



Journal of European Periodical Studies

an online journal by ESPRit, European Society for Periodical Research

Women Editors in Europe

Marianne Van Remoortel, Julie M. Birkholz, Maria Alesina,
Christina Bezari, Charlotte D'Eer, and Eloise Forestier

Journal of European Periodical Studies, 6.1 (Summer 2021)

ISSN 2506-6587

Content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Licence

The *Journal of European Periodical Studies* is hosted by Ghent University

Website: ojs.ugent.be/jeps

To cite this article: Marianne Van Remoortel, Julie M. Birkholz, Maria Alesina, Christina Bezari, Charlotte D'Eer, and Eloise Forestier, 'Women Editors in Europe', *Journal of European Periodical Studies*, 6.1 (Summer 2021), 1–6

Women Editors in Europe

MARIANNE VAN REMOORTELE, JULIE M. BIRKHOLZ,
MARIA ALESINA, CHRISTINA BEZARI, CHARLOTTE D'EER, AND
ELOISE FORESTIER
GHENT UNIVERSITY
Marianne.VanRemoortel@UGent.be

How did women participate in public life, how did they make their voices heard, and how did they create change at a time when their formal rights and access to power were limited? These are the questions that we explored in the past six years as part of the ERC Starting Grant project 'Agents of Change: Women Editors and Socio-Cultural Transformation in Europe, 1710–1920' (2015–21; acronym WeChangEd). Our project focused on periodical editorship as a pivotal yet understudied aspect of women's participation in European society and culture. Together we examined how editorship enabled a number of women from the early eighteenth century onwards to bypass the educational, political, legal, and other access routes to power and influence that were largely closed off to them and to exercise a form of soft power: as periodical editors these women stepped into the public arena, participated in transnational exchanges of ideas, and shaped key processes of social and cultural change.

The main outputs of our project are a database, a digital storytelling app, and a series of thematic studies. We created a comprehensive relational database collecting biographical and bibliographical data on over 1,800 female editors and their periodicals in twenty-six European languages. The backbone of the database is the data model that we developed in accordance with Linked Open Data principles. It is the first sustainable, collaborative data model for periodical studies built on stable identifiers and controlled vocabularies and ontologies that are universally applicable across language boundaries.¹ In the final stages of the project, we transferred all data to the collaboratively edited knowledge base Wikidata. The WeChangEd dataset on women editors thus not only contributes to the diversity of open historical and cultural data and to closing the gender gap in Wikidata (at present, eighty per cent of the items describing people represent males); it can also be enriched by other projects collecting similar or related data.² Following the transfer to Wikidata, we collaborated with developers Katherine Thornton and Kenneth Seals-Nutt to build a Wikidata-powered digital storytelling app that presents the data as visually compelling narratives accessible to the wider public.³

Meanwhile, we conducted in-depth research on eighteenth- to early-twentieth-century periodicals edited by women in Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish. We studied their impact on key aspects of modern European societies, with particular attention to the ways in which women's

- 1 On the development of the data model, see Jasper Schelstraete and Marianne Van Remoortel, 'Towards a Sustainable and Collaborative Data Model for Periodical Studies', *Media History*, 25.3 (2019), 336–54.
- 2 See the forthcoming article Katherine Thornton, Kenneth Seals-Nutt, Marianne Van Remoortel, Julie M. Birkholz, and Pieterjan De Potter, 'Linking Women Editors of Periodicals to the Wikidata Knowledge Graph', *Semantic Web* (2021).
- 3 The app can be accessed on the WeChangEd project website at www.wechanged.ugent.be.

editorship shaped transnational textual and emotional networks, promoted ideals of deliberative democracy, intertwined with the development of salon culture, contributed to the rise of the European fashion press, and led to the emergence of the first women's rights movements. Yet even with a team of six researchers there was only so much ground that we could cover thematically as well as linguistically. To complement our own expertise, we organized an international conference in Ghent on 28–29 May 2019 that gathered a wealth of additional perspectives on female editors of, for instance, Hungarian avant-garde journals, the French socialist press, Italian Enlightenment periodicals, and feminist periodicals in English, Estonian, Romanian, Slovenian, Polish, and Finnish.

This special issue of the *Journal of European Periodical Studies* on 'Women Editors in Europe' contains a selection of eleven papers presented at the conference. It explores women's editorship in a wide range of national and transnational contexts in five full-length articles by Judit Acsády, Lola Alvarez-Morales and Amelia Sanz-Cabrerizo, Aisha Bazlamit, Andrea Penso, and Joanne Shattock, and five shorter pieces by Petra Bozsoki, Zsolt Mészáros, Marie Nedregotten Sørbo, Zsuzsa Török, and Alicja Walczyna, headed by a provocative essay by the conference keynote speaker, Fionnuala Dillane. Spanning three centuries and seven European languages, this special issue not only offers insight into the breadth and diversity of women's editorial work for the press; it also draws together different national and language traditions in periodical scholarship and makes them accessible to an international audience.

The two articles on eighteenth-century female editors offer case studies from the opposite ends of Europe, yet they share an interest in the intersection of editorship with women's other cultural roles. Andrea Penso's article examines Elisabetta Caminer Turra's (1751–96) editorship of the Italian *Giornale enciclopedico* [*Encyclopedic Journal*] (1774–82) and *Nuovo giornale enciclopedico* [*New Encyclopedic Journal*] (1783–89) as an example of cultural mediation, showing how Turra shaped the reception of English novels in Italy by publishing reviews translated from the French *Journal encyclopédique* [*Encyclopedic Journal*] in her periodicals. Turra's aim as a translator and supervisor of translations 'was not to adhere completely to the original content, but rather to mediate between the originals and the Italian public and its expectations'. Similarly, Marie Nedregotten Sørbo's discussion of the life and career of the first known Danish-Norwegian female editor, Birgithe Kühle (1762–1832), highlights the four roles — of editor, translator, book owner, and printer-publisher — converging in the publication of her weekly journal *Provincial-Lecture* [*Provincial Reading*] (1794), three of which were taken on by Kühle herself. The questions Sørbo's article raises, of how to define women's editorship and disentangle it from the roles and contributions of others, are also addressed by Joanne Shattock in relation to William and Mary (1799–1888) Howitt's joint husband and wife editorship of *Howitt's Journal* (1847–48): 'how do we determine an editor's contribution to any publication, what is the nature of their input, to what extent do they drive the agenda? In the case of a joint editorship how do we identify the contributions and responsibilities of each editor?'

Shattock engages with these questions by unearthing evidence from a large collection of Mary Howitt's letters in the Houghton Library at Harvard. Such unpublished archival materials are treasure troves of information for scholars seeking to gain a behind-the-scenes understanding of women's editorial activities. Judit Acsády's article similarly draws on readers' letters and cards in the archives of the Hungarian Feminist Association to map the local, national, and transnational networks established by the editors of the Hungarian feminist journal *A Nő és a társadalom* [*Woman and Society*] (1907–13) and its successor *A Nő* [*Woman*] (1914–27) to create leverage for the Association's feminist activist agenda. Acsády's is one of four contributions to this special issue showcasing recent scholarship on the Hungarian periodical press. The other

three form a series of short articles on Hungarian women editors of the second half of the nineteenth century. Zsuzsa Török demonstrates how Mária Csapó (1828–96), following the loss of her husband, through her editorship of several women's magazines established a strong public identity as 'Mrs Vachott', mother and 'widow of the nation'. Petra Bozsoki considers the unique efforts of Emília Kánya (1828–1905), editor of *Családi Kör* [*Family Circle*] (1860–80), in female community building and in promoting female authorship to a Hungarian audience. Zsolt Mészáros explores the connections between the transnational and cross-cultural exchanges that took place in the Budapest literary salon hosted by Janka (1843–1901) and Stephanie (1846–89) Wohl and the *Magyar Bazar* [*Hungarian Bazar*] (1866–1904), the popular fashion magazine they co-edited for several decades.

Another woman whose press career was closely interlinked with the salon she organized was the Polish women's rights activist Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit (1859–1921). Her editorship of the feminist periodical *Ster* [*Helm*] (1895–97, 1907–14) is the focus of Alicja Walczyna's article. Just as Kuczalska-Reinschmit's Warsaw salon 'served as a meeting place for the major figures of the Polish feminist movement', *Ster* enabled Kuczalska-Reinschmit to bring together in print many of the most prominent public voices in the Polish feminist movement. If, as Walczyna puts it, Kuczalska-Reinschmit's mission was to 'edit at the service of Polish women's rights', Aisha Bazlamit's article presents a somewhat different incarnation of female editorship in an activist context. Her study of the weekly newspaper *L'Harmonie sociale* [*Social Harmony*] (1892–93), edited by the French feminist and socialist Aline Valette (1850–99), reveals how the periodical provided Valette with a fertile ground and mouthpiece for her vision on the emancipation of working women. Coining her ideas into a theory of 'Sexualism', Valette not only emerged as a highly original voice in the struggle for women's rights. As an editor she also integrated sexualist principles into her own editorial practice by 'symbolically embod[y]ing the image of [the] mother, placed on the summit of the communal hierarchy due to her decisive role in generating and maintaining the product that is *L'Harmonie sociale*'.

Many of the periodicals discussed in this special issue are accessible in digital form. As Lola Alvarez-Morales and Amelia Sanz-Cabrero point out, the recent increase in digitization of periodical collections allows us to test previous findings of periodical scholarship on a much larger scale. In their article on the Spanish press, Alvarez-Morales and Sanz-Cabrero examine to what extent insights into the careers of major figures such as Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851–1921) and Concepción Gimeno de Flaquer (1850–1919) are representative of the practices and experiences of larger numbers of Spanish women editors. Rather than a single case study, their article offers a sweeping view of Spanish women's editorship from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. The collaborative work of a literary scholar and a former media CEO, it looks at the past through the lens of the 'glass ceiling', 'velvet ghetto', and other modern metaphors for the obstacles preventing women from achieving top managerial positions. Alvarez-Morales and Sanz-Cabrero thus challenge the narratives of female empowerment and sisterhood that underlie much feminist scholarship of the past half-century and to which WeChangEd, too, is highly indebted.

By bringing together these different perspectives, we hope to stimulate further discussion of women's editorship across languages and scholarly traditions. The pressing need for such debate is highlighted in more detail in Fionnuala Dillane's article, which provides a thought-provoking preface to this special issue. In her keynote at the 2019 conference, Dillane addressed participants as 'cultural memory activists' for their efforts in recuperating women's editorial work. The next step, to make sense of this newly recovered knowledge, depends on how we structure and conceptualize it. The question

‘What is a periodical editor?’ from which her article sets out may seem a simple one, but Dillane demonstrates that it is complicated in at least two ways. First, existing models and typologies of periodical editorship are invariably derived from examples of male editors. The case studies in this special issue illustrate that these models and typologies fail to capture the diversity and specificity of women’s editorial practices, roles, and identities. Second, the most influential attempts in periodical studies at typologizing editorship have been invariably articulated in English. Robert L. Patten and David Finkelstein’s model is based on their research on *Blackwood’s Magazine*; Matthew Philpotts distills his typology of editorship from case studies on both British and French modernist periodicals, but the language in which he shares it with the scholarly community is English.⁴

This decision may have been motivated by pragmatic and strategic considerations but it has important consequences that need to be addressed in the context of European periodical scholarship. As Dillane rightly asks, ‘when we talk about women periodical editors, do we share a conceptual or definitional understanding of what we mean when we say “editor”, whatever our working language?’ Our experiences in compiling this special issue suggest that we do not, or at least only to some extent. Birgithe Kühle, for instance, signed the foreword to *Provincial-Lecture* ‘Udgiv.’, short for ‘Udgiver’, which depending on the context can mean both ‘editor’ and ‘publisher’ in Danish. How do we do justice to this semantic overlap in a language like English that has separate words for these roles? To complicate matters further, the English word ‘editor’ has semi-false friends in many Romance languages: cognates such as ‘editor’ in Spanish, ‘editore’ in Italian, and ‘éditeur’ in French have the same etymological origins but refer to the publisher (and sometimes also the proprietor) of a periodical rather than the editor in the English sense of the word.

Moreover, English-language periodicals of the period covered in this special issue tend to use the phrase ‘edited by’ to identify male and female editors alike. The French Aline Valette, by contrast, appeared as ‘Directrice’ — the female equivalent of ‘Directeur’ [‘Director’] — in the masthead of *L’Harmonie sociale*. Direct translations of the word, such as ‘Directress’ or ‘Female Director’, may accurately convey its lexical meaning but are bound to fall short in capturing its socio-cultural connotations. One could argue that a full understanding of the argument Bazlamit makes about Valette’s ‘sexualist’ approach to editorship requires familiarity with the terminology commonly used in the mastheads of late-nineteenth-century French periodicals. If Valette was able to put her theory into practice, it was also because of this terminology — because of the associations with power, supervision, and control contained in the word ‘Directeur’ that also permeated the feminized form, ‘Directrice’ (in contrast to the feminization of ‘editor’, ‘editress’, which sometimes features on the cover pages of nineteenth-century English-language periodicals). Similarly, Alvarez-Morales and Sanz-Cabrerizo in their discussion of the Catalan women’s weekly *Or y Grana* (1906–07) mention a reader’s letter addressed to ‘Sras. Directora y Redactoras’. The translation we decided on in consultation with the authors is a striking example of what gets lost in translation when we try and talk about women editors across languages. ‘Ladies Editor-in-Chief and Editorial Team Members’ only partially captures the female leadership conveyed by ‘Directora’, and ‘Editorial Team Members’ reflects the lack in the English language of

4 Robert L. Patten and David Finkelstein, ‘Editing Blackwood’s; or, What Do Editors Do?’ in *Print Culture and the Blackwood Tradition, 1805–1930*, ed. by David Finkelstein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), pp. 146–83; Matthew Philpotts, ‘The Role of the Periodical Editor: Literary Journals and Editorial Habitus’, *Modern Language Review*, 107.1 (2012), 39–64.

a single word to refer to individuals carrying out editorial work under the supervision of the main editor.

As we hope to show in this special issue, we can recuperate some of these losses by sharing and discussing research on women editors on platforms that foster cross-cultural and cross-language exchange. Dillane's article offers a productive tool to continue the conversation: not a fixed typology of editorship, but a list of questions organized around an open who, why, what, where, when, and how questioning model. By exploring these questions together, we can go beyond recovering and collecting names, reconstructing career trajectories, and analysing texts, and develop a deeper understanding of how languages and cultures have shaped, and continue to shape, historical practices and perceptions of women's editorship.

This work was supported by the European Research Council under the ERC Starting Grant agreement no. 639668.

Marianne Van Remoortel is Associate Professor of English Literature at Ghent University, Belgium. Her expertise is in nineteenth-century poetry, women's literature, and periodical studies. She is the author of *Lives of the Sonnet, 1787-1895: Genre, Gender and Criticism* (Ashgate, 2011) and *Women, Work and the Victorian Periodical: Living by the Press* (Palgrave, 2015) and editor-in-chief of the *Journal of European Periodical Studies*. In 2015-21, she directed the ERC Starting Grant project 'Agents of Change: Women Editors and Socio-Cultural Transformation in Europe, 1710-1920' (acronym: WeChangEd).

Julie M. Birkholz is Assistant Professor of Digital Humanities at UGent and Lead of the Royal Library of Belgium's Digital Research Lab. Her research expertise is in historical social network analysis. From 2017-20 she was a DH Fellow on the WeChangEd project, investigating the historical networks of women editors, periodicals, and organizations in Europe, as well as the research data manager for the linked open data of the bibliographic information of these editors. From 2014-17 she was a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Centre for Higher Education Governance Ghent, researching the identification of social networks through web data. She holds a doctorate in Organization Sciences from the VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Given that the study of networks, both the theory and methods, crosses disciplines her research is inherently interdisciplinary. Her most recent research explores a computational method for extracting social networks from historical newspapers.

Maria Alesina was a doctoral student on the WeChangEd project in 2016-20. She wrote a dissertation on 'Femininity at the Crossroads: Negotiating National and Gender Peripherality in the Russian Fashion Journal *Modnyi magazin* (1862-1883)' and now works as Policy & Research Assistant at the European Liberal Forum.

Christina Bezari is a post-doctoral researcher and teaching assistant at Ghent University, Belgium. Her research has focused on transnational women's history, literary translation, nineteenth-century salon culture, and women's periodicals in Southern Europe. She is currently working on the project 'Las Vanguardistas. Spanish Women Poets and the International Avant-Garde (1910-1936)', which aims to rethink the generational approach to Spanish vanguard poetry and examine women's connections to transnational avant-garde circles. She previously co-directed a project on comparative

translation studies at Sorbonne University and completed a doctoral dissertation on the WeChangEd project.

Charlotte D'Eer was a doctoral student on the WeChangEd project in 2016–20. She wrote a dissertation on 'Women Editors in the German-Language Periodical Press (1740–1920): Transnational Emotional Networks' and is now Open Science Policy Advisor of the Research Foundation–Flanders.

Eloise Forestier is currently working as an English literature and language lecturer at Ghent University and Saint Louis University (Brussels). She has been appointed postdoctoral fellow by the FWO (Flanders Research Foundation) for a project on late nineteenth-century Swedish feminist periodicals (2021–24). She has published several articles on the transnational and political influence of women editors from Britain, France, and Sweden and has obtained a Curran Fellowship (RSVP, 2021) to research and write a monograph based on her doctoral dissertation, *Women Editors Conducting Deliberative Democracy, A Transnational Study of Liberty, Equality, and Justice in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals*, which she wrote as a member of the WeChangEd project.

Bibliography

- Patten, Robert L., and David Finkelstein, 'Editing *Blackwood's*; or, What Do Editors Do?' in *Print Culture and the Blackwood Tradition, 1805–1930*, ed. by David Finkelstein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), pp. 146–83
- Philpotts, Matthew, 'The Role of the Periodical Editor: Literary Journals and Editorial Habitus', *Modern Language Review*, 107.1 (2012), 39–64