Public Relations Update

November, 1995

The President's Notepad ──────
Division Set To Begin 31st Year
by
Carolyn Garrett Cline

This summer the Public Relations Division turned 30 years old, and we celebrated the event in Washington at the luncheon by recognizing the astounding number of pr evious division heads who are still active in the PRD and still leaders in the field. It's clear that these individuals have built an exciting, dynamic and gr owing division, and since then I've been grap - pling with how to continue this work.

But first, thanks must go to those who made the Washington conference so successful, especially Immediate Past Head Richard Nelson, as well as the committee chairs. As usual, the PRD packed a lot of sessions into that convention thanks to a lot of hard work. If you missed Washington, consider ordering some of the tapes or the papers.

For the next year, several priorities come to mind. The first, of course, is the Anaheim convention. Already Don Stacks, as Vice-Head and Program Chair, has been compiling ideas for programs and we'll take those ideas to the mid-winter meeting in Austin and negotiate, bargain, deal and pressure to put together

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Change Viewed as Good News and Bad News for Communication Professionals
by
Howard Gross

The following information comes from a speech presented by Management Consultant Howard Gross to members of the American Marketing Association, the Public Relations Society of America and Women in Communications at an event hosted by Southern New England Telephone.

Gross also serves as an adjunct professor of Communications at the Hartford Graduate Center in Hartford, Connecticut. Y ou can contact Gross on-line at gr ossh@hgc.edu or by calling (203) 230-0572.

There is good news and bad news for communication professionals, and both can be summed up in a single word ... change.

In an economy where 80 percent of GDP is information-related, and growing numbers of the workfor ce are classified as knowledge workers, communication is critical. So much so that the need for communication tools and techniques is cutting across every sector of society.

Advanced technologies are not only altering conventional media, they are opening new domains. Powerful video servers, still years away from providing consumers with movies-on-demand, are being integrated with common business applications. More than half of all public school students attend schools in districts served by distance education. Voters can bypass 10-second sound bites and examine electoral issues online. And at least twenty states already have telemedicine projects underway. What's more, every institution is actively exploring the potential of the Internet.

What's Inside ••

LEXIS-NEXIS Launches ClientSmart

LEXIS-NEXIS announced recently that ClientSmart, a customized version of its online information retrieval service exclusively for public relations counselors and professional communicators, is available.

ClientSmart assists communicators in quickly retrieving information they most frequently need. Its targeted users are counselors and account service executives in public relations firms, as well as managers of in-house departments.

ClientSmart uses a Windows-based, graphical user interface (GUI) intended to mirror the specific needs of the communications industry.

You can receive additional information on ClientSmart online at LEXIS-NEXIS Communication (http://www.lexis-nexis.com). ◆

Update Looking for Comments, Columns and Visuals

Public Relations Update invites its readers to submit short, pr ovactive articles and commentary for publication. Also needed are book, video, software and database reviews as well as photographs and other news of interest. Send information to:

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e-mail: Basso@midget.towson.edu

If possible, submit information on a 3 1/2" Macintosh floppy disk using Microsoft Word 6.0. Also include a printed copy of your information. ◆

Public Relations Division Set To Begin its 31st Year

a program which serves the needs of the PRD members and AEJMC in general.

Although the proposals were due at national headquarters November 1, there's still time to get in good ideas. Call, fax or e-mail either Don or me with any suggestions or ideas you may have.

Start thinking now about paper submissions for the teaching and/or research competitions, of course.

I am bringing an item to the PRD agenda this year, one which has troubled me for several years. We're witnessing major alterations in the configurations of communication and journalism programs nationwide, including incorporation of some units, and even elimination of programs. While no discipline seems to be exempt from the budgetary ax, public relations is particularly vulnerable at many institutions. Whether this reflects the youth of the field as an academic discipline, or a misperception of the pr ofession, few can deny that many of our members are being challenged to defend the existence of a public relations major, especially in a reseach university.

Therefore, I have asked Bill Adams in his role as Elected Delegate-at-Large to establish a Task Force to examine the role of public relations in the academy, and he will be calling on many members for input. I'd like to encourage PRD members to share ideas, opinions, examples of success as well as failure, to help us all gauge the health of the major and determine what seems to work in maintaining a viable, strong program in the changing university.

Finally, moving into technology, the PRD has put a version of the newsletter online. It's been there since shortly before the Washington conference, but I discovered that putting up a site is really great fun, but maintaining it takes dedication, time and effort. Hence, PRD OnLine now has a co-webmaster (can anyone suggest a non-gendered alternative term?), Diane Penkoff (penkoff@sage.cc.purdue.edu). Check it out, and send comments to her or to me. We'd like to use this site as a way of communicating information more rapidly and more cheaply than we've been able to, as well as offering "value added" features such as archives of Teaching Tips. You can find PRD OnLine at:
(http://www.usc.edu/dept/annenberg/prd). ◆

John Pavlik and David Dozier Receive $5,500 For Study

Following are details on the grant received by John Pavlik and David Dozier at San Diego State University.

Title: *How are Communications Professionals Using the New Information Highway Technologies?*

Grant: $5,500 awarded by The Institute for Public Relations Research and Education, with support from MCI.

Awarded to:
- John V. Pavlik
  Director, School of Communication
  San Diego State University
- David. M. Dozier
  Professor, School of Communication
  San Diego State University

Project Background:
Leading public relations practitioners use the technologies of the information highway for many of the same purposes that most other communications professionals do. These include communicating via e-mail, transferring files electronically and remotely accessing electronic data bases such as the Library of Congress (Pavlik, 1994, others). But increasingly, leading practitioners also use the information highway for one application special to public relations: environmental scanning and monitoring (Dozier, 1987, 1990).

Through environmental scanning, practitioners become effectively the "eyes and ears" for their organizations, an early warning system for turbulence and threats in the organization's environment. As the information

International Academy of Business Disciplines Prepares for Meeting April 11-14 in Washington, DC

The International Academy of Business Disciplines Public Relations/Public Affairs and related areas announces a call for papers for its Eighth Annual Meeting April 11-14, 1996 in Washington, DC. There will be opportunities to:

- interact with a truly international and inter-disciplinary group of attendees;
- participate in paper panels, roundtables, and workshops;
- publish your work as a chapter in a quality annual research volume.

Call for Papers Conference Overview

Proposals for paper presentations, symposia, tutorials and workshops are invited. The conference will focus on *A Strategic Approach to Globalization Through Technology and Diversity*, but refereed and invited research time slots will be devoted to other important areas as well. This conference features a number of presenters, many with international backgrounds.

Conference Location

Doubletree Hotel, 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852. To make reservations call 1-800-222-Tree, (301) 468-1100 or fax (301) 468-0308. This is a Washington, DC, suburb on the Metro subway line.

Required

For referred papers submit four double-spaced copies (17 pages maximum) of original, unpublished work; 150-word abstract; detachable title pages with name(s), affiliation(s), title/academic rank(s), address(es), and phone number(s) of the author(s); a self-addressed, stamped postcard; and a statement certifying that at least one of the authors intends to register for and attend the conference to present the paper if it is accepted.

Accepted papers are eligible for publication in the *Business Research Yearbook.*

For symposia, tutorials and workshops include a 2-3 page overview description of the activity, a list of participants, and a signed statement from each showing agreement to participate. The deadline for submission is **November 20, 1995.**

Contact

For further information and papers or proposals in Public Relations/Public Affairs and related areas contact Dr. Richard Alan Nelson, Manship School of Mass Communication, 221 Journalism Building, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70802-7202 (phone: (504) 388-6686; fax: (504) 388-2125; e-mail: rnelson@unix1.sncc.1su.edu).

"For symposia, tutorials and workshops include a 2-3 page overview description of the activity, a list of participants, and a signed statement from each showing agreement to participate. The deadline for submission is November 20, 1995."

For *Corporate Communications: Global Perspective* papers and case histories contact Professor Susanne A. Roschwalb, School of Communication, American University, 4400 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20016-8017 or call (202) 885-1890. ◆

IABC Research Foundation Seeking Papers

The International Association of Business Communicators' Research Foundation encourages rigorous research on questions of practical relevance to communicators and public relations practitioners. To qualify for the $1,000 award for best scholar-practitioner paper (with an equal share to each co-author), the co-authors must include at least one full-time university faculty member or graduate student; and at least one person whose principal full-time employment involves internal or external communication for organizations. Single-authored papers are ineligible for the cash award. Single-authored and co-authored papers will be judged equally in blind peer reviews by communication scholars.

The best papers accepted and presented at the IABC annual conference, June 16-19, 1996, in Dallas, Texas, will be considered for publication in the *Journal of Public Relations Research*.

Papers can focus on any aspect of public relations, communication management and business communication. All scholarly methodologies are appropriate. Papers, including a one-page abstract, should be approximately 30 double-spaced, single-sided pages--excluding references and appendix items. To ensure the integrity of blind reviews, no identification of author(s) should be apparent in the paper. A cover letter should include full name, title, address and phone number for the author(s).

Send five copies of the paper to Mark McElreath, Department of Speech and Mass Communication, Towson State University, Towson, Maryland, 21204. ◆

Division News

Outgoing Division Head Elected IABD President

Richard Alan Nelson, outgoing head of AEJMC's Public Relations Division, has been elected president of the International Academy of Business Disciplines (IABD). Nelson, professor and associate dean for graduate studies and research at Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication, is the first person from a communications program to hold the IABD leadership mantle.

Founded in 1988, IABD is a worldwide non-profit organization which encourages the exchange of information, ideas and research results from around the world. "The International Academy of Business Disciplines seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice, increasing public awareness of business problems and opportunities in the international marketplace," says Abbass Alkhafaji, the organization's executive vice president and professor of management at Slippery Rock University. "The election of Richard Nelson points to the growing recognition by faculty in business schools that public relations, advertising, and marketing communication are important components of our discipline."

According to Nelson, "The IABD organization is built to bring people together. Numerous PRD members have become involved as IABD conference track chairs and paper or panel presenters. The academy serves a real public interest by providing a truly unique international forum for professionals and faculty in business schools, communications programs, and other social science departments to discuss common interests that overlap artificial career, political, and national boundaries. We've really created an atmosphere where people can learn from each other,

socialize, and leave with the feeling that they've been part of something worthwhile."

Nelson also serves as "Public Relations/ Public Affairs/ Lobbying and Media Business Issues" track chair for the forthcoming Eighth Annual Meeting (April 11-14, 1996) in the Washington, DC area. He is joined by Susanne Roschwalb, American University, who heads the IABD "Corporate Communications: Global Perspective" track. IABD conferences have a broad scope, with a total of 34 different track areas and a truly international/ interdisciplinary group of attendees.

"The election of Richard Nelson points to the growing recognition by faculty in business schools that public relations, advertising, and marketing communication are important components of our discipline."

More than 400 scholars, practitioners, students, and business executives attended IABD's conference this past year, with many publishing their work in Business Research Yearbook, a quality annual based on the proceedings co-published by University Press of America and IABD. While the conference this year will focus on "A Strategic Approach to Globalization through Technology and Diversity," proposals for refereed paper presentations, symposia, tutorials and workshops in all areas of public relations are invited. Deadline for submissions is November 20, so contact Nelson or Roschwalb for more details. ◆

Pavlik and Dozier Receive $5,500 for Study on New Information Highway Technologies

superhighway extends to the remotest corners of the Earth, it provides an electronic portal through which intrepid practitioners can observe patterns of public opinion take shape.

Objectives of the Study

This study examines how leading public relations practitioners are using the technologies of the information highway to engage in high-tech environmental monitoring and scanning. The specific objectives of the study are to determine:

- which information highway technologies are being employed by practitioners to monitor the environment;
- how those technologies are being used;
- how often and effectively these digital tools are employed; and
- how does such environmental monitoring on the information highway create opportunities for practitioners to enact managerial roles and contribute to strategic planning.

The study uses multiple qualitative research methods, including focus group interviews with leading practitioners, depth interviews with selected top practitioners, online dialogues with practitioner user groups and ethnographic study or participant observation of leading practitioners engaged in the use of information highway technologies to monitor the environment. We will also create a Home Page on the World Wide Web to provide information about the project and updates on its findings, and to solicit input from the professional and academic communities as well as from the public. The use of these multiple methods is critical to provide a reliable and valid measure of the phenomena of interest (Pavlik and Szanto, 1994; Campbell and Fiske, 1959).

We hope this study will contribute to both the theory and practice of public relations. Environmental monitoring is a critical public relations function (Dozier, 1987, 1990). Past research shows that environmental monitoring has depended on a variety of traditional methods of data collection, especially scanning media coverage. The advent of the information highway--especially the Internet--has spawned a new era in communications. Witness the emergence of virtual publics and rapid activist group mobilization as savvy individuals and groups use online communications to reach their members en masse at low cost and high speed.

For example, in June of 1995, one activist group used the World Wide Web to conduct an electronic petition-signing campaign in opposition to Senator Jim Exon's so-called "Decency Bill" (S. 314) which sought to ban certain forms of adult-oriented content on the Internet. Leading public relations practitioners are increasingly turning to information highway technologies such as the Internet to monitor such activity and anticipate important developments in issues and public opinion long before they are apparent in traditional news media.

" *This study will provide a conceptual map of the information highway technologies that leading practitioners use to monitor the communication environment.* **"**

Prior research indicates that such innovative activities allow practitioners to play a broader, more strategic role in the management of the organizations that employ them. Both informal (advisory groups, media contacts) and formal research (focus groups, surveys) have been shown to position practitioners as experts on publics,

public reactions to organizational behavior, and issues important to organizations. This expertise regarding "what's going on out there" allows practitioners to play a more active role in the strategic management of organizations (Dozier, 1987; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). Does the Internet provide practitioners with an additional tool to scan, to provide management with rapid feedback on public reactions to organizational behavior and issues? Is the kind of information that practitioners gather as they "surf" the Internet the kind of information management pays attention to? Does expertise on the information highway play the same role in professional advancement as does expertise in research methods?

Expected Results

This study will provide a conceptual map of the information highway technologies that leading practitioners use to monitor the communication environment. It will also provide a "user's guide" for practitioners interested in enhancing their use of information highway technologies in environmental monitoring. It will enrich our theoretical understanding of the impact of information highway technologies on how practitioners monitor the communication environment. Finally, it will provide important insights as to the professional consequences of practitioner uses of the information highway.

Time Frame

The proposed study will be conducted during a nine-month period, from September 1, 1995 to May 1, 1996. The initial three-month period will be used to design the study and conduct a pilot investigation of the central research question.

The next three months will be devoted to data collection and preliminary data processing. The final two months will be used to analyze the data and write a report of the findings of the study for submission to the Institute. ◆

New Software Offers Interactive Approach to Public Relations Research

PR Research offers students, teachers and practitioners an interactive and systematic approach to public relations research planning and evaluation.

What You Need to Use PR Research

PR Research works on any Apple computer with at least one megabyte of RAM. You also need a mouse. PR Research was developed as a stand-alone HyperCardÆ application.

How To Use PR Research

Use PR Research to create or evaluate research plans, projects and proposals for any public relations problem, situation or opportunity. The intuitive software design follows a step-by-step progression through the basics of sound research practices in industry and the academy, both in the U.S. and around the world. Few instructions are needed. Just follow the outline below.

Follow These Six Steps

Click on any of the buttons arrayed vertically on the left side of the screen to select a basic step in the PR Research process.
These steps are:

- Design the PR research investigation;
- Sample the population or public;
- Observe the PR phenomena of interest;
- Measure those PR phenomena;
- Analyze the data; and,
- Report the results to the client or other audience.

When you click on a button, you access a unique, interactive car d of guidelines and information covering that subject area. Each area is arranged with additional buttons to take you deeper into the subject if you choose. Many buttons are interactive and will provide feedback to your typed input. Intelligence is built into PR Research to help you make decisions about everything from choosing the most appropriate research method to determining sample size, designing the measurement instrument and analyzing the data validly and reliably.

Although the six steps on the left are in the basic sequence of public relations research, you can actually work in any order you would like, simply by clicking on the desired button. Working in an interactive fashion may, in fact, work the best, since PR research projects typically evolve over time.

Select Special Features

On the right-hand side of the screen are six special buttons that facilitate your use of PR Research.

Note Pad is the place to start. Click on Note Pad and a hidden electronic note pad will appear. Type in this note pad any information you would like included in your PR Research plan. For example, when you are working the section on Research Design, type into the note pad information about the purpose of your research, theoretical considerations, basic methods, and other pertinent information. You may also "cut-and-paste" information directly from PR Research into the note pad. In some cases, PR Research will have a special button to enter key information automatically for you. Use the Note Pad for each section of PR Research.

> 66 *When you click on a button, you access a unique, interactive card of guidelines and informa - tion covering that subject area.* 99

Plan Maker takes you to the section of PR Research that actually puts together your research plan. Click on Plan Maker after you have worked through the steps, then use the Note Pad to enter relevant information.

Plan Maker will then automatically compile all your notes into the window in the center of the Plan Maker screen, adding appropriate headings for each section. Plan Maker will even read your draft plan to make sure all important issues have been addressed in your plan. If anything major is left out, it will tell you so an note where it should be added in your plan.

Index takes you to a table of contents for PR RESEARCH wher e you can see every car d or section in the software. You can use the Index of PR RESEARCH or to go dir ectly to any section simply by clicking on appropriate listing.

Simulation takes you to a simulated PR Research problem, where the computer will play the role of the client and you the r esearcher. The computer will:

- interview you,
- expect you to know the subject matter at hand (you should see the database provided in the simulation before you talk to the client),
- ask you to prepare a research plan using PR Research, and
- let you present your plan electronically, giving you feedback based on your presentation.

Search provides key-word searching of the entire PR Research package, including the Note Pad and Plan Maker features. Use the Search feature to quickly return to any desired notes or subject areas. Because of the HyperCard/E design, Boolean searching is not possible (i.e., you cannot search for two or more words in combination).

Help offers on-screen advice to facilitate use of PR Research. ◆

Gross

Little wonder then that corporate outlays for communication and computing equipment now exceed all spending on industrial, construction, mining and farm machinery combined.

These and other changes are engendering new ways of thinking and working, as well as newer tools to improve the process. All demand continuous learning to keep pace in an ever-evolving economy. And at the heart of learning is communication. That is the good news.

Yet shifts in economic, social and political faults—along with emerging and converging technologies—are constantly altering the communication landscape. As communication professionals, and educators, we are hardly immune.

The tools and techniques that once defined us exclusively are becoming universal. Children now use computers to design their own Christmas cards. More advanced desktop technologies have given people the means—if not the talent—to become their own publishers. And some of the most memorable moments of the past decade—whether at Tienanmen Square or the Berlin Wall or San Francisco or the streets of Los Angeles—were recorded by folks we used to call amateurs.

Smaller, cheaper and easier to use technologies are enabling just about anyone to produce and distribute information anywhere at any time.

These days, more than a third of all business presentations are created by individuals for their own use. Teachers conduct lectures, doctors transmit detailed images, engineers and artists exchange ideas and inspiration, all via integrated networks.

At the same time, we are confronted by an array of seemingly arcane systems and devices—client-servers, electronic documentation,

intelligent agents, and groupware, just to name a few. These are the tools, not of traditional communicators, but of information technology professionals; and their importance in the enterprise is growing, as computers evolve from isolated information processors to key components in broadband communications.

❝ Smaller, cheaper and easier to use technologies are enabling just about anyone to produce and distribute information anywhere at any time. ❞

According to a recent study by the Rochester Institute of Technology, jobs with titles like telecommunications management, network integration and imaging science will be the hot careers of the 21st century, as firms turn to technology professionals to reduce cycle time, improve market share, strive for zero defects, and increase investment return.

As a result, we find ourselves caught somewhere between an organizational rock and hard place—between technically savvy managers of information and increasingly sophisticated end-users.

Like everywhere else in the organization, our roles and responsibilities are changing. Sometimes disappearing, as companies downsize, outsource or go in other directions. One consequence, for example, has been the decline of in-house video departments from an average of 14 staff members down to about five. This will likely become the rule as customers, clients, employees and the public increasingly dictate, not just the *what* with regard to communication, but the *where, when* and *how*.

In the past, we may have been able to address these groups through distinct channels—management com-

munication for employees; marketing communication for customers; public relations for just about everyone else.

No more. Not when people can work at home, or learn at work. Not when more and more of them are becoming members of teams or alliances or virtual organizations. And certainly not when their needs and interests are changing as well.

Communication is becoming increasingly integrated, and new working arrangements mean crossing paths, not only with different communication functions, but with research and development, manufacturing, human resources, sales and scores of others both within and outside the enterprise.

Thus, collaboration is now the price of doing business in a global market. Along with bottom-line considerations come gut feelings like confidence, credibility and respect. They rely on the ability of participants to develop mutual benefits, and to clearly demonstrate those benefits to everyone involved. Just as important, they require constant sharing of ideas and information, since, in an era of communication, mistrust and misunderstanding can be costly.

That means traditional disciplines like interpersonal and small group communication will become all the more important, though they will be practiced in very non-traditional ways. New technologies are making it possible—and the new economy is making it imperative—that interactions of all kinds be carried on across the boundaries of time and place.

So where do we, as communication professionals and educators, stand in this shifting environment? Perhaps, stand is the wrong word; because to succeed, we will have to be increasingly more mobile. Not just physically, but intellectually, too; and one of the most serious collaborative challenges we face is between ourselves and our tools.

Internet Growing

Those familiar with Moore's law ... divined more than thirty years ago by Intel Corporation founder Gordon Moore ... know that the processing power of computers increases by a factor of ten about every three years. At the same time, the number of machines connected to the Internet has been growing five to ten times faster than the number of transistors on a chip.

By that reckoning, communication technologies will be 1,000 times smarter by the end of the century than they were at the start of this decade. Unfortunately, we won't.

Consequently, the technology gap will keep widening. That is a serious problem, because productivity isn't based on the capacity of machines, but on the capability of people to use machines; and at a time when competition has already taken a heavy toll, we shouldn't have to compete with our tools as well.

We have little choice then, but to continuously learn new systems and devices. Yet learning works best when it is founded on previous knowledge. That is what we bring to the process. It is why artists are more proficient with graphic technologies, and why writers are more adept at online documentation, than persons who lack fundamental communication skills and simply learn to operate hardware.

Not only are experienced communicators better able to select and use the most appropriate technology—saving considerable time, effort and money—we are also more likely to develop innovative uses which can expand a technology's life and value.

Experienced computer user all understand that, before investing in hardware, they must know the software they plan to use with it. Well, we are the software ... not the databases nor the graphics programs nor the word processors. We are extensions of the machine. We determine the applications. And we operate on our own human levels.

Anyone who has ever walked with an infant knows progress is compromise. So no matter how much smarter than us our technologies may be, occasionally they will have to slow down and give us a chance to catch up. Tools are only as effective as the people using them; and the degree to which systems and devices emulate and foster human communication, the faster and more efficiently they will succeed.

Whatever the future directions, this much seems obvious—people and technology will count. But success will mean that both will have to adapt.

Again, new technologies will enable almost anyone to communicate anywhere, at any time. That fact bears repeating because it is already having a significant impact. Those who work in finance know this all too well. Today, the international flow of capital is endless. It goes on 24 hours a day. The same is true of news. And it won't be long before most other institutions find themselves in similar situations.

> ❝ *Consequently, the technology gap will keep widening. That is a serious problem, because productivity isn't based on the capacity of machines, but on the capability of people to use machines; and at a time when competition has already taken a heavy toll, we shouldn't have to compete with our tools as well.* ❞

Over time, it will be increasingly common to communicate with people whom we may never set eyes on. Developments in internetworking and videoconferencing are making it possible to conduct face-to-face meetings with people anywhere on the face of the earth. We already trade stocks, teach courses, design airplanes and ⊠

diagnose illnesses with people who are not only not in the same room with us, but maybe not on the same continent.

Add to this the factors of portability and connectivity, and each of us can have our own offices—our own companies, for that matter—anywhere we go.

Still, there is an interesting paradox here. Even as we broaden our reach and expand the distances over which we communicate, that communication is becoming more and more intimate. Unlike older media—newspapers, radio and television—which have traditionally been mass media, the new means of communication are personal technologies. They don't lend themselves well to grand and generic gestures, and they are poor conduits for top-down or command-and-control messages. Instead, they support dialogues, and require that we not only know our audiences, but that we understand and address their individual needs and concerns.

That presents a challenge to advertisers and marketers who are used to packaging pithy slogans in tight spaces or 15-second time slots. Or to public relations executives who pronounce official edicts and expect them to be disseminated—in one direction—throughout the marketplace. In fact, it presents a challenge to anyone who is used to business as usual, because business as usual just doesn't work anymore.

Responsiblity Added
As organizations restructure, members at all levels must take on added responsibilities, interacting with people with whom they have previously had little or no contact ... in situations that may be new and unfamiliar. The growing reliance on teamwork, alliances and virtual relationships—and the need to integrate disparate knowledge, functions and cultures—mean involving larger and more diverse sectors of the enterprise. More demanding consumers, and more aggressive competitors, are compelling organizations to explore issues beyond their immediate concerns,

since that is where opportunities and obstacles are likely to arise.

All of these are communication issues. They call for communication solutions. But it would be a mistake to handle them as we have in the past. Just as it would be a mistake to continue to define ourselves in exclusive terms. We can longer afford to think of ourselves as simply management communicators, or marketing communicators, or public relations professionals. Instead, we must become communicators who deal with sundry constituencies under constantly changing circumstances. Sometimes those constituents are employees. Other times they are customers or members of the public. More often than not, they are a composite of these groups.

It is unlikely that any of us can do this on our own. Nor is it advisable. Yet each of us will, at least, have to understand the various elements that constitute effective communication; while our organizations must develop the kinds of strategies that enable them to gather, evaluate, organize and present information using the full spectrum of viable technologies.

Here is an opportunity—and a challenge—for communication educators. In the future, education will be better served if, rather than training only future communication professionals, our schools and departments provide all professionals—all citizens—with communication and information skills.

But we cannot—and should not—do it alone.

Information Needs Will Change
For the first time, communication programs can end their intellectual isolation and become a vital resource throughout the entire academic community. We can remove the barriers that ghettoize us, and work instead with others through open and imaginative alliances.

By the end of this century, for example, business will be the single largest user of information in the

world. Companies and commercial organizations already publish thousands of newsletters, magazines, bulletins and journals, using the most advanced technologies. Some corporate publications reach audiences that are several times larger than small and community newspapers.

At the same time, three-quarters of a million firms regularly employ video services and personnel, spending more than $10 billion annually to produce more programming than all broadcast and cable television combined.

Moreover, with 100 million PCs installed in corporate America, computer-based communication systems are becoming as ubiquitous as the telephone. Use of the World Wide Web is now evenly divided between public services on the Internet and private services on corporate networks.

> **"** *More demanding consumers, and more aggressive competitors, are compelling organizations to explore issues beyond their immediate concerns, since that is where opportunities and o bstacles are likely to arise.* **"**

If future communicators plan to take full advantage of the opportunities that will be available, they have to learn about business. Just as businesspeople who hope to succeed in the new economy will have no other option but to become effective communicators. But this is just one example.

Aside from business, communication schools and departments must encourage their students and faculty to explore other disciplines. Scientific methods of testing ideas, and mathematical approaches to solving problems would add new dimensions to information literacy. Education skills

Towson State University
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would enhance instructional design.

Computer sciences would help redefine interpersonal and organizational communication in an era of networks and groupware. And the list goes on.

Indeed, cooperation among a broad base of disciplines can engender a truly comprehensive liberal education. One in which developing new talents, temperaments, experiences and perspectives takes priority over simply acquiring new facts.

This approach does not require wholesale re-deployment of programs and personnel. To the contrary, any attempt to permanently realign existing arrangements would only bog down in a morass of turf wars and political infighting. Instead, it calls for the creation of improvised partnerships that come about as needs arise, and evolve as circumstances change.

No doubt, few if any of these changes will come easily; and whatever the outcomes, the future will likely be a combination of good and bad news.

Some of the possibilities are truly heartening: Access to more specific and more discernable data will enable us to customize services. Increased mobility will mean we will no longer be restricted by time or space. We may gain levels of autonomy that never seemed possible before, like the freedom to work when, where and how we want.

Most important perhaps, the need for ideas and information will continue to grow. In fact, it has been estimated that, while investment in new media will reach as high as $400 billion over the next decade, investment in new content may be twice that amount. Yet the challenges will be equally daunting:

They will require new ways of managing organizations— some spread out across the globe rather than just across town. We will have to continually learn about new tools and techniques. A restless economy will mean addressing the interests of narrower and more diverse markets; while the need to successfully communicate with each will place greater reliance on trust and understanding. Ultimately, many of our institutions, including colleges and universities, may change radically.

The degree to which we encounter any of these possibilities or challenges will vary, depending on how far we are willing to venture. In some cases, there will be few options except to be left behind.

Need to be Open and Flexible
The minimum this new environment will demand of us is that we be open and flexible. If change is the only constant, we will constantly have to change. Furthermore, we will have to be at ease with risk and uncertainty. We should be allowed to fail some - times, and to learn from the experience.

On the other hand, the extent to which we prepare and support ourselves through a broad range of knowledge and skills—and see differences, not as barriers, but as opportunities—we will define this new age in our own terms ... rather than let it define us. And in times of change, that is the best news of all. ◆