# Publishing strategies in online television
## Introduction to the themed issue

### Hanne Bruun[1]  ⓘ  & Mads M. Tommerup Andersen[2]  ⓘ

1. School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University, hbruun@cc.au.dk
2. Department of Communication, University of Copenhagen, mtommerup@hum.ku.dk

In 2003, *MedieKultur* published a special issue (volume 19, no. 35) with the title "Changing Television" (in Danish: "Fjernsyn i forandring"). The editorial in that issue reflected on how television was changing in the light of a growing number of multi-channel portfolios and intense competition for market shares. Among other themes, the aim was to show how the professional ability of scheduling relevant content on the many new channels was getting increasingly important. This strategic shift had a huge impact on the development of the organisational structures of the television companies, their production cultures, and the development and commissioning of new content in that era.

22 years later, in this special issue, we revisit some of the questions about the changing television medium and the practices of publishing content. However, we focus this issue entirely on *publishing strategies and practices for online television*, and we regard this kind of professional work to be in continuation of what is known as *scheduling* and *the schedule* (e.g., Ellis, 2000). In traditional broadcast television, the schedule of programmes and continuity are central features of what characterises television as a time-structured medium and its experiential qualities of liveness, immediacy, and sociability (Scannell, 1996; Bruun, 2020). The schedule as a television phenomenon is still relevant to consider, especially because it carries the important business model of the television industry: the spot commercials. However, we need to include the changes that are currently shaping television. Questions about the spatiality of the television medium become prominent as the video-on-demand (VoD) services work in time as well as space. The VoD service is

a spatial and temporal organisation of content priorities, and most VoD services publish new content daily, while they also work as an archive for users to dive into. Issues like prominence, discoverability, and searchability of content become topical because of this new spatial dimension of television (Johnson, 2019; Bruun et al., 2025a). AI-driven personalisation is part of this new dimension of what was once only an editorially produced phenomenon. Publishing content to fit these personalised schedules shifts the balance towards the scale and scope of an entire content catalogue and how it is curated by the provider. For instance, what kind of content is available to the user, for how long is it available, what editorial principles guide the content available in the catalogue for the user to find, or what are the editorial principles behind the different algorithms supporting the users' engagement with the catalogue?

In many ways, we are in the middle of a new phase in the history of television in which the schedule as a textual phenomenon is adapted to an online context. As contributions to this special issue show, these changes already have an impact on the communicative interface between content providers and the audience. Furthermore, they also show that we are facing a new development within the professional and strategic skills of scheduling in which content *publishing* in time and space might be better terms to cover the aspects involved. Regardless of the terminology, this specific production practice takes place within an organisational framework with several implications for what kind of content is commissioned and produced. As contributions to this issue also show, the changed production practice has both organisational and managerial consequences for the creative work, which in turn will have an impact on the cultural importance of television as a medium and as an industry.

In this special issue, we focus a great deal on how the traditional broadcasters – the "TV natives" (Johnson, 2019, p. 54) – have reacted in practice to the new conditions in the television industry, as this is still a relatively neglected area. Studies of the international streaming services (mostly Netflix) and their use of AI-driven personalisation have so far dominated the field of televisions studies (e.g., Van Es, 2024; Iordache, 2023; Pajkovic, 2021; Frey, 2021; Lobato, 2019). As the competition for audiences has intensified, the international streaming services are trying to adopt many different television genres and not just fiction series and films. Furthermore, they seem to include some of the publishing and commercial strategies familiar to the traditional television industry, for example, spot commercials (e.g., Netflix and Amazon Prime Video), live sports events (e.g., Netflix) and publishing TV series in weekly instalments (e.g., MAX, Apple TV+). The distinction between TV natives and the international streaming services becomes increasingly blurred, which calls for more empirical research, as Van Es (2024) has argued.

Even if these distinctions are blurred, developing publishing strategies and practices for online television is still a work in progress for most traditional television companies. The challenges involved are related to a new phase in the internationalisation – or cultural globalisation – of the industry. As documented by the European Audiovisual Observa-

tory in several reports (Lobato et al., 2024), this development has a bias towards content catalogues dominated by fiction from the US and/or the UK. Furthermore, the international streaming services have made on-demand use of television content a common practice. Many TV natives in technologically mature and wealthy countries such as Denmark have largely replaced traditional scheduling strategies and tactics with publishing strategies focused on their in-house VoD services (Bruun, 2023). When looking at the Danish market, the live streaming of television content is, however, still widely used. TV 2 states that around 50% of the time users spend on their VoD service TV 2 Play is spent on the live streaming of programmes (Bruun, 2023). Especially in certain genres with high topicality like news, sports, or some serialised weekly episodes of reality shows, this use of television is similar to traditional viewing habits and connected to the daily and weekly routines of everyday life (Danmarks Radio, 2025, p. 8). These aspects inform us about the continuing importance of the relationship between publishing practices and viewership in which everyday life and television content are still in sync and characterised by some degree of what Scannell called "dailiness" (1996, p. 149f.).

As the final point, the European tradition for upholding a public service media (PSM) sector with extensive cultural-political obligations has been put under a renewed pressure to adapt to the new competitive situation in the television industry. The ideal of public service is built around core values of universality in reach and content; diversity in content, subject matter, and representation; and societal impact and relevance (Donders, 2021). Many European PSM institutions have aimed to employ these values using scheduling strategies and practices across their portfolios of mainstream and niche channels. The increased organisational focus on the in-house VoD services rather than on channels limits the playing field. As documented by Bruun et al. (2025a), the prime space of a VoD service does not equal the possibilities for exposure diversity compared to a multi-channel portfolio of content. Furthermore, many PSM are struggling to attract and retain an audience, especially among the younger generations. Employing social media that use different strategies and publication practices are seen as necessary moves to meet the remits. This inclusion, nevertheless, represents many dilemmas for PSM, as pointed out by, for example, Moe (2024).

## Research on VoD publishing strategies

Based on these challenges to TV natives, this special issue taps into an emerging interest in television studies around publishing strategies (e.g., Kelly, 2021; Bruun, 2020, 2021; Johnson, 2019). We therefore imagine that this issue of *MedieKultur* can contribute to strengthening the research interest with an issue, which focuses on television publishing from different perspectives, using different methodological approaches, and in different national contexts. Similarly, fruitful contributions with a focus on the general changes to television and the industry have been presented by Johnson (2019) and by Lotz (2014).

Furthermore, the existing research on this topic so far has been given an elaborated and inspiring review in a contribution by Lobato, Scarlata, and Wils (2024). They identify research investigating the changing publishing practices from a catalogue or an interface analysis approach all driven by questions concerning the diversity, prominence, and discoverability of the content published. These approaches and issues cut across the VoD services and catalogues produced by the international streaming services as well as nationally-based services and the legacy television companies' VoD services in different markets.

In line with the focus of this contribution and the special issue's call for more research into the developments of the legacy television companies, rather than Netflix, we would like to emphasise the work by Kelly. His analysis of the BBC iPlayer catalogue (2021) showed the genre profile of their VoD services over time, and this approach was expanded in Kelly's comparative work together with Sørensen (2021) on the iPlayer and DRTV in *MedieKultur's* issue about streaming media. Other relevant studies have been conducted by Lassen and Sørensen (2021), who also analysed the catalogue of DRTV over 17 months and showed how the editorial changes happen within the hero board and the in top decks of the service's interface. A combined focus on content priorities and genre profiles was also used in a comparative study by Bruun et al. (2025a) of 10 public service VoD services' prime space in seven markets. This research compared the publishing on the VoD services with the scheduling during prime time on the main channels from each organisation and identified profound differences between the organisations and their use of the two outlets. In a similar comparative study by Bruun, Johnson, and Lassen (2025b), the level of AI-driven personalisation of the PSM VoD services was investigated, and the study documented a rather low level of such personalisation, while editorial curation done by the editorial teams still dominated the practices identified.

Among these examples of studies of publishing, some scholars have been more interested in investigating the use of the certain genres of television in this new competitive situation. There have been investigations of, for example, news content (Cores-Sarría et al., 2024), documentary content (Bruun & Bille, 2022), and reality TV content (Andersen, 2024) on various VoD services, which have revealed new publishing strategies and, for instance, that a genre like news is at risk of getting low visibility on certain VoD services. These studies point to why researchers and policymakers should regularly keep a close eye on significant changes in VoD services' genre use, content visibility, and genre diversity. Finally, it is worth mentioning a few examples of studies of how the interplay between linear and nonlinear outlets are used by, for example, Australian broadcasters' VoD services (Scarlata & Lobato, 2023), and how continuity on the linear channels of DR and TV 2 changed and increasingly pointed the audience in the direction of VoD instead of the broadcast channels (Bruun & Lassen, 2023, 2004). So far, the new publishing practices have only to a very limited degree been investigated from a production studies approach (see Bruun, 2020, 2023), where the editorial decisions around publishing are studied. In

fact, television studies could benefit from strengthening this approach to better understand how the overall industry and television as a cultural forum is developing. There is also a lack of audience studies of how these new practices can influence viewers and their use of television content. The findings from, for example, Johnson et al.'s (2023) project "Routes to content" and Frey's work (2021) call for similar investigations in other countries.

Finally, we would like to stress an overall problem for this kind of research on the development of television. We as researchers face a material and methodological challenge concerning the collecting and archiving of online TV. So far, public libraries have been eager to record and archive broadcasted television programmes to preserve this kind of cultural heritage. In Denmark, the Royal Library maintains such a media collection that still provides solid data access to broadcasted programmes. Furthermore, the programming schedules or TV guides are possible to retrieve either from databases publishing the weekly schedule or by retrieving the actual on-air broadcasted flow of programmes, including its continuity sequences, trailers, and commercial breaks. However, these data collections were based on a broadcast paradigm that is not sufficient anymore, as television has become online television.

A major problem is that the VoD interfaces behind logins are not archived systematically, which means that we as researchers face several challenges when trying to collect data about VoD services (Aegidius & Andersen, 2024; Kelly, 2021). The consequences are that both current and future researchers will not be able to find reliable public information about what VoD interfaces behind logins have looked like, and then it will not be possible to answer questions about publishing strategies, prominence, or diversity on VoD services in the past. Except for some of the VoD services run by public service institutions, most other services require a login to access the actual interface. Every day, the knowledge about the exact design, composition, and functionality of these interfaces is lost and can likely not be recovered or recreated. In this sense, it is also a loss of significant cultural heritage, because these interfaces are continuously influencing the users' viewing habits and everyday lives. Subsequently, there is no recording or archiving of how a medium of paramount importance to the cultural-political fabric and developments in a country has been gradually changing over time. Furthermore, these changes in publishing practices are happening very fast, and only because of certain handheld archives – made by some of the aforementioned university scholars – is a small portion of this data collected and can document a few of these developments. These archives are less reliable and will likely not be sufficient to answer important questions in the future about all the different changes in publishing dynamics that have taken place in the streaming era. Of course, we as researchers must keep developing methods to collect and analyse data about VoD services to address some of these challenges. However, we strongly hope that politicians and policymakers will soon support better national collections of these interfaces and ensure better transparency around VoD publishing practices. Because without such archives, it

will in fact also be very difficult for them to monitor and regulate VoD services or to settle questions of misconduct.

## The articles in this special issue

This special issue on publishing strategies in online television consists of five articles. The first is a study that adds to the body of work on VoD catalogues, where Cathrin Bengesser, Marius Øfsti, and Martin Trans have used a comparative and quantitative approach to study PSM catalogues in five European markets. Their study contributes to the understanding of European PSM by focusing on the content offered in their VoD catalogues. It examines levels of exclusivity and qualitative difference of European content offers. Their findings contribute to a multifaceted picture of distinctiveness as a relational concept, which can help us understand how PSM institutions try to stand out from their competitors in the different markets.

The focus on content and distinctiveness is followed by two contributions that present detailed investigations of how specific PSM organisations have changed and adapted their publishing practises. First, Julie Münter Lassen uses a much-needed production studies approach to understand how the new publishing practices are changing from within DR. DR's organisational and strategic changes in 2018-2024 is the focus, and the findings show how a change towards an online PSM identity has evolved but also presented DR with new challenges. Second, Catalina Iordache, Dan Martin, and Catherine Johnson employ a comparative approach to investigate how public service algorithms are developed in practice in the cases of the BBC (UK) and VRT (Flanders-Belgium), and how their implementation is guided by the organisations' remit. Through document analysis and interviews, the authors discuss the ways in which market contexts, policy contexts, and organisational contexts inform the use of algorithms by the two organisations and suggest the need for a re-theorisation of public service algorithms.

These three contributions provide important accounts of how PSM organisations are adapting to the new phase in the internationalisation of the television industry. Still, more studies of the private television sector would be a welcome addition to this body of research in the future. As an example, in small markets such as Denmark, commercial television has adapted to an online identity in different ways compared with the public service media organisations.

The final two articles in this special issue employ a genre-based approach. The article by Pedro Gallo and Juan Ignacio Fernández-Herruzo provides eye-opening information on and discussion of what happens when a powerful online retailer like Amazon acquires control over the production of a popular reality talent show format: *Operación Triunfo*. Their study documents how the format has been changed and yet has preserved its simultaneity as a live event. This points to how television studies need a broader view on how different types of international streaming services make use of the traditional genres

of television. Their study also reveals how Amazon uses cross-media practices and the public interest around this popular format to push audiences towards their conglomerate's other products and platforms (e.g., Twitch, Amazon Music, and the Amazon marketplace) through the heavy use of product placement and brand sponsorships to maximise their earnings. These insights also point to how there is a lack of studies on how the external or independent production companies in the television industry are navigating their business relationships and are reacting to changing conditions.

The final article in this special issue is by Lene Heiselberg and Lucía Cores-Sarría and combines a genre focus with a production studies approach. Their article describes how the news departments at Danish national and regional PSM have experimented with new narrative structures to adapt television news to the on-demand and streaming habits of the audience. More of such production culture investigations and genre studies are necessary to follow how different genres and types of content are curated and published as well as revised in the publishing practices of online television. We need studies of how both new players and legacy companies in the television industry appropriate or abandon major television genres such as, for example, sports, lifestyle programming, quiz and gameshows, talk shows, live events, and so on. In a time where fiction series can be an expensive and sometimes risky product to make, we should keep a close eye on how content providers turn to these other (sometimes) more cost-effective genres. In our experience, it is exactly by studying one or more specific genres that we gain valuable knowledge about publishing strategies and learn how the priorities of both small and large VoD services are shifting.

## Open section

### Stinne Gunder Strøm Krogager

This issue also contains four articles and an essay in the open section. In the article "Communicating craft: Builders on Instagram", Troels Fibæk Bertel maps communicative practices and strategies of Danish carpenters and woodworkers. By using quantitative content analysis and through the analysis of textual characteristics of posts, type of content, and engagement with followers, the study provides understanding of the mediatisation of crafts on social media.

In the article "Why can't we be friends (with streamers): Content creators and streamers' perception of parasocial relationships and audience management", Emory S. Daniel, Steph Orme, and Arienne Ferchaud explore the concept of parasocial relationships from the side of streamers. Through interviews with Twitch streamers, the authors further an understanding as well as an evolution of the concept – as the nature of parasocial relationships keeps changing through the means of live streaming.

Louise Yung Nielsen, Jo Krøjer, and Mette Lykke Nielsen have also conducted interviews with platform workers, such as gamers and influencers, and in the article "The

entanglement of emotional labour and digital work platforms: A study of how professional gamers, influencers, and gig and crowd workers experience the affordances of digital work platforms", they show how workers experience the affordances of the platform they use and how these affordances demand performance of extensive emotional labour from them.

In the article "Representing and rekindling conviviality: The role of Burgaz islanders' media productions in resilience, solidarity, and reunion", Deniz Neriman Duru explores how Burgaz islanders produce and use media to reunite a separated community of islanders. Building on longitudinal ethnographic research, the study analyses how the islanders cope with collective trauma and political crises, and through interviews, Duru explores the production side as well as the reception side of different media texts and representations of diversity, conviviality, and solidarity.

This issue is concluded by Frands Mortensen and Erik Nordahl Svendsen's essay in Danish "Hvorfor dog DR2?", which examines the birth of the TV channel DR2. This media historic text describes how a traditional (Danish) public service organisation undergoes great changes to strengthen public service, and the development of DR2 also represents an advanced case of organisational development. This contribution has not been subject to double-blinded peer review.

## References

Andersen, M. M. T. (2024). Showcasing reality content on the front page: Comparing four services on the Danish video streaming market. *Critical Studies in Television*, Online first. https://doi.org/10.1177/17496020241259734

Aegidius, A. L., & Andersen, M. M. T. (2024). Collecting streaming services. *Convergence*, *30*(5), 1665–1684. https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565241253906

Bruun, H. (2023). The changing role of a video-on-demand service in the strategies of public service media: A production study of Danish TV 2 Play and its impact on the production culture of the schedulers, 2016-2022. *Nordicom Review*, *44*(2), 235–252. https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2023-0013

Bruun, H. (2021). From scheduling to trans-programming. *Media, Culture & Society*, *43*(4), 613–628. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443720957556

Bruun, H. (2020). *Re-scheduling television in the digital era*. Oxon: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429276309

Bruun, H. & Bille, B. K. (2022). Television documentaries as spearheads in public service television: Comparing scheduling practices on the linear channels and video-on-demand services of Danish TV 2 and DR. *Nordicom Review*, *43*(1), 79–93. https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2022-0005

Bruun, H., Johnson, C., Lassen, J. M., Nucci, A., Switskowski, F., & Raats, T. (2025a). Public service media on demand: Comparative study of public service media companies' editorial practices on their VoD-services in the age of platformisation. *Journal of Digital Media and Policy*, Online first. https://doi.org/10.1386/jdmp_00167_1

Bruun, H., Lassen, J. M., & Johnson, C. (2025b). *Streaming public service television in the age of platforms: Lessons from a comparative analysis of VoD publishing and personalisation in seven markets*. Public Service Media in the Age of Platforms, Policy Brief 2. https://doi.org/10.48785/100/298

Bruun, H., & Lassen, J. M. (2024). Pushing public service television online: A quantitative study of the cross-promotional continuity announcements on DR and TV 2 Denmark. *Norsk Medietidsskrift*, *31*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.18261/nmt.31.1.3

Bruun, H., & Lassen, J. M. (2023). New scheduling strategies and production culture in public service television in the digital era: The case of DR and TV 2 in Denmark. *Critical Studies in Television*, *19*(2), 182–200. https://doi.org/10.1177/17496020231196422

Cores-Sarría, L., Andersen, M. M. T., & Heiselberg, L. (2024). The role of news content on Danish broadcasters' streaming services: A longitudinal content analysis of two video-on-demand services. *Journalistica*, *18*(1), 142–167. https://doi.org/10.7146/journalistica.v18i1.142892

Danmarks Radio. (2025). *DR Medieudviklingen 2024*. https://www.dr.dk/om-dr/fakta-om-dr/dr-analyse

Donders, K. (2021). *Public service media in Europe: Law, theory, and practice*. Oxon: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351105569

Ellis, J. (2000). Scheduling: The last creative act in television? *Media, Culture and Society*, *22*(1), 25–38. https://doi.org/10.1177/016344300022001002

Frey, M. (2021). *Netflix recommends: Algorithms, film choice, and the history of taste*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Iordache, C. (2023). Netflix and streaming video: The business of subscriber-funded video on demand. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *67*(1), 138–140. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2022.2150192

Johnson, C. (2019). *Online TV*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315396828

Johnson, C., Hills, M., & Dempsey, L. (2023). An audience studies' contribution to the discoverability and prominence debate: Seeking UK TV audiences' 'routes to content'. *Convergence*, *30*(5), 1625–1645. https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565231222605

Kelly, J. P. (2021). 'Recommended for you': A distant reading of BBC iPlayer. *Critical Studies in Television*, *16*(3), 264–285. https://doi.org/10.1177/17496020211024201

Kelly, J. P., & Sørensen, J. K. (2021). "What's on the interface tonight?": A longitudinal analysis of the publishing strategies of public service video-on-demand platforms in the UK and Denmark. *MedieKultur*, *37*(70), 66–90. https://doi.org/10.7146/mediekultur.v37i70.122386

Lassen, J. M. (2023). The reappropriation of time in television: How traditional qualities of broadcast media are being adopted by their video-on-demand services. *Nordicom Review*, *44*(2), 217–234. https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2023-0012

Lassen, J. M., & Sørensen, J. K. (2021). Curation of a personalized video on demand service: A longitudinal study of the Danish public service broadcaster DR. *Iluminace*, *33*(1), 5–33. https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1693

Lobato, R. (2019). *Netflix nations: The geography of digital distribution*. NYU Press.

Lobato, R., Scarlata, A., & Wils, T. (2024). Video-on-demand catalog and interface analysis: The state of research methods. *Convergence*, *30*(4), 1331-1347. https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565241261992

Lotz, A. (2014). *The television will be revolutionized*. NYU Press.

Moe, H. (2024). Embrace or leave social media? On the viability of public service media organizations' strategies facing platform power. *European Journal of Communication*, *39*(6), 595–607. https://doi.org/10.1177/02673231241290097

Pajkovic, N. (2021). Algorithms and taste-making: Exposing the Netflix recommender system's operational logics. *Convergence*, *28*(1), 214–235. https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565211014464

Scannell. P. (1996). *Radio, television and modern life*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Scarlata, A., & Lobato, R. (2023). Broadcaster video-on-demand in Australia: Platforms, policy and local content. *Media International Australia*, Online first. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X231177122

Søndergaard, H., Andersen, T. F., Borker, L., Hjarvard, S., Jantzen, C., Løngreen, H., Rasmussen, T. A., Schu-
bart, R., Tufte, T., & Vinderskov, K. (2003). Indledning. *MedieKultur: Journal of Media and Communica-
tion Research*, *19*(35), 1–3. https://doi.org/10.7146/mediekultur.v19i35.1227

Van Es, K. (2024). Exploring Netflix myths: Towards more media industry studies and empirical research in
studying video-on-demand. *Critical Studies in Television*, Online first.
https://doi.org/10.1177/17496020241297618