16. Multi-media and new media technology (9 papers)
17. Public service broadcasting in transition (3 papers)
18. Intercultural communication (3 papers)
19. Journalism and media ethics (6 papers)
20. The sociology and aesthetics of news reporting (12 papers)

This special issue of *Nordicom Review* collects all the keynote addresses, plus a selection of the over 130 papers presented in the working groups. It is our hope that the contents will give readers a good appreciation of the breadth and depth of Nordic research on mass media and communication today.

Göteborg in June 1996,

Ulla Carlsson
Editor