

2020 in Review

Who would have expected 2020 to turn out the way it has?

Last year, we wrote of CNM's desire to continue "pushing the frontier of our education and research as a leader of the communication and media studies landscape both regionally and around the world". While 2020 has thrown us an unexpected curveball, we are proud to say that CNM has still made key contributions towards NUS' vision of becoming *a leading global university, shaping the future*.

Active Citizenry and Community Impact

In 2020, CNM dedicated significant effort in contributing to the University and the community. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, and during the General Elections 2020 (GE2020), our faculty and students impacted community through their research and applied work.

In line with our department's mandate to pursue *Communication for Transformation*, our colleagues worked extensively to highlight and bridge the digital challenges exposed during the pandemic.

The growth of the pandemic was accompanied by the spread of rumours and false information on the internet. In response, Dr Elmie Nekmat and Prof Audrey Yue offered [five key strategies in combatting this infodemic at the World Economic Forum](#), based on our analysis of news articles from three Asian countries. Dr Natalie Pang also discussed how [instant messaging platforms can be an empowering platform for civic engagement and verification of online falsehoods](#), and highlighted the [additional difficulties faced by elderly in adapting to digital living](#). Meanwhile, Dr Jiang Shaohai discussed ways to [combat rising scams in telemedicine with CNA938](#), while Dr Elmie Nekmat participated in a diplomacy training organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation and recommended ways for governments to conduct crisis communications digitally when face-to-face interaction is not possible.

Dr Natalie Pang also led [initiatives to purchase second-hand laptops for needy families](#). Through the combined efforts of staff and students from CNM and beyond, and in partnership with the People's Association Youth Movement and Daughters of Tomorrow initiative, her campaign provided more than 20 laptops for needy families in Yishun and Kolam Ayer.



Distribution of laptops at Kolam Ayer Community Club



Setting up laptops prior to the distribution.



The CNM Student's Society also launched a new initiative, CNM Cares, to address the challenges in hardware and soft skills faced by disadvantaged students in a digital society. During the Christmas season, a team of students worked with Pasir Ris East Community Club to conduct a workshop for young families on cyberbullying and online scams. We applaud their effort in applying their education towards making a real difference.

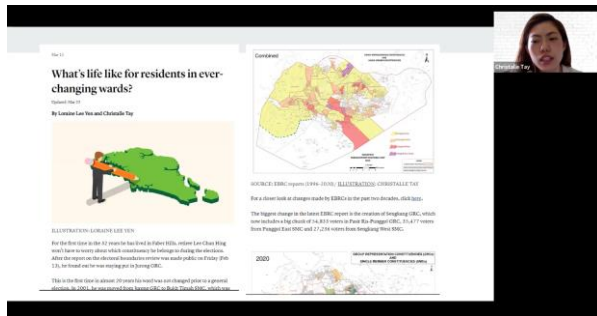
GE2020 offered CNM yet another opportunity to impact our community. Under the leadership of Associate Professor (Practice) Bertha Henson, students from NM4883G Election Reporting created "Our Class Notes," a portal *for first-time voters, by first-time voters*. Our students researched extensively various topics related to the Elections, some of which were cited in Parliament, and also featured on Yahoo! News:

Article	Author(s)
Singapore GE2020 in numbers	Christalle Tay; Lauren Ong
GE2020: A primer for first-time voters from role of MPs to GRC	Christalle Tay
Town council websites to look at when you're nostalgic for old-school Internet	Daryl Choo; Christalle Tay

Christalle Tay and Ethan Tay also participated in a [podcast with social service research website, socialservice.sg, and discussed interesting issues surrounding GE2020](#), including the Parliamentary Elections (COVID-19 Special Arrangements) Bill, and the political campaigning which was held in a Pofma environment for the first time.

A/P Bertha Henson also published *GE2020: Fair or Foul?* (Epigram Books, 2020), which consolidates her and the students' experiences from GE2020. CNM organised a virtual sharing session to celebrate the launch of this book. Close to 300 people attended the session. We were privileged to also be joined by a

panel of distinguished speakers, which included Mr Han Fook Kwang, Editor-at-Large of *The Straits Times*, Mr Edmund Wee, CEO and Publisher of Epigram Books, CNM Lecturer Dr Wu Shangyuan, and alumni Christalle Tay and Daryl Choo. You may also read some of A/P Bertha Henson’s thoughts [here](#).



Alumna Christalle Tay sharing her experiences covering GE2020 for the “Our Class Notes” project.



A/P Bertha Henson candidly interacted with attendees of the webinar.

Some of our colleagues were also involved in analysing GE2020. Dr Shobha Avadhani spoke of [the need for political campaigners to continue conveying sincerity and empathy through physical presence on the ground](#). Dr Natalie Pang discussed the elections with [Mothership on their Polling Day show](#), while both Dr Pang and Associate Professor Zhang Weiyu further discussed the role of the media, the impact of social media, and its implications for political campaigning in future elections in a [forum on Internet and Media Use in GE2020 conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies](#).



Dr Natalie Pang on Mothership’s Polling Day show.



Associate Professor Zhang Weiyu and Dr Natalie Pang on IPS’ forum on Internet and Media Use in GE2020, alongside alumna Dr Carol Soon (CNM PhD ’11)

Beyond the key events of our 2020 national calendar, we also wrote commentaries or participated in interviews in response to relevant events of the day, which included:

Article / Interview	Author(s) / Interviewee(s)
Viral posts on elder cleaner – let’s review meaning of consent and how personal data is shared online (Today)	Dr Natalie Pang; Wong Kwang Lin
Interview on misconduct of local influencers (CNA 938Live)	Dr Elmie Nekmat
Interview on cyberbullying (CNA 938Live)	Dr Elmie Nekmat

CNM is proud to serve the country in our own small ways. We will continue to commit to *Communication for Transformation*, and impact society with our expertise.

Teaching and Staff Excellence

Teaching remains the cornerstone of our work. Beyond our commitment to society, much work has been put into maintaining a quality learning experience for our students, especially during the difficult transition to e-learning. We are proud to say that many of our academic talents lived up to their expertise in New Media studies, and handled the transition with ease. In fact, many of them leveraged on this opportunity to explore new pedagogies, thus creating an alternative yet impactful learning experience for the students.

As a leading department in Communication and Media Studies, CNM is blessed with top academic talents from the region and beyond. Our faculty and teaching assistants have consistently demonstrated great teaching capacity and were also duly recognised for their ability.

Faculty Teaching Excellence Award for AY2019/2020	Assistant Professor Dr Alex Mitchell Assistant Professor Dr Hong Renyi Lecturer Dr Shobha Avadhani Instructor Mr Tan Kai En
Graduate Students Teaching Award Honour Roll	Augustus Ceasar Destura Latosa Neo Yu Han Ng Yi Kai Aaron Wong Hei Ting
Graduate Students Teaching Award	Baey Shi Chen Farah binti Gulam Hussain Bawany Kway Li Ting Najwa Abdullah Xi Yipeng Xu Xinyue Zhu Zicheng

“
To get students to think about *theory*, I get them to create *games* and *interactive stories*.”



DR ALEX MITCHELL
NUS Dept of Communications & New Media
FASS FTEA 2020 Recipient

In particular, Dr Alex Mitchell was interviewed for his outstanding work in promoting experiential learning through hands-on practice. Dr Mitchell shared his experience overcoming traditional barriers faced introducing practice-based teaching approaches in the earlier years of his time with CNM, and how students in his classes have benefitted from thinking about theory by creating games and interactive stories. You may read more about Dr Mitchell’s work [here](#).

CNM is also actively seeking new talents to join our family, especially those who share our common vision towards teaching excellence. Since the start of 2020, we have welcomed many new members to our fraternity. They include:

Name	Appointment	Previous experience
Prof Qiu Linchuan Jack	Professor	Professor, Chinese University of Hong Kong
A/P Maite Soto-Sanfiel	Associate Professor	Associate Professor, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Dr Angela Li Ke	Assistant Professor	PhD Candidate, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Dr Ozan Kuru	Assistant Professor	Howard Deshong Postdoctoral Fellow, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
Dr Subhayan Mukerjee	Assistant Professor	PhD Candidate, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
Dr Dennis Ang	Lecturer	PhD Candidate, National University of Singapore
Dr Jaime Hsu Fang-Tze	Lecturer	Curator, NUS Museum
Dr Elizer Jay de los Reyes	NUS Fellow (Southeast Asia) <i>(Postdoctoral Fellow w.e.f 2021)</i>	PhD Candidate, University of Melbourne

CNM is confident that our new members will greatly value-add our department with their expertise.

The work of our administrative staff is crucial towards supporting our teaching fraternity. Mr Michael Basaldella from the administrative team has been awarded the **FASS Outstanding Service Award** this year, in recognition of his immense contribution to the department.

CNM also spearheaded the adoption of digital means in engaging potential students during NUS and FASS Open Houses. Potential students had the opportunity to join live engagement sessions on our social media platforms, partake in an Ask-me-Anything (AmA) on Reddit, and even attended masterclasses held by our faculty members. The pandemic forced us to reinvent, and the department indeed rose to the challenge.



Live engagement with CNM staff and students, led by Dr Sean Chaidaroon



CNM Masterclass on Public Speaking, conducted by Dr Shobha Avadhani



Live AmA on Facebook and Instagram, led by Dr Natalie Pang



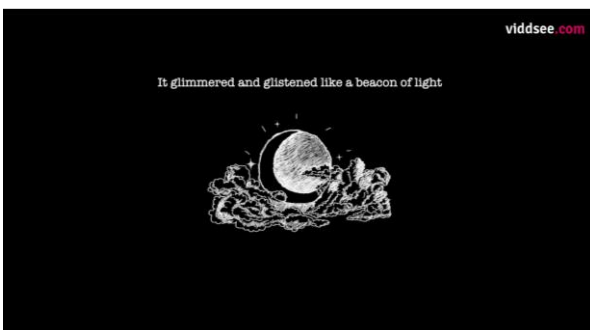
Student-created content from NM3222 shared on our social media platforms

Student Excellence

The following CNM students were given due recognition for their academic achievements in AY 2019/20:

PRIZE	RECIPIENT
NTUC Income Prize	Teo Zi Lin
Special Prize (Communications and New Media)	Alvarez Brielle Clavel
CNM Best Communication Management Prize	Celine Goh Shi Ying
China Daily Prize	Lim Beng Hiang Daniel Ong Hui Xian Jong Ching Yee Sharmaine Jean Laquindanum David Iqbal Saifuddin Ahmad Ng Wei Ting Sheryl Tham Si Jia Nurul Amirah binte Samsudin Lee Si Xuan

Outside of their scholastic and academic achievements, our alumna and students are also making waves in their respective areas of interest!



Soh Kai Xin

Nominee, Audience Choice Awards, Viddsee Juree Awards 2020
Out-of-Competition Feature

Kai Xin's animation video project, "Claire de Lune," was created as part of her coursework in NM3230 Digital Storytelling. Inspired by Debussy's composition of the same name, Kai Xin used the Moon to explore themes related to coming-of-age and hope.

[Watch here](#)



Jolies Tan (Class of 2020)

Co-Founder, MatchHub

Jolies and her friends from NUS Overseas Colleges (NOC) [pioneered an internship-matching portal, MatchHub](#), which connects applicants with companies based not just on academic performance, but even through personality and hobbies.



Danielle Chan (Class of 2018)

Co-Founder, Citiponics

Food security came to the forefront of our attention when borders were shut due to Covid-19. Danielle commits herself to educating people about farming in Singapore, and redefining the relationship that we have with food. Read more about her feature on Mothership [here](#).

Graduate Conference 2020

Our graduate students succeeded in organising our annual Graduate Conference (gCON). Into its second year, gCON aims to showcase the research and professional expertise of our graduate students. Eleven graduate students presented papers surround three themes: CommunicAsia, Technological Re-imaginings, and Everyday Communication.



The organising committee, led by graduate student Cho Soo Kyung, succeeded in putting together CNM’s first-ever virtual gCON, which was well-received not just by the 60-odd attendees comprising not just CNM staff and students, but guests from other departments too. We were also delighted to be joined by two keynote guests: Dr Dominic Yeo, CNM Alumnus and Assistant Professor at Hong Kong Baptist University; and Dr Sharon Chang, Research Director of Culture Academy at Ministry of Community, Culture, and Youth, and Chief Research Officer at National Arts Council.

Congratulations to the following award recipients from gCON 2020!

Best Full Paper	<p>Purnima Kamath PhD Candidate, Communications and New Media</p> <p><i>A Lacanian Perspective on Artificial Intelligence</i></p>
Top Presenters	<p>Nurul Huda Rashid PhD Candidate, Cultural Studies in Asia</p> <p><i>Women in War: Annotating with Art against the Algorithmic Logic</i></p> <hr/> <p>Farah Bawany Master’s Student, Communications and New Media</p> <p><i>Love and Sex in Covid-19</i></p> <hr/> <p>Roe Curie Master’s Student, Communications and New Media</p> <p><i>Re-examining the game narrator in unreliable narration: A Lacanian approach</i></p>

CNM is always inspired by the outstanding achievements of our students and alumni! You can read more about their excellent work [here](#).

Advancing Research Capabilities

Our academic talents are not just great teachers, but superb researchers as well. This year, our faculty members have been awarded a number of grants to further their research interests, including:

Provost's Educator Award	Dr Jinna Tay <i>"Exploring pedagogies and programme for Work-Integrated-Learning (WIL) with a view to fine-tuning CNM Compulsory Internship Programme (CIP)"</i>
MOE Academic Research Fund Tier 1	Dr Jiang Shaohai <i>Singapore Health Information National Trends Survey</i> Dr Wu Shangyuan <i>"Data Journalism In Asia: Investigating The Growth And Practice Of Data Journalism In Singapore And Hong Kong"</i>
National Heritage Board Fashion Grant	Dr Jinna Tay <i>"Fashion Shows and Fashion Media: Identification and Documentation of Singapore Fashion Heritage"</i>
National Arts Council	Prof Audrey Yue <i>"The Role Of Arts In Fostering Social Cohesion In Australia And In Singapore"</i>
University of Sydney-National University of Singapore Partnership Collaboration Award	A/P Zhang Weiyu <i>"The Mediation Of Civic Learning By Digital Social Media: An Australian-Singapore Comparison"</i>
FASS Staff Research Support Scheme	Dr Jinna Tay and Dr Shobha Avadhani <i>"Emergency remote teaching and beyond: A media studies approach towards understanding student affect and emotional presence in online learning"</i>

Our faculty members and graduate students have also made excellent progress in their research, many of which have been published in top-tiered journals worldwide, or were awarded in renowned international conferences:

Article/Book Title	Author	Accolade
<i>Is media technology a culprit behind the loss of community? A cross-national study on the impact of communication and technology on social capital</i>	Chen Zhuo	Top Paper (Student), Political Communication Division, International Communication Association (ICA) Conference 2020
<i>Spiral of Silence Pathways Linking Perceived Social Capital and Individual Expression on Social Media</i>	Dr Elmie Nekmat, Magel Ordoñez, Ismaharif Ismail Dr Jung Eun Hwa	Top Paper (Faculty), Mass Communication Division, International Communication Association (ICA) Conference 2020



Dr Wu Shangyuan, Lecturer at CNM, was appointed International Engagement Editor of *Digital Journalism*. *Digital Journalism* is ranked a super-tier journal in communication and media studies (#9/411 according to the SCImago journal rankings). As an ambassador to the journal, Dr Wu will work alongside the best in the field to reach out to journalism scholars from around the world and encourage the publication of a broad range of political, economic, social, and cultural perspectives. We are proud to have Dr Wu represent us with her leadership and expertise in the editorial board of this distinguished journal.

To further enrich the research experience of both our staff and students, CNM also organised 13 research talks in 2020. As a result of Covid-19 restrictions, we were not able to organise as many talks as we did in past years. However, we took this opportunity to instead focus on having our own faculty members share their research, thus increasing the research visibility and profile of our colleagues. The conduct of virtual research talks also attracted a far larger number of audience, to the delight of our speakers.

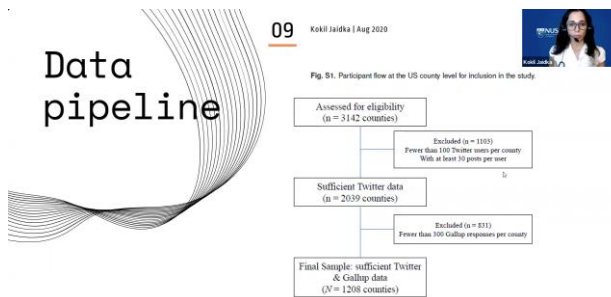


Facebook helps find the "needle in a haystack" – Brad Parscales, Trump Digital Director, 2016

Professor Jennifer Stromer-Galley delivered a talk on "Social Media Advertising in the 2020 U.S. Elections," at the launch of Dr Taberez Neyazi's [DigiCamp Dashboard](#), a platform for analysing digital political campaigns.

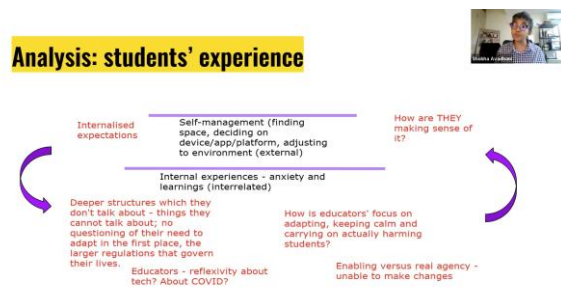


Dr Alex Mitchell delivering his lecture on repeat experiences of dynamic computational media.



NUS Department of Communications and New Media Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Dr Kokil Jaidka's research estimates the well-being of people within a particular geography based on text mining from Tweets.



Dr Shobha Avadhani and Dr Jinna Tay are working on a study on the impact of emergency remote teaching and online learning on student affect and emotional presence.

Industry Orientation

A unique trait about CNM has always been its orientation towards industry and practice. In spite of the Covid-19 pandemic, CNM continued to witness students embarking on the [Compulsory Internship Programme](#), with an additional focus on supporting students through their (largely) virtual and displaced internship experience. The largely positive feedback from both employers and students helped to affirm the CNM's endeavour in providing a fruitful but safe internship experience for all our students.



Our Instructor in digital and interactive storytelling, Ms Sarah-Tabea Sammel, initiated the [CNM Production Studio](#) Interest Group. The members of the Interest Group completed their first industry assignment with Asia Video Industry Association (AVIA). They took charge of filming short interviews to explore the worldview of younger audiences and the next generation of media consumers and content creators, and the interviews were screened during AVIA's OTTT Summit.

CNM has also worked hard to offer platforms for students to interact with industry practitioners. In collaboration with the Photographic Society of Singapore, CNM organised a panel discussion titled "Resilience and Photography: Using Smartphones as Minimal Equipment for Photographic Storytelling". Students had the opportunity to interact with industry experts as they discussed the concurrently boundless and bounded world of smartphone photography, in the context of limitations arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a bid to provide greater interaction and partnership opportunities with key industry players, the CNM Society renewed its partnership with and membership in the Institute of Public Relations Singapore (IPRS) as an IPRS Student Chapter. This arrangement allow CNM students greater access to industry resources and events, including socials, internships, and talks offered by IPRS and their constituent members.

Furthermore, CNM also signed a new MOU with IPRS in anticipation of our upcoming [Master of Social Sciences \(Communication\) Coursework Programme](#). Students in this new Masters programme will benefit from mentorship and internship opportunities with leading industry experts and accredited members of IPRS. In addition, graduates from this Masters programme will be automatically eligible for associate membership within IPRS. We are confident that these arrangements will afford our students greater opportunities as they venture forth in their careers.

Lifelong Learning

Singapore aspires to [become a world leader in cultivating lifelong learning](#). CNM, likewise, strives to offer opportunities for mid-career professionals to upgrade and upskill themselves. We want everybody to have the chance to enjoy CNM's quality education, and to be better prepared to face new, complex challenges in the digital world.

This year, CNM launched [three Professional Certificates \(PC\), which includes 15 Continuing Education and Training \(CET\) short courses](#). Since then, around 100 participants have completed our trainings. Our CET short courses have received positive reviews, and we are glad to have supported these participants in their career progression.

In addition, CNM received approval to conduct the [aforementioned Master of Social Sciences \(Communication\) coursework programme](#). Recruitment has commenced, and its inaugural class will join CNM in August 2021. We are confident that these programmes will plug existing gaps within our higher education sector, and respond effectively to the demands of the industry. We look forward to welcoming our new students.

Shaping the Future

2020 has been a difficult year for everyone around the world, and for some more than others. Yet, it has also been a remarkable year for CNM, and for us as individuals, to rethink pre-existing assumptions and reinvent ourselves for the “New Normal”. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who have journeyed alongside us in 2020, and I look forward to working with all of you as we continue pushing the frontier of our education and research as a leader of the communication and media studies landscape both regionally and around the world.

Professor Audrey Yue
Head of Department