

WSCA News on the Web

The Newsletter of the
Western States Communication Association

"It is better to ask some of the questions
than to know all of the answers."

--James Thurber

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Musings: Communication and Change

By Peter A. Andersen, WSCA President

Soon we will be meeting in for our seventieth convention in the beautiful city of Vancouver. This is the last meeting of the millennium and of the century, our first meeting outside the U.S. and the seventieth time WSCA has met since 1929.

Things have changed a bit since then. There was no television, portable radio, jet aircraft not to mention no faxes, e-mail, or Internet. Of course, newspapers, radio, books, public address, and interpersonal communication were the connections that held our society and our world together. They also formed the basis for what we studied for the next fifty years: rhetoric, writing, speech, public address, interpersonal communication, and mass communication.

It is important that as a community of intellectuals who deeply believe in our pedagogical and scholarly missions that we embrace the current era with the same fervor and fearlessness as did our scholarly forebearers. It is not hyperbolic to view this era of instantaneous global communication as a cultural and political milestone equivalent to the dawn of literacy, the invention of the printing press or the industrial revolution. Nor is it an idle concern that we could fail in our academic mission if we did not adjust to the rapid changes that occurring in our society and in education today.

Unlike some other voices within the academe, I enter this decade with considerable optimism for American

higher education and for the field of communication. This is the information age and what I called, in my convention theme last year in Denver, the communication era. The commodities we sell, information, interpretation, communication and meaning are in more demand than ever before. This is an opportunity for all of us, the academic merchants of these commodities, to be in an excellent position to profit from our products, educate our students, guide the debate about the changes in culture and communication and explain what is happening in an era where communication is being dramatically transformed, commodified, deified, and damned.

I am optimistic about the creative opportunities provided by the communication century but concerned too. Too few of our colleagues understand the game is different and we have to play by different rules:

Capitalism won and will be predominant for the foreseeable future. We must partner with the business community in joint ventures, consultancies, internships, establishing endowments and in a hundred other ways, always aware of the pitfalls associated with any such relationship. No longer can we do anything very meaningful by relying purely on state revenue sources.

Retooling will be imperative. If you are doing the same things you did five years ago, be worried! Like the society in which we live we cannot afford to stagnate. Frankly too many of a colleagues are paralyzed by change and very comfortable with the same old..same old. Continuity too is important but it can coexist with change. Meeting the millenium with tired old paradigms, products and pedagogy will not be a functional adaptation to the tidal wave of change that we will experience. The lethargic changes in the curriculum of communication, our slow adoption of technology and our seeking of shelter from change are maladaptive responses.

I intend to address these and other issues in my luncheon speech in Vancouver and to tour some of your campuses in the future to help provide a vision of what we can become. For we should be optimistic. According to the Dept of Commerce 25% of all our economic growth has been in communication. Communication is recognized as more important than at any time in history. The American economy is so strong that it can sustain educational innovation at a high level. And most important, WSCA members probably no more about communication than anyone in the world. So bring on the new millennium. Forward with innovative classes, curricula and research programs. And on to Vancouver.

Reach Out and Mentor Someone

By Pamela J. Kalbfleisch, WSCA Second Vice President

Do you have a colleague who is new to the West ? A promising student? An acquaintance who seems isolated or a friend who would like to be more involved?

Share the joy of being a member of one of the best professional associations in our discipline. Invite your colleague, student, acquaintance, or friend to join the Western States Communication Association.

WSCA is a great place to meet new people and to make connections. It is the perfect environment for new scholars, educators, and professionals to meet other people who are new to the discipline or simply new to our association. It is also the perfect place to approach leaders in our discipline in a warm and inviting atmosphere.

WSCA people meet at our annual conventions as well as keep touch throughout the year with our WSCA Webpage and Newsletter as well as with informal calls and electronic messages to WSCA friends and colleagues. Our two scholarly journals are first rate as well as the quality of research and teaching innovations presented at our conventions.

What better gift to give someone who needs a helping hand or who would simply benefit from being connected to a warm, caring, and extraordinary professional community, than a WSCA membership? I recently bought student memberships for two of my promising students who put their egos on the line for the first time by submitting papers for competitive review. I have also sent membership forms to new colleagues in our discipline and encouraged them to join our association. Membership is accessible at only \$20 for a student membership and \$40 for a regular membership, and membership forms are easily available from our WSCA Web Page or from our Executive Director's office.

Think about sharing the wealth that is WSCA. Looking out for our companions in the discipline not only empowers them, it reinforces us all.

WSCA Officers for 1999-2000: Election Results

WSCA's Executive Council has new members, beginning their terms at the Vancouver Convention.

First Vice President:

Sandra Petronio, Arizona State University

Second Vice President:

Kathy Adams, California State University, Fresno

Legislative Assembly:

Bill Cupach, Illinois State University
Laura Guerrero, Arizona State University
Anneleise Harper, Scottsdale Community College
Susan Owen, University of Puget Sound
Julie Yingling, Humboldt State University

Editor's Notes

by John A. Cagle

Our hope to make the newsletter a useful tool for WSCA and our members to communicate with one another. There is also a print version mailed to members.

The website version, *WSCA News on the Web*, has "late-breaking" news between the print editions, and it is of course in color. If members or interest groups have webpages of interest, we can put links on our homepage to them.

WSCA News generally comes out three times a year: April, October, and February--not exactly a calendar year, but facilitative of our convention schedule. Material is cordially invited, especially scatalogical humor or anecdotal narratives or germane editorials, although reports on the activities and vicissitudes of our interest groups and members may well be more appropriate.

Comments and suggestions to me, johnca@csufresno.edu, are welcome, either for the print or electronic versions of the **WSCA News**.

Link to [WSCA Homepage](#)