

# James E. Katz: An Intellectual Biography

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## INTRODUCTION

James E. Katz is the Feld Professor of Emerging Media at Boston University's College of Communication and he directs its Division of Emerging Media Studies. He joined Boston University in 2012. He is also the Director of the Boston Center for Mobile Communication Studies (prior Rutgers Center for Mobile Communication Studies), the world's first academic unit to focus solely on social aspects of mobile communication research. The center research direction focuses on human use of mobile technologies and mobile data. The center members study at all forms of mobile communication technology, ranging from pagers and cell phones to Google Glass and gaming platforms. Members conduct state of the art investigations into how mobile communication affects human behavior as well as mobile technology's long-term organizational and policy implications. Their studies are also wide-reaching and include the disciplines of psychology, sociology, philosophy and political science. The kinds of issues they concern themselves with encompass everything from the individual through the family to organizations and governmental bodies.

Prior to Boston University, Katz was the Board of Governors Professor of Communication, which is Rutgers' highest faculty honor. He was the Chair of the Department of Communication at Rutgers University for two terms before moving to Boston University. Earlier, he served on the faculties of the University of Texas at Austin, George Mason University, Clarkson University, and Indiana University. He was a visiting fellow

of the Center for Information Technology Policy of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public Policy at Princeton University, the Kennedy School of Government Fellow at the Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University and the National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Policy Alternatives at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He graduated with Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Sociology at Northern Illinois University. He was awarded his Doctoral degree in Political Sociology in 1974 at Rutgers where he subsequently earned a second Master's degree in Educational Statistics, Measurement & Evaluation. In 2013, he was awarded the Doctorem Honoris Causa at Budapest University of Technology and Economics.

Katz is the author or co-author of several books in the field of mobile communication. Among his mobile communication books are *Perpetual contact: Mobile communication, private talk, public performance* (with Mark Aakhus) (Katz & Aakhus, 2002b), *Machines that become us: The social context of personal communication technology* (Katz, 2003), *Magic in the Air: Mobile Communication and the Transformation of Social Life* (Katz, 2006), *Handbook of Mobile Communication Studies* (Katz, 2008), *Mobile communication: Dimensions of social policy* (Katz, 2011), *Technology and creativity: Social media, mobiles and museum* (with Wayne LaBar and Ellen Lynch) (Katz, LaBar, & Lynch, 2011) and *The social media president: Barack Obama and the politics of digital engagement* (with Michael Barris and Anshul Jain) (Katz, Barris, & Jain, 2013). He also published more than 70 peer-reviewed journal

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articles and his works have been translated into several languages and re-published in numerous edited collections. His research interests focus on uses and social consequences of technologies, especially the Internet, mobile technologies and social media. He explores how technologies affect social interaction and what their uses reveal about human nature and organizations and was among the first to demonstrate their pro-social uses. He also seeks to understand what the future holds in terms of society and communication technologies and works with others to explore ways in which society can best prepare itself to make the optimal use of new developments.

Katz has been frequently interviewed about his research by various presses around the world, such as the *Economist* in UK, the *New York Times*, *Toronto Star* in Canada, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, network news programs, BBC in UK, and *PBS NewsHour*. His teaching and research interests include research methods, the social aspects of communication technology, and the contest between privacy and publicity on mobile technologies. He keynotes, lectures and gives presentations in various countries, including Canada, China, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Korea, Netherlands, Switzerland, Taiwan, and the United States.

Katz was the Director, Senior Scientist and Distinguished Member of Technical Staff of the Social Science Research Information Technology & Internet Applications Laboratory at Bell Communications Research (Bellcore). He serves on the boards of several leading social science journals and charitable and educational foundations. In terms of editorial responsibilities, he has served as the Editor of *Human Communication Research*, a top-ranked journal in the field of communication and on the editorial advisory boards of *Encyclopedia of Mobile Phone Behavior* and *Mobile Media & Communication*. He also served on the advisory board of the Society for the Social Study of Mobile Communication (SSSMC), a mobile

communication research community that served as a resource to support a network of international mobile communication research. He has been granted national and international patents on his inventions in telecommunication technology. He is active in the Communication and Technologies division at the International Communication Association and served as the chair of this division between 2010 and 2012.

### PIONEER IN RESEARCH ON SOCIAL ASPECT OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH

In early 2000s, before mobile technologies became ubiquitous and affected every aspect of their users' social lives, a small school of scholars and researchers around the world were trying to explore and understand the social and cultural consequences of mobile technology use. Starting in the mid 1990s in Europe, early mobile technology research included Timo Kopomaa's study (2000), several mobile technology use research reports (as cited in Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010) and articles (e.g., Grinter & Eldridge, 2001; Jarrat & Coates, 1990; Rakow & Navarro, 1993). In 2000s, along with other European researchers (e.g., Bull, 2000; Brown, Green, & Harper, 2002), Katz and colleagues published research on mobile technology use and culture (Katz & Aakhus, 2002b). Katz and Aakhus's book (2002b), *Perpetual contact: Mobile communication, private talk, public performance*, collected case studies from several countries, including Bulgaria, Filipino, Finland, France, Israel, Italy, Korea, Netherlands, Norway, and the United States, intrigued scholars and researchers around the world to studying mobile technology use in everyday life. According to the Cambridge University Press, it was the first book to provide an academic analysis of the impact of mobile phones on social interaction. The book has a distinguished group of contributors with

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