

CFP Platform Intimacies
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This special themed section of *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* seeks to explore the study of digital platforms as a question of culture and intimacy. As proposed by Rambukkana and de Verteuil (2021), digital platforms seem to be everywhere and nowhere all at once— computational technologies such as video game consoles and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) interfaces; software platforms such as Meta and ArcGIS; algorithmic decision making and deep learning interfaces—digital platforms increasingly structure ways of knowing and being in relation to each other and the world. The ubiquity of digital platforms and their extensive reach makes them difficult to pin down as objects of culture study. Even the scope of the term “platform” is contested, shifting, in flux (Gillespie, 2010). And yet, following Berlant, our intertwinement with—even, at times, imbrication within—digital platforms has become “a situation” that invites deeper study (2011). Platforms offer conduits for diverse intimacies, figured broadly as “the kinds of connections that *impact* on people, and on which they depend for living” (Berlant, 2000, p. 4, emphasis in original). What we are naming as “platform intimacies” is therefore a way to feel into and critically map the contours of how digital platforms (re)make modern life.

We invite paper proposals for a special themed section of *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, Spring 2024. Possible topics include, but aren't limited to, the following:

- Defining digital platforms in relation to critical intimacy theory; methods for studying them
- Platform/media archaeologies; exploring the time of platform cultures; relations between past and present (digital) technologies, communities, intersections
- Platform intimacies and the (re)making of culture; when looking through platform studies, how is culture made, re-visioned, imagined, or contested?
- The nexus of platform intimacies: platform ecosystems (van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal, 2018), social media, algorithms, videogames, AR and VR, drones, robotics, Artificial Intelligence, etc.—what are the borders and boundaries of the intimate platform?
- Mixed and Augmented Reality (MAR) and the making of intimate experience, can MAR create truly intimate experiences; are VR and AR intimacies and empathies illusory? Intimate tourism?
- Platforms connections/disconnections: fandoms, nations, publics, ideologies, networks, communities, families, work and career cultures, subcultures of all stripes.
- Materialities; documenting and theorising the material of the platform intimate: how does it manifest? What are the medium specificities? What material culture artifacts does it throw off (e.g., meme t-shirts, VR and AR installations, artistic reflections, tourist traps framed around Instagrammable views or moments).

- Labour: How do slim platforms (Srnicsek, 2016) like UBER, AirBNB, and Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT) recast the relationships between companies and workers, workers, and clients? How are platform mobilizations of machine learning, autonomous technologies, and robotics transforming industries in the so-called “Fourth Industrial Revolution” (Schwab, 2016)?
- Politics: If digital intimacies are always already political (Rambukkana, 2022) what are the politics of platform intimacies?
- Haptics: unpacking digital touch technologies and remediations from cultural studies perspectives (from MAR transductions of touch, to “feely” artifacts from Paro robot seals, to sleep robots, to sex robots and teledildonics).
- Algorithms: what are the intimate possibilities and perils of algorithmic warfare, redlining/weblining, pattern of life analysis, machine learning, algorithmic oppression, self-tracking, platform capitalism (Srnicsek, 2016).
- Machines: what intimacies are being built in and around machines and what might this mean for Human–Machine Communication? Command and control, autonomous vehicles, autonomous weapon systems, robotic animals, robotic people, cyborgs, biotechnology and human augmentics, xenofeminism.
- How do platform intimacies play out in music, art, and fictions: from reflections of the implications and entanglements of today, to utopian and dystopian future visions.

Please submit 500-word abstracts or queries to platformintimacies@gmail.com by September 30, 2022. Draft versions of papers will be due in advance of a prospective peer workshop in March 2023 (grant-pending), with final paper submissions due May 1, 2023.

References

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- Rambukkana, Nathan, & de Verteuil, Gemma. (2021). The shape of platform studies: A multidimensional methodological model for a vicissitudinous concept. *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research*, 2021. [doi:10.5210/spir.v2021i0.12229](https://doi.org/10.5210/spir.v2021i0.12229)
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