



Fandom | Cultures | Research

ONLINE JOURNAL FOR FAN AND AUDIENCE STUDIES

F | C | R Editors

Connecting Dots

Editorial to the First Issue of Fandom | Cultures | Research

ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS

journal, inaugural issue, fan studies, German fan studies, media studies, interdisciplinary approaches, networking, early career, open access, open research, Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft, media/rep/

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The concept for a Germany-based fan studies journal originated in 2022, driven by three primary considerations: the distinctive characteristics of the academic landscape surrounding this subject in Germany, an increasing emphasis on open access and data sustainability in scholarly publishing, and the necessity of creating such a platform within the humanities.

This journal reflects our aspiration to foster interdisciplinary research on fans and fandom, both within and beyond Germany, while connecting German-language scholarship to the international discourse. Our approach emphasizes openness, transparency, and a commitment to the sustainability of research and its data. It also actively invites and supports early career research.

Fan studies in Germany: Disciplinary fragmentation and methodological gaps

In 2020, a panel on “Fan Studies Methodologies” at the annual conference of the Society for Media Studies highlighted a significant challenge within the German academic landscape on fandom research. Fan studies in Germany are dispersed across various disciplines, resulting in limited awareness and engagement among researchers in the field. This fragmentation is compounded by the fact that much of the research is conducted within the constraints of short-term funded projects, typically lasting three years. Furthermore, there appears to be no dedicated professorship in German-language media studies specifically focused on fan cultural phenomena.

Fan research is conducted across diverse fields such as communication studies (e.g., with connections to sports or music sociology), media studies (primarily within the critical-hermeneutic framework of cultural studies), art studies, literary studies, and didactics (e.g., with a focus on fan fiction). The lack of interdisciplinary awareness has, at times, resulted in repetitive research. The limited recognition and citation of each other’s work among German-speaking fan researchers exacerbate this issue, contributing to the unfortunate reality that German-language research is rarely engaged with at an international level. Consequently, many high-quality German-language studies on fandom remain inaccessible and unacknowledged within the broader international discourse. A disciplinary divide further complicates the field: While media studies in Germany tend to adopt a more theoretical and philosophical orientation, communication studies are predominantly grounded in empirical social research, often emphasizing quantitative methodologies. This division has hindered the development of a cohesive fan studies discourse in Germany as differing disciplinary traditions discourage long-term collaboration.

Moreover, there is no established canon of foundational knowledge in Germany-based fan studies that can be consistently taught or assumed across disciplines. Similarly, no shared publication platforms

exist to foster sustained dialogue and to build a collective body of work, which has been a major impetus for the creation of our journal.

Methodological divergences across disciplines exacerbate these challenges. For instance, media studies often emphasize (moving) image analysis while neglecting methodologies suitable for examining social phenomena. Consequently, standard curricula in media studies rarely equip students or doctoral candidates with the methodological tools needed for fan research, such as ethnographic approaches. Given that students often have unique access to emerging fan cultural niches and communities, this is especially problematic. Therefore, it is an academic imperative to offer students spaces for their methodological questions and to recognize the value of their contributions to the field.

The emergence of the *Method Labs* and the idea for a journal

The “Fan Studies Methodologies” panel catalyzed the creation of the digital *Method Labs* during the pandemic, initiated by the AG Partizipations- und Fanforschung (Participation and Fan Research Working Group) of the German Society of Media Studies (GfM). These sessions, held quarterly via video conferencing, provide a platform to address specific methodological challenges and present ongoing research projects. The possibility of virtual participation has significantly broadened the group’s membership and attracted active participants not only from Germany but also from the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Denmark, and Brazil. This expansion has greatly enriched the discourse.

During one of the *Method Labs* sessions in 2022, the concept of a collaborative journal emerged. The initial idea was to address the fragmentation of the fan studies discourse in Germany, strengthen its connection to international research, and explore pressing methodological questions.

Open research and infrastructures for data sustainability

As part of the [National Research Data Initiative](#) (NFDI), infrastructural support for digital publishing and data archiving has been developed at Philipps University of Marburg in recent years. This has created a particularly advantageous environment for the journal project. The repository [media/rep/](#), the first specialized open-access repository for media studies, initially focused on providing secondary publication access to standard texts in media studies. It has since evolved into a repository for datasets and primary publications, actively promoting free access to peer-reviewed scholarly research. The repository collects a wide range of materials, including publications, theses, and research data from film and media studies, as well as related disciplines. [media/rep/](#) is now part of Leipzig/Marburg-based [FID Media](#) (an informational service for researchers; FID is short for ‘Fachinformationsdienst’). By permanently archiving its content and making it accessible online, [media/rep/](#) represents an ideal collaborative partner for the journal project.

Acknowledgments and reflections on the journal’s inception

Facilitating the journal has greatly benefited from the guidance of Kai Matuszkiewicz, coordinator of [media/rep/](#) and [FID Media](#), who has provided invaluable support in its early stages. Long-term open-access availability will be ensured through [media/rep/](#). Without this infrastructural support, financing this open-access publication would have been unfeasible. The resources available in Marburg thus represent a tremendous and fortuitous opportunity for the realization of *Fandom | Cultures | Research*.



We also extend our deepest gratitude to the anonymous reviewers of this inaugural issue, who took a leap of faith and undertook their responsibilities despite our inability to draw upon the reputation of an established journal. The journey from the initial idea to the development of the journal's concept and the implementation of a double-blind peer review process required numerous meticulous steps. Special thanks are due to the members of the Participation and Fan Research Working Group, who supported this endeavor alongside their involvement in the *Method Labs*, and to the Journal Task Force, whose members have largely transitioned into the core editorial team.

While the journal is a labor of love for all of us, it is important to acknowledge that this work is undertaken on a voluntary basis and in addition to our other professional responsibilities.

Where to go from here

Certain sections and formats within the journal remain under development. For example, this first issue includes only one method and data paper linked to a dataset, illustrating the potential of this section. We warmly encourage contributors to explore their digital archives for (ethically sound) reusable materials or compelling methodological questions that could be addressed in future issues. While data publications are well-established in the natural sciences, the humanities remain in the early stages of adopting this practice, and we aspire to contribute to advancing this effort. To provide guidance, we have uploaded an initial [data statement](#) for your consideration. We would also like to encourage scholars to submit book reviews and conference reports.

Today marks the publication of the inaugural issue of *Fandom | Cultures | Research* while the call for contributions to the third issue has recently concluded. The realization of this journal has been made possible by the infrastructural and human resources for digital publishing and data archiving provided by Philipps University of Marburg, as well as the dedication, voluntary effort, and unpaid work of numerous members of the working group.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to this endeavor!

We warmly welcome feedback and suggestions for improving the journal in the future. With this first issue, the journal is officially launched, and we look forward to many more issues, contributions, and readers in the years to come!

Yours sincerely,
the Editorial Team