International Communication Association 2020 Preconference
*Gold Coast, Australia*

**Digital Cultures of South Asia: Inequalities, Infrastructures, Informatization**

**Link to CFP online:** [Preconference Digital South Asia](#)

**Date & Time:** 9:00 am to 5.00 pm, Thursday, May 21, 2020

**Location:** Onsite, 2020 ICA Main Conference Venue, Gold Coast, Australia

**Organizers:** Radhika Parameswaran ([rparames@indiana.edu](mailto:rparames@indiana.edu), Indiana University), Sangeet Kumar ([kumars@denison.edu](mailto:kumars@denison.edu), Denison University), Kalyani Chadha ([kchadha@umd.edu](mailto:kchadha@umd.edu), University of Maryland), Adrian Athique ([a.athique@uq.edu.au](mailto:a.athique@uq.edu.au), University of Queensland) and Pradip Thomas ([pradip.thomas@uq.edu.au](mailto:pradip.thomas@uq.edu.au), University of Queensland).

**Conference Coordinator:** Roshni Susana Verghese, [roshnisusana@gmail.com](mailto:roshnisusana@gmail.com)

**ICA Division Affiliations:** Global Communication and Social Change, Popular Communication, Intercultural Communication, Ethnicity & Race in Communication, and the South Asian Communication Association (SACA).

**Institutional Sponsors:** The Media School, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA; The Philip Merrill College of Journalism, University of Maryland, College Park, USA; Department of Communication, Denison University, Granville, Ohio, USA; School of Communication and Arts and the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Queensland, Australia.

**Preconference Description**

Characterized by a mobile phone led connectivity boom and the cheapest data prices in the world (McCarthy 2019), South Asia has emerged as a region with the greatest potential for the future growth of Internet users. Indeed, as such, the area is not only central to any attempts at imagining the future of digital media globally, but it also constitutes a fertile territorial and cultural space for scholarly inquiry into the various dimensions of expanding digital life in the region. Consequently, this preconference focuses on exploring digital developments and their political, economic, social and cultural implications in the context of postcolonial South Asia and its global diaspora. The preconference draws inspiration from scholars who have sought to de-westernize digital media studies through their granular and interdisciplinary accounts of varied aspects of digital life in non-western countries. It is also grounded in the notion that the historical, political and social specificities of postcolonial South Asia necessitate the production of knowledge on digital culture— both conceptual and empirical— that explores the heterogeneities and complexities of the diverse nations that constitute the region. We envisage this preconference to be a forum for illuminating the varied dialectical forces that are at play in
South Asia in shaping digital culture in ways that are similar to but also quite different from other parts of the world.

In pursuit of these objectives, we invite submissions that cover a broad range of topics set in South Asia, including, but not limited to scholarly areas such as:

- Issues of digital access, connectivity and inequality (social asymmetries of caste, gender, sexuality, religion, language, and class)
- Online mobilization by activist communities to protest inequities and advocate for social change
- Nature and implications for sovereignty of governance and infrastructure regimes emerging across the region, particularly as they relate to data collection and commodification, security and privacy
- The political economy of digital media and the impact of digital technologies on the mainstream media landscape in entertainment and news media
- Rise of new genres of informational and artistic representation— including parody, satire, and humor—in online spaces such as YouTube
- Role of digital and social media in the transformation of contemporary politics, including campaigns and elections
- Transformations in the business and content of journalism, the rise of fake news, misinformation as well as hate and extreme speech
- Vernacular community formation in local, national and transnational/diasporic South Asian digital spaces
- New transnational digital circuits of cultural production and consumption—fueled by affinities of caste, gender, class and sexuality—within and beyond South Asia

The preconference aims to bring together ICA participants as well as scholars from around the world who are interested in digital culture in the Global South, with a particular focus on South Asia. Presentations and conversations at the preconference will be geared to achieve the following broad goals: build theory sensitive to the nuances of the region, strengthen analytical frameworks, foster interdisciplinarity, encourage critical thinking, and address empirical gaps in research.

** Keynote speakers to be determined and announced in Spring 2020. **

**Submission and participation details**

Extended abstract due: Monday, February 3rd, 2020

Final decisions on acceptance: Monday, February 17th, 2020

At this time we invite authors to submit extended abstracts (700 to 1,000 words) that describe the main thesis and arguments, research goals, theoretical influences/frameworks, and to the
extent possible, the methodological background and findings of their papers. The preconference organizers welcome diverse theoretical and methodological approaches and varied modes of analyses.

Please make sure you include a title for your abstract. We request you to anonymize your document by removing all identifying information from it. Very poorly written abstracts as well as those that do not relate to South Asia will be automatically rejected. Abstract submissions will be reviewed and final decisions communicated by February 17th, 2020.

Please submit your extended abstracts to conference coordinator Dr. Roshni Susana Verghese at roshnisusana@gmail.com.

Based on the volume and the quality of submissions, we intend to explore a potential thematic publication of preconference materials as a special issue in a journal or as an edited volume.

**Registration fees:** With financial support from institutional sponsors and ICA Divisions, the registration fees for the preconference will be **under $20.** The registration fees will cover refreshments for two breaks and lunch. This is a flat fee for anyone who wishes to present at or simply attend the preconference (without a presentation), including all ICA student and faculty members. There are no prerequisites for submitting abstracts, registering for and participating in the preconference. All attendees will need to create an ICA profile to register.

Finally, we expect all presenters will attend the preconference event for the full day. If you are traveling from overseas, we advise you to arrive on Wednesday, May 20, 2020, and make appropriate accommodation arrangements for that night.

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