

20 August 2026

Search Committee Department of Media and Cinema Studies College of Media University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Re: Tenure-Track Assistant Professor, Media and Society, Requisition 1036992

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I am applying for the Tenure-Track Assistant Professor position in Media and Society. I completed my PhD in Cinema Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University in 2025. My research asks how television became a social institution, a cultural form, and an everyday technology in post-independence India. That focus brings together three areas named in your search: media historiography, television studies, and international and transnational media.

My dissertation, *Television before Colour: Intermedial Networks and Imaginations in India, 1959–82*, reconstructs the first two decades of Indian television through archival and historical research. It examines the broadcaster's state-run institutional structure, educational programming, cultural impact, and relationships with cinema and other media. Rather than treating early television as a self-contained technology, I study the networks of institutions, people, forms, and public ideas through which it acquired meaning. This approach also informs my work on governmentality and infrastructure, film-television transactions, cultural programming, and the BBC's role in the inception of Indian television.

My publications develop this research across questions of gender, public culture, production history, and urban memory. My 2026 article in *Women's History Review* recovers the work of women producers in early Indian television. My 2024 article in the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, which received a 2025 BAFTSS article award, revisits the Indian women's movement through the *Women's Programme*. A multi-authored article in *Critical Studies in Television* considers national, transnational, and transmedial entanglements in women's broadcasting histories. My earlier article in *BioScope* examines film exhibition and urban memory through Delhi's Chanakya theatre. Together, this work shows a sustained commitment to media history as a way of understanding institutions, social inequality, space, and public life.

I would bring to Illinois an archival, qualitative, and interpretive research practice. I do not present myself as a computational or quantitative researcher. My contribution lies instead in historical depth, close attention to institutions and media forms, and a South Asian perspective on questions often framed through North Atlantic histories. The Institute of Communications Research is especially appealing because its work spans media history, popular culture and film, gender, democracy and media, and global communications. The Department's combination of theory, history, methods, and production also suits the way I connect critical analysis with visual archives and media practice.

My formal classroom experience consists of six guest lectures: two on cinema, exhibition, and the city at Ambedkar University in 2016, and four on genre, neorealism, and melodrama at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Arts and Creativity in 2017. I have also designed modules in Television and New Media, Cinema and the City, South Asian Film and Television, and Indian Cinema. At Illinois, I could contribute undergraduate courses in television history, global television, South Asian film and media, cinema and the city, and gender and broadcasting. I would also be prepared to develop graduate seminars on media historiography, archival methods, and television, infrastructure, and public culture. While I have not yet led a full semester course, my guest teaching, module design, and sustained research provide a concrete base from which to take on that responsibility with careful preparation and clear learning goals.

Beyond teaching and research, my work as an Assistant Editor at *Critical Studies in Television* has given me practical experience with scholarly review and publication. My earlier roles in festival programming, visual documentation, videography, and arts research have also required collaboration across academic and public-facing settings. I would welcome the opportunity to contribute these perspectives to a College whose parallel cluster searches invite conversations across Media & Cinema Studies, Journalism, and Advertising.

Thank you for considering my application. I would be glad to discuss how my research on television history, gender, infrastructure, and South Asian media could contribute to the Department and the wider College of Media.

Sincerely,

Ipsita Sahu, PhD