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European perspective to scholarship in mass communication and journalism

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Context: Historical growth

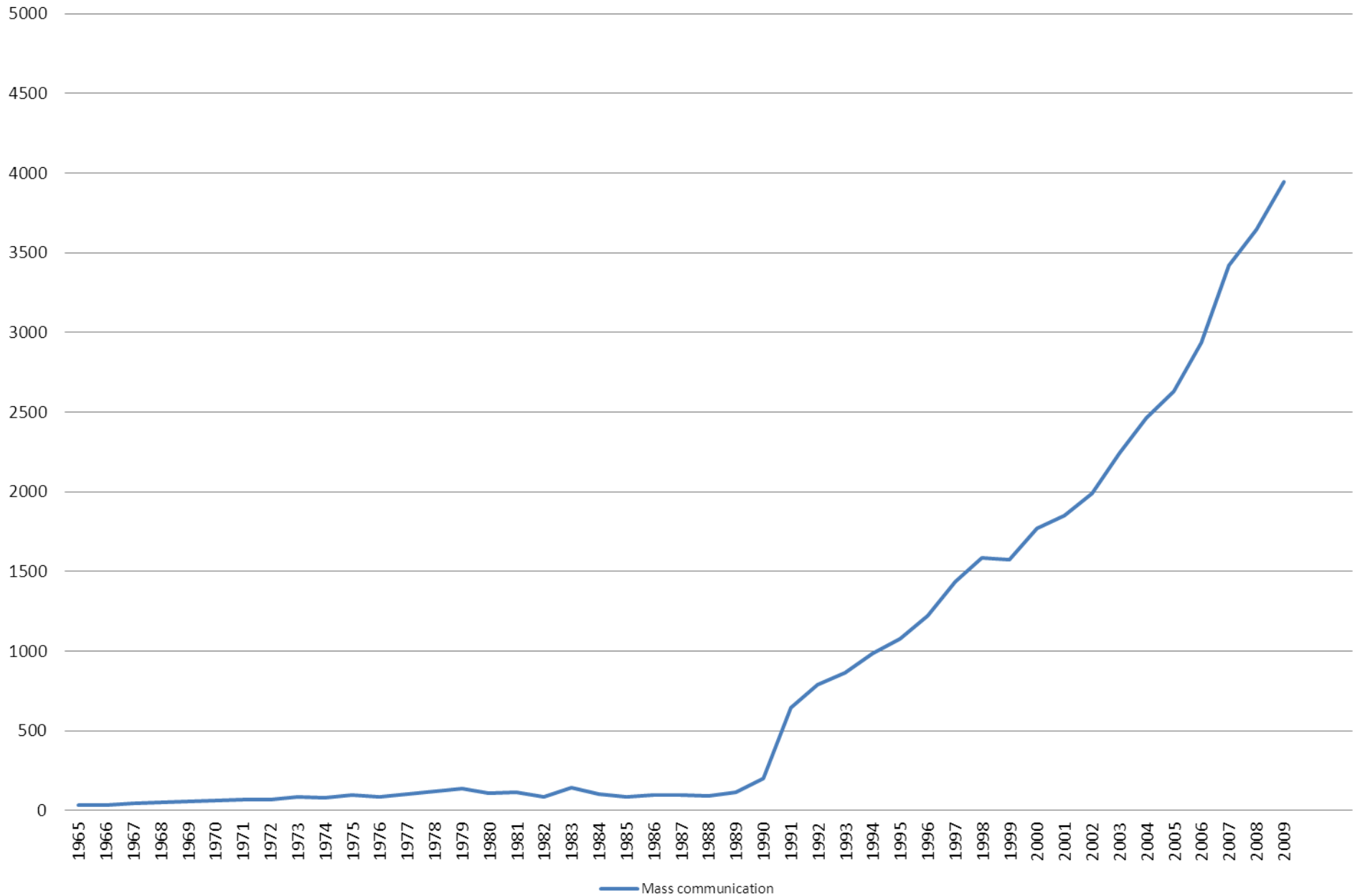
In general, the field has experienced explosive growth since the 1960s – something that compares only with the rise of computer science and biotechnology as shown by

- growth of **publications** (data from Web of Science)
- increase of **teachers** (data from France and USA)
- increase of **students** (data from Germany)

So let me once more display these slides as a reminder of the historical context where we are today.

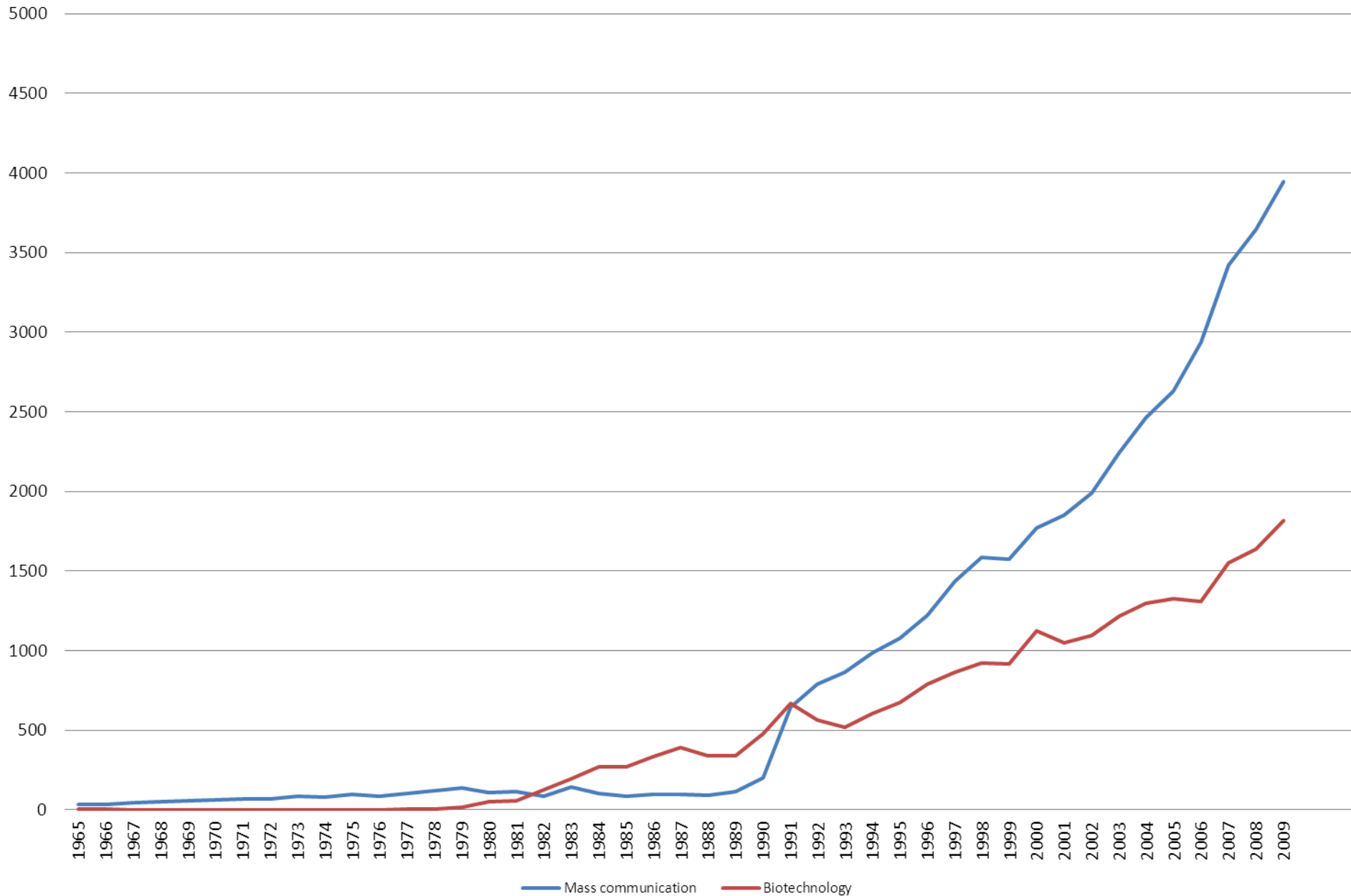
Growth of publications 1965-2009

Source: Web of Science; constructed by Maria Forsman, November 2011



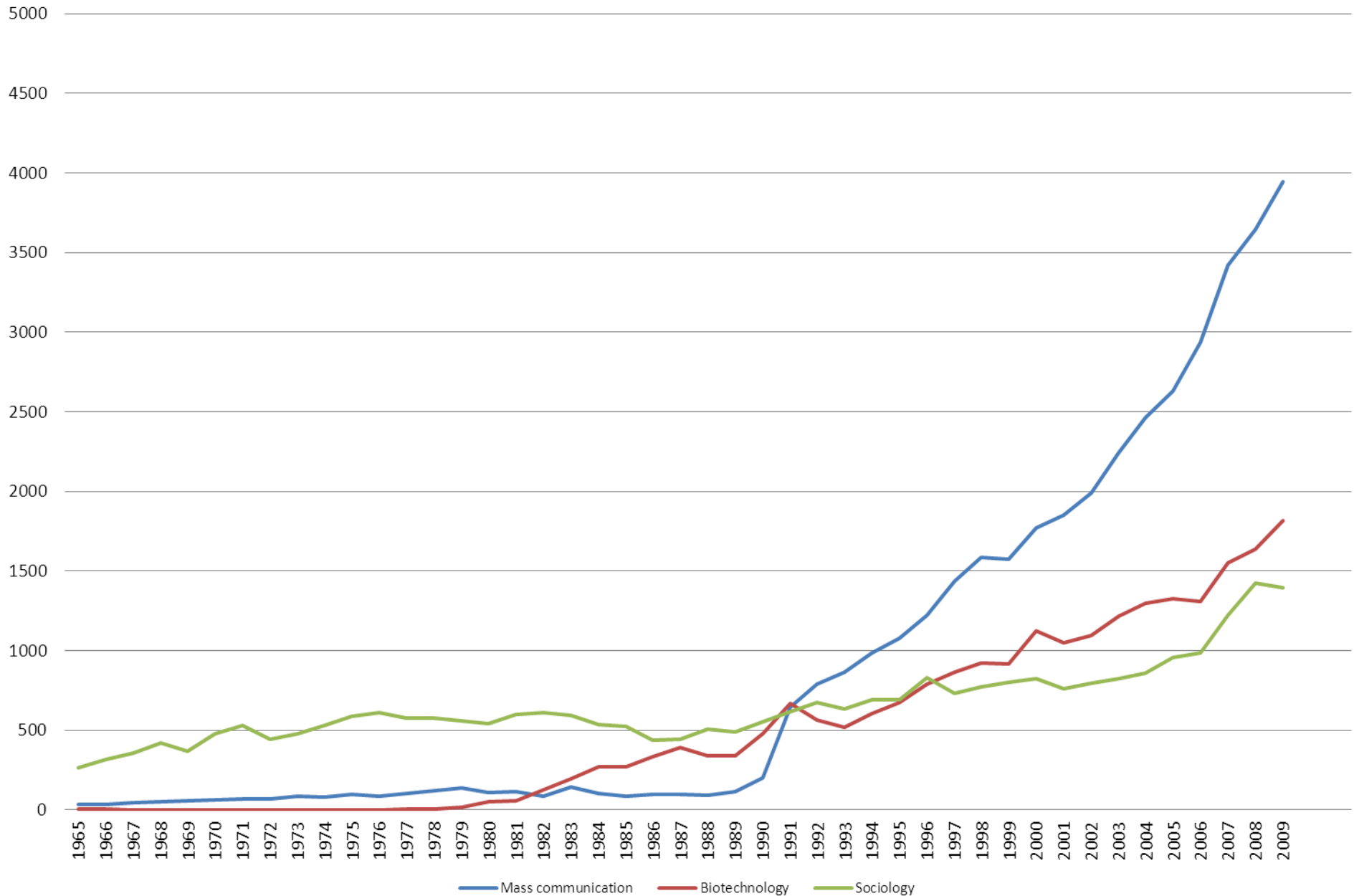
Growth of publications 1965-2009

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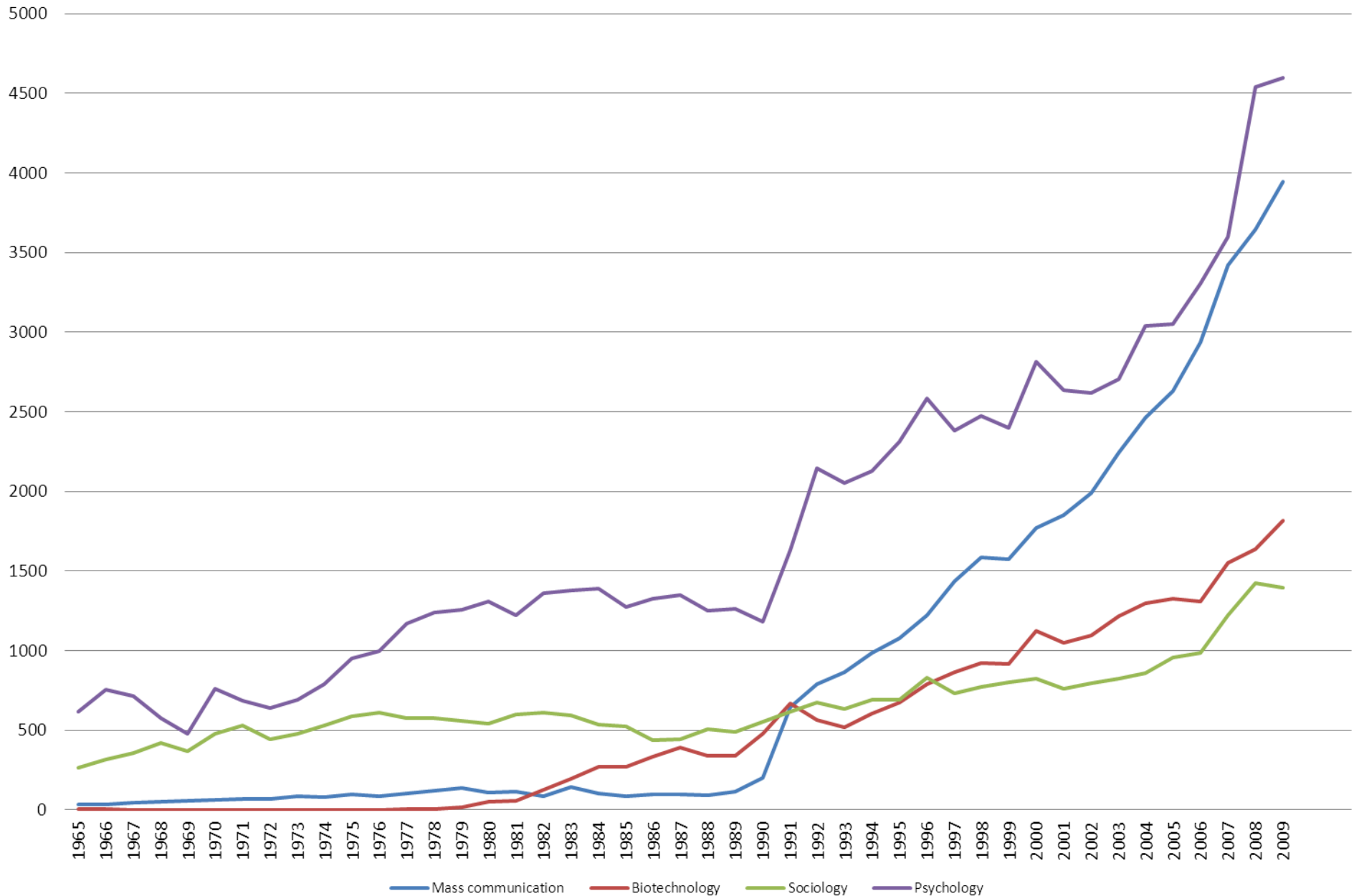
Growth of publications 1965-2009

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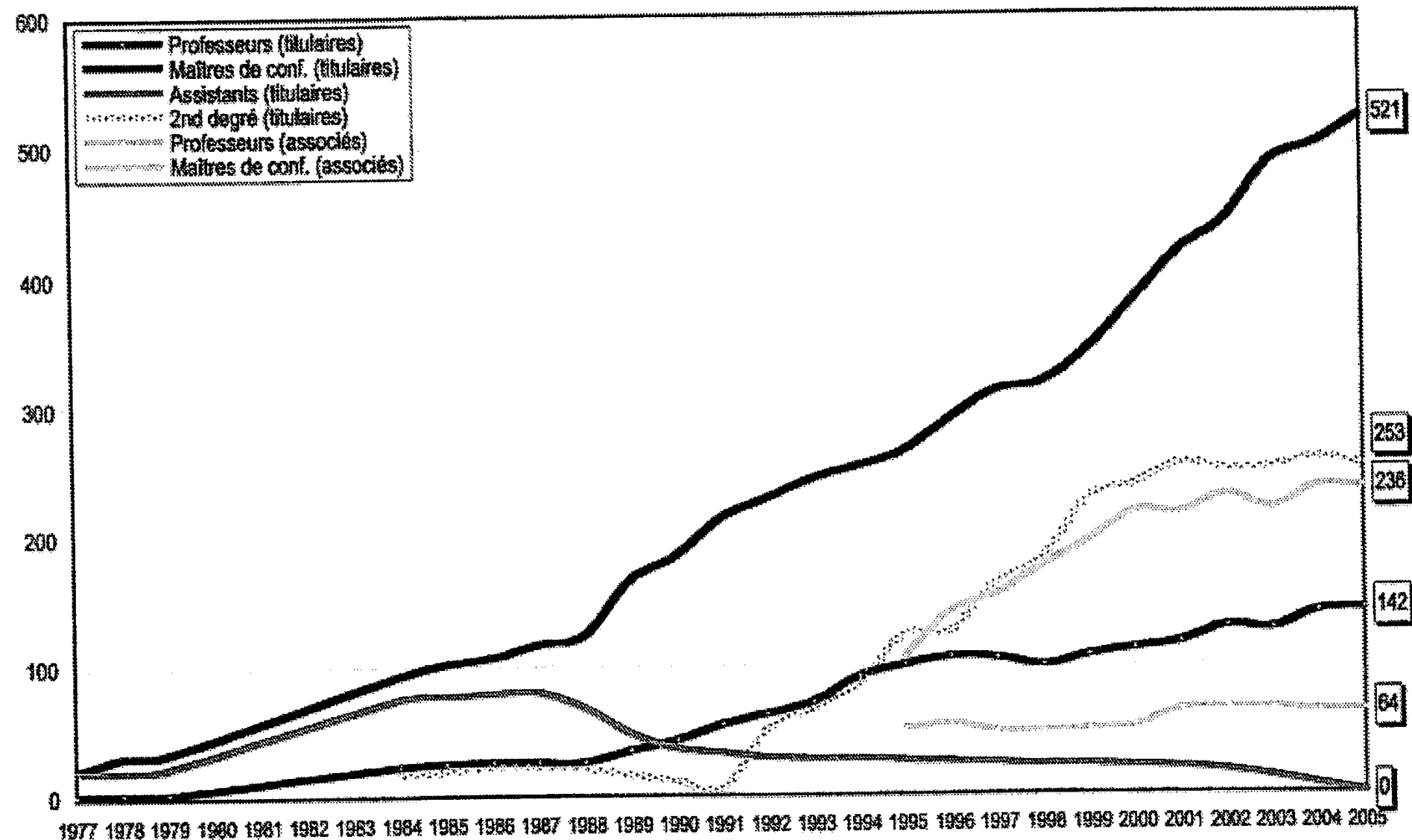


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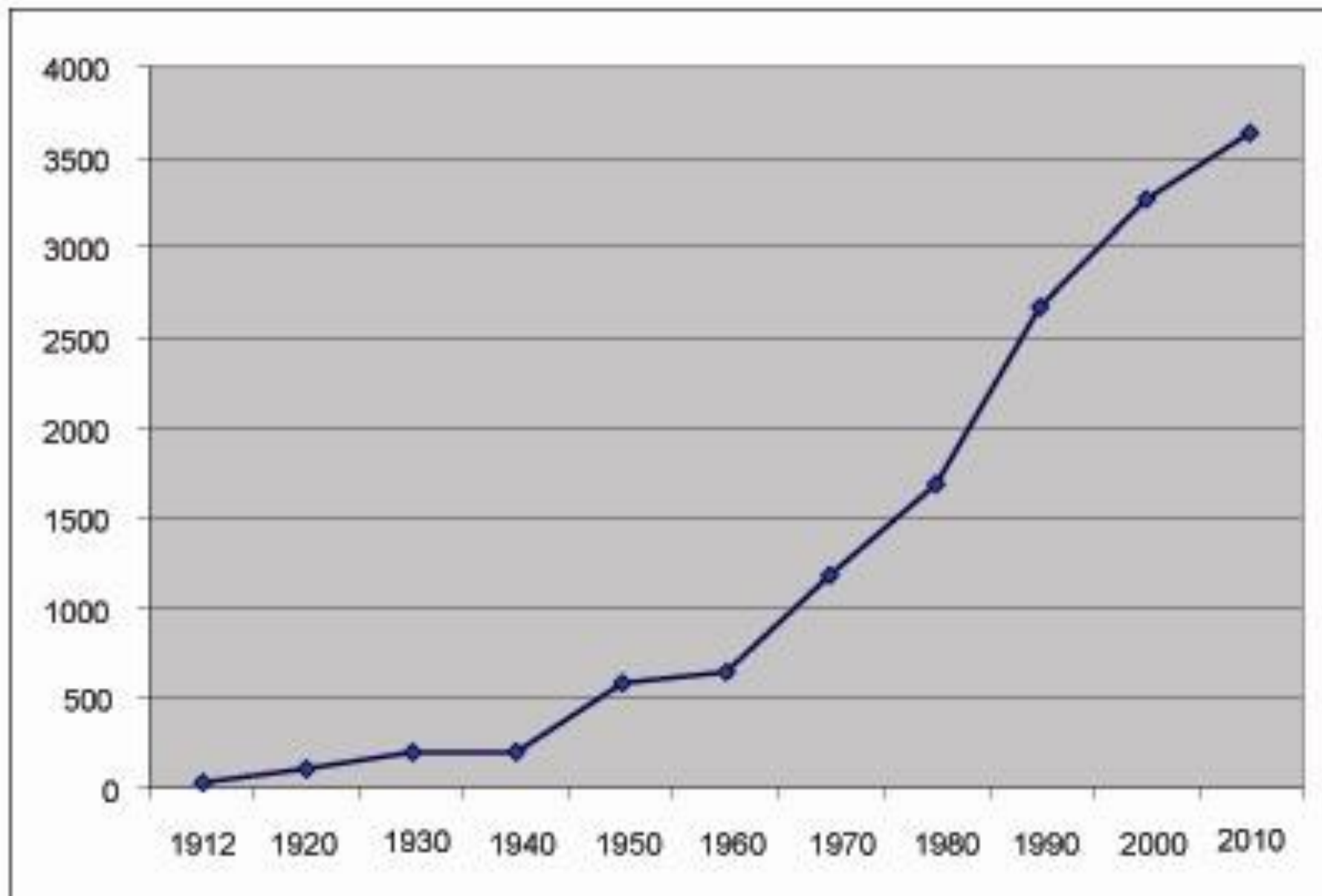


Growth of the Infocom researchers in France

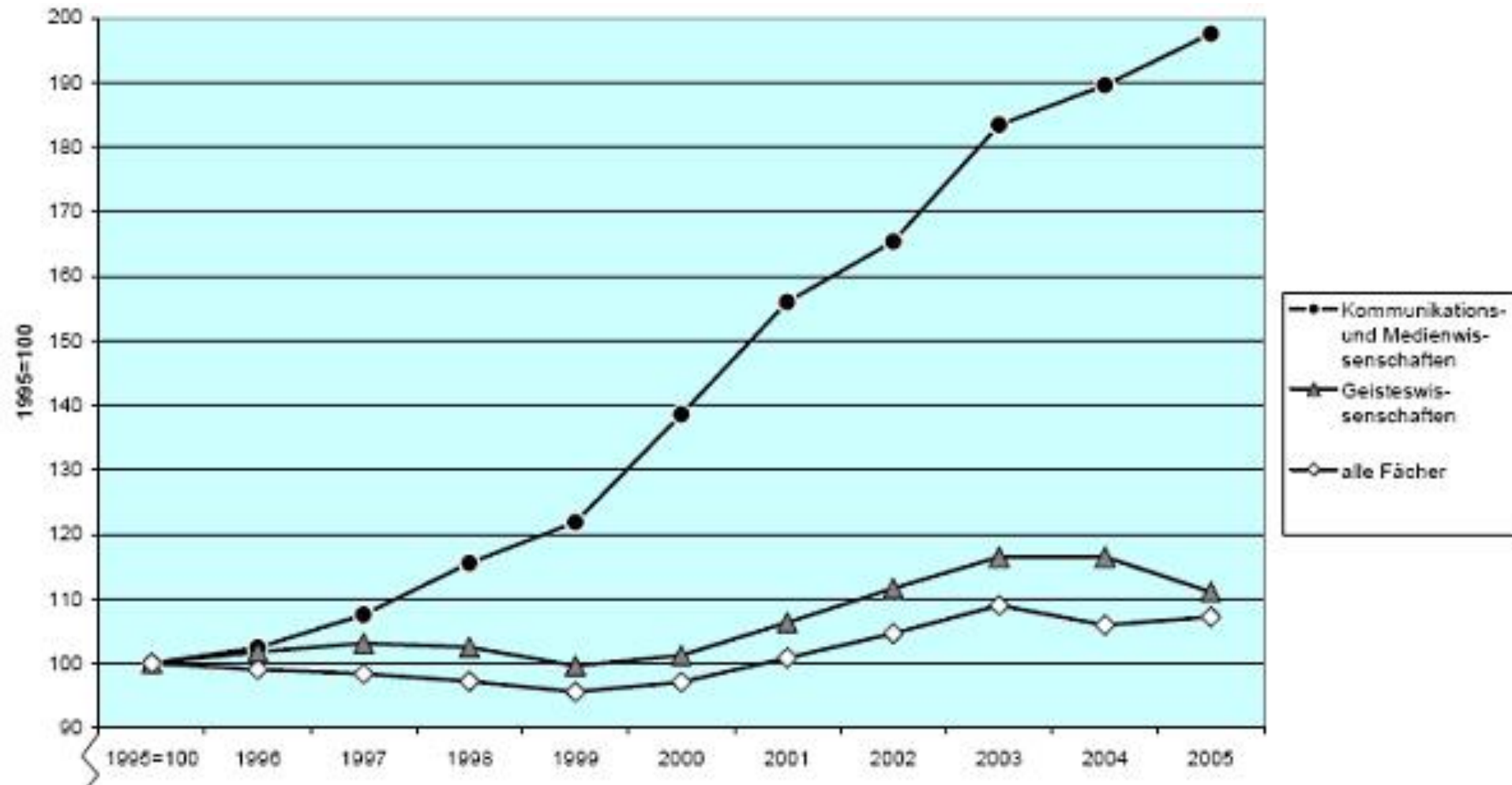


Source: Ministère (DPE A6). Traitement: P. Froissart, 2005.

Members of the American Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)



Relative increase in students of communication-media field in comparison to other fields of humanities and total student population in Germany



Quelle: Statistisches Bundesamt: Fachserie 11, Reihe 4.1 Studierende an Hochschulen, Tabelle 2 in ausführlicher Gliederung; eigene Berechnungen (vgl. auch Anhang B.1.).

International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR)
founding fathers in late 1957, when IAMCR was founded . From the left:
Francesco Fattorello (Italy), Fernand Terrou (France), Evgeniy Khudyakov
(USSR), Jacques Leaute (France) and Mieczyslaw Kafel (Poland).



Roots in Europe

Although the expansion was particularly strong in the US, the academic traditions had their origin mostly in Europe. Meanwhile, the European research landscape had more diversity due to different language and cultural spheres (Latin, Slavic, etc).

This tied Latin America closer to Europe than to the US. European research has continued to expand as shown by university programmes, publications and associations such as ECREA.

Contemporary trends in journalism studies

Digital journalism is most typical keyword today. For example, a recent CFP for the conference “Digital Opportunities and Challenges: Researching Journalism and Media in a Digital Age” at Sheffield in January 2017: “This conference will explore new directions in journalism and media research in digital environments. The emergence of social media has ignited lively discussion about the opportunities they can offer to journalism, but also about the challenges they pose. These opportunities and challenges are not only technological: they touch on a variety of areas including social, political and financial realities. What is more, by trying to adapt to these changes, journalistic practices are constantly evolving and the relationships between producers and consumers of news are constantly redefined.”

The SAGE Handbook of Digital Journalism

Another typical sign of the offers 37 chapters ranging from Social media and the news and Reworked framing and gatekeeping to Big data and News ecosystems.

In their introduction editors Tamara Witschge et al “embrace the ambiguity, unease, and uncertainty of the field” and declare that “we need to move away from a consensual understanding of journalism in Journalism Studies and towards a much more diverse understanding of news and journalism”.

They do not reduce “digital” to simply technological but to display “the complexity and multiplicity of the journalistic contexts and practices”.

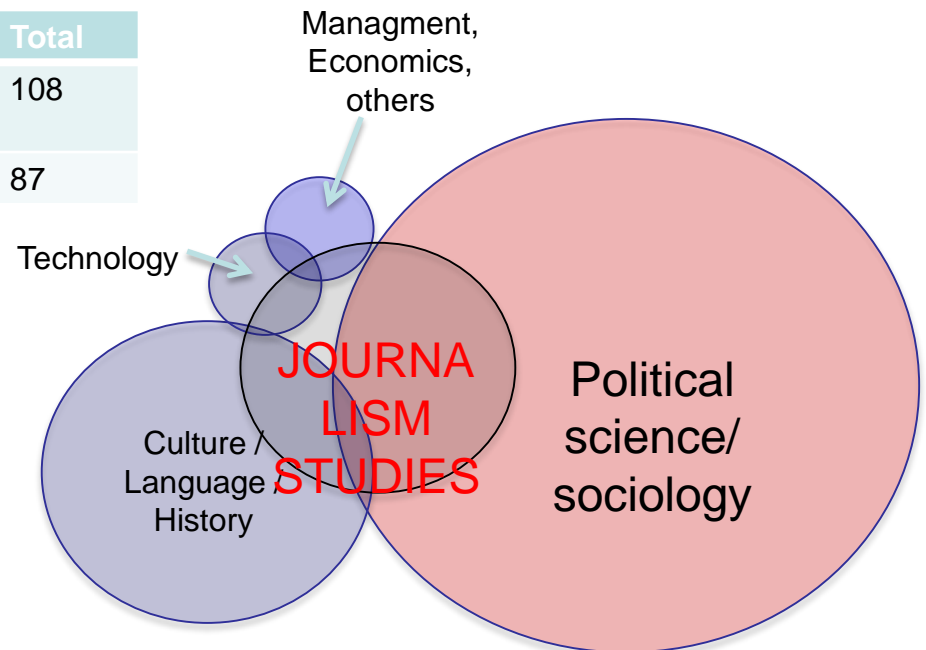
Theoretical approaches

My younger colleague Laura Ahva, who won the best paper award in WJEC-2013, gave last month in ICA a presentation with her Norwegian colleague Steen Steensen “Babbling about the future of journalism” analyzing articles published in *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism* (Sage) and *Journalism Studies* (Taylor & Francis).

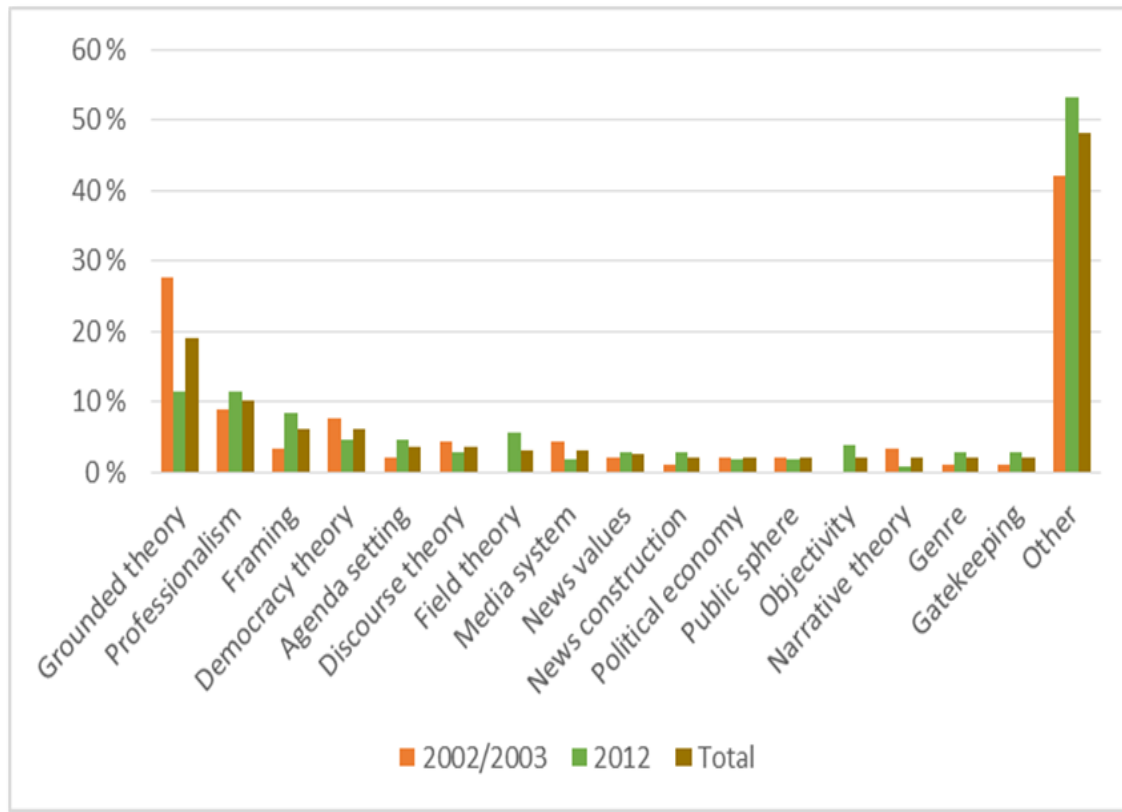
Here are samples of their findings based on nearly 200 abstracts – with Laura’s permission and her regards to colleagues over here.

The new interdisciplinarity of Journalism Studies

Journal	Sample 1	Sample 2	Total
Journalism Studies	2002-2003 (58)	2012 (50)	108
Journalism	2002-2003 (32)	2012 (55)	87

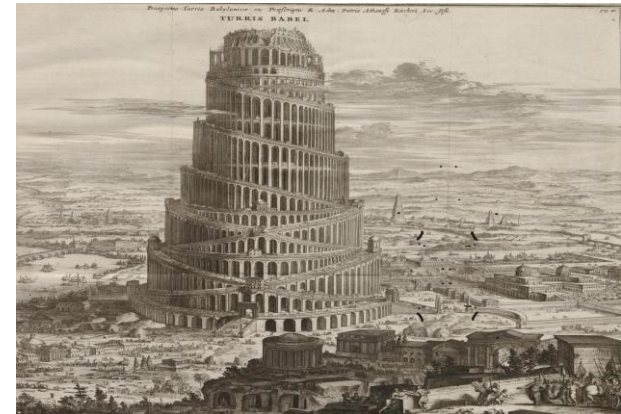


Abstracts analysis: The long tail of theories



- Almost 50 percent of theories occurred only once or twice
- More than one hundred different theoretical approaches detected

Abstracts analysis: The cacophony of theories



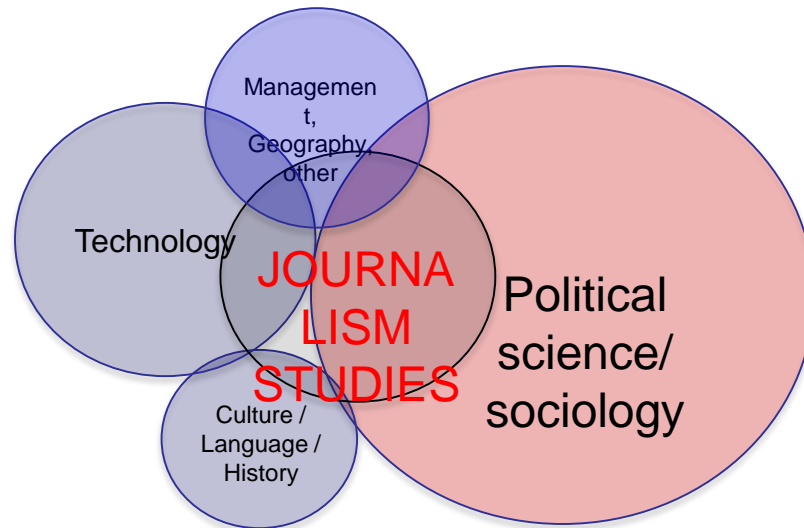
- A choir of disintegrated monologues in different languages?
- Or a dialogue between different dialects that understand and enrich one another?

Journalism studies: A choir of disintegrated monologues?

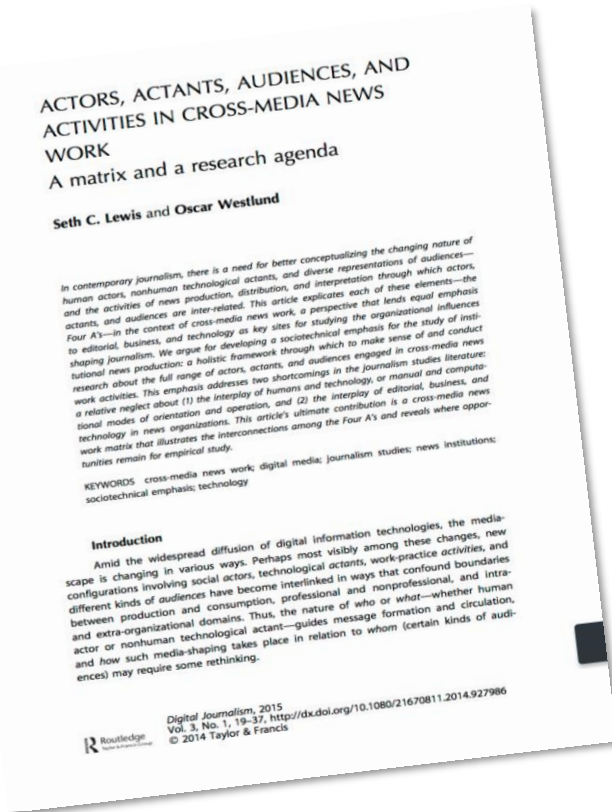


Journalism studies:

Cross-disciplinary, not interdisciplinary?



Interdisciplinarity as dialogue: An example



- Seth Lewis and Oscar Westlund (2015) “ACTORS, ACTANTS, AUDIENCES, AND ACTIVITIES IN CROSS-MEDIA NEWS WORK. A matrix and a research agenda”, *Digital Journalism*, 3(1): 19-37
- Combines perspectives from sociology, STS and media management to build a “holistic framework” of news work.
- Excellent example of how one intergrate theories into a new esperanto.
- But: is the discourse of framework too humble?

Be bold: Future beyond the “framework”

- Future-orientation of the field has resulted in increased interdisciplinarity, which provides possibilities for theory-building.
- What we normally tend to do: collect theories from other fields and call it a framework.
- What we need to do: collect theories from other fields, rework and integrate them and build new theories.
- We need to be more bold: claim and name theories of journalism!



Conclusion: Paradox

A more or less explicit paradox is looming in today's journalism studies in Europe as well as elsewhere.

On the one hand, journalism as such is undergoing the most drastic change ever since its emergence some three centuries ago feeding both innovation and confusion – whereby many in the profession feel distressed. In short, *journalism seems to be out and down*.

On the other hand, research on journalism flourish more than ever, including sections in IAMCR and ICA – with scholars inspired and excited. In short, *journalism research seems to be in and up*.

What has the field achieved?

- Contributed to modernization plus post-industrial, postmodern society and globalization
- Constructed a hybrid of media independence and Information Society
- Integrated social sciences and humanities while delinking from their roots
- Created interdisciplinary specialties highlighting new phenomena and canonizing them
- The expanded field became more and more fragmented, with new media & internet boosting specialties, which easily gained the status of another major subject and discipline in the academic nomenclature

Ceterum censeo: What should be done?

- It is deceptive to celebrate popularity of the field as a success story which has created new disciplines.
- Be open to novelties but do not let them carry you to a “surfing syndrome” whereby one eclectically combines features without in-depth analysis.
- With such a trend the field is both losing its healthy roots to basic disciplines (philosophy, psychology, sociology, political science, linguistics, etc) and it is turning more dependent on empirical and practical aspects – typically applied research serving the status quo, i.e. administrative instead of critical research.

- Better to see media studies as a field – interdisciplinary with close links to basic disciplines.
- Respect diversity but not at the expense of coherence.
- I call for serious soul-searching and critical examination of the identity of the field, by
 - studying the history of ideas in the field to understand how communication and media study has evolved and how it relates to other fields of inquiry, and
 - pursuing research on research to deal with the concepts of communication and mediation in relation to the system of sciences.
- Welcome to fascinating realm of self-reflection of the field!



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Thank you!

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