

**Transatlantic Interdisciplinary Research Colloquium Small**  
**Forms. Aesthetics – Media – Modernity**

**Abstract**

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**At the Litfaßsäule: Telegraphic News and the Advertising Column During the Franco-Prussian War**

During the Franco-Prussian War (1870/71), advertising columns were the most important source of up-to-date war news for most Berliners. The latest news telegrams appeared on the columns faster than they did in any newspaper, and reading them was completely free of charge. For the operating company, owned by Ernst Litfaß, the war telegrams made ideal editorial content: first, they were provided at no cost by the government; second, the production of the prints was quick and easy, since the short telegrams could be quickly typeset and fit on the standard poster formats; and third, they attracted curious crowds to the columns, increasing the visibility of the advertising space.

In my presentation, I will argue that the form of telegraphic news is not only shaped by the media-technical conditions of the telegraph. Rather, the example of the advertising column allows me to take a closer look at the practices of production, distribution and reception of telegraphic news in order to better understand the relationship between form and timeliness of news telegrams.