***Visual Communication Quarterly* Special Issue Call for Papers:**
The State of Visual Evidence

Abstract submission deadline:
March 19, 2024
Notification on submitted abstracts:
March 22, 2024
Full manuscript submission deadline:
May 1, 2024

"Pictures provide a point around which other pieces of evidence collect." — *American Film Director Errol Morris*

Morris's sentiment emphasizes the role of images—especially photographs and videos—to help galvanize evidentiary claims and to help create the foundations from which societies can construct notions of truth or fact. Although this role is socially constituted rather than being an inherent quality of the medium (Tagg, 1988), it has been instrumental in both emancipatory and oppressive projects since its inception. Yet, with the surge in visual misinformation, disinformation, and evolving artificial intelligence (AI), the epistemic role of still and moving images to convey truth has reached a crucible. This prompts a critical inquiry: What theoretical and interpretive frameworks, technologies, and practices can identify, categorize, and preserve images' evidentiary value? To delve deeper, what *precisely* is worth preserving?

Thus far, the literature on visual misinformation, disinformation, and AI-generated visuals has primarily explored the social impact of deceptive or augmented visuals. This includes individuals' ability to detect deception (meleers et al., 2023; Köbis et al., 2021; Korshunov & Marcel, 2021; Shahid et al., 2022), public perceptions of deepfakes and their engagement (Ahmed, 2023; Ahmed et al., 2023; Ahmed & Chua, 2023), their impact on news credibility (Jin et al., 2023; Shin & Lee, 2022; Vaccari & Chadwick, 2020), detection methods (Sohrawardi et al., 2020), and the construction of deepfakes through meta-journalistic discourse (Gosse & Burkell, 2020; Yadlin-Segal & Oppenheim, 2021).

One component this literature lacks, however, is theoretical and interpretive frameworks that can redefine and reorient the epistemological role of image-based news in a networked society. To fill this gap, we invite contributors to critically evaluate the challenges, opportunities, and dynamics surrounding visual representations influenced by misinformation, disinformation, and/or evolving AI technology. The special issue welcomes empirical studies utilizing diverse approaches—qualitative, quantitative, computational, and mixed-methods—and theoretical contributions assessing the contemporary state of visual evidence. It considers topics such as:

- Spectacle, simulation, and the social construction of truth in visual media
- The role of embodied witnessing and authorship in credibility
- Visual mis/disinformation intervention strategies (technological/social)
- Political economy of synthetic visual media
- Journalism's role in addressing visual misinformation, disinformation, and AI-generated visuals
- Ethics in evaluating and reporting visual misinformation, disinformation, and AI-generated visuals
- Theoretical and interpretive frameworks in examining visual misinformation, disinformation, and AI-generated visuals

We also invite portfolio submissions that have used generative visual AI technology in any capacity for storytelling purposes. Portfolios should be submitted to foster discussions on the utility of synthetic visual media and associated ethical, ontological, and epistemological implications. Submissions may encompass endeavors to visualize abstract social processes, reimagine past events, or explore speculative futures.

Information about Submissions

Abstracts of no more than 1,000 words (not including references) should be submitted to vcq.visualevidence@gmail.com in a PDF document by March 19, 2024. Please use the special issue title ("The State of Visual Evidence" in the subject line of the email and in the body include a brief biography that includes your previous and current research and how it relates to the special issue theme. Accepted abstracts are expected to have a completed draft (of no more than 8,000 words inclusive of references) by May 1, 2024.

Portfolio submissions should include 7 to 11 color or black and white images, a 150-1,000-word artist statement, and a biography of 50 or fewer words. Please compress these files into a single .zip folder and submit this to vcq.visualevidence@gmail.com by March 19, 2024. See the journal's instructions to authors for complete details.

Special Issue Editors

Dr. Alex Scott (alex-scott@uiowa.edu) is an assistant professor at the University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication specializing in the qualitative examinations of non-fiction practices of photography. His research is informed by his experiences as a photojournalist and focuses on the construction of social differences and the production of visual knowledge.

Dr. Sang Jung Kim (sangjung-kim@uiowa.edu) is an assistant professor at the University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication specializing in the computational examination of visual content. Her research focuses on how multi-modality (visual, text, audio, video) exacerbates the devastating consequences of mis- and disinformation.

Dr. Bingbing Zhang (bingbing-zhang@uiowa.edu) is an assistant professor at the University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication specializing in studying the effects of visual content on audiences' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Her research also investigates the impact of algorithms and AI-related technology on these message effects.

The special issue editors are affiliated with the Visual Media Lab, which aims to examine the (1) attributes, (2) prevalence, and (3) impact of visuals in journalism and social media in the digital age. Additionally, they are organizers of the symposium 'State of Visual Evidence,' addressing the challenges and opportunities that synthetic media pose for the contemporary media environment, which is highly relevant to the *VCQ* special issue.

State of Visual Evidence Symposium

This special issue corresponds with "The State of Visual Evidence" virtual symposium, which will be held on April 8, 2024. The symposium features keynote talks by Dr. T.J. Thomson, senior lecturer at RMIT University, Dr. Cindy Shen, Professor at the University of California-Davis and Dr. Bryce Dietrich, Associate Professor at Purdue University. Attendance to the symposium is encouraged regardless of intent to submit abstracts to this special issue.

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