

Media

Spring, 2004

Ecology

IN MEDIAS RES

Vol. 5, No. 2

Association

(In the Middle of Things)

www.media-ecology.org

5th Annual MEA Convention--June 10-13, 2004

Media Environments and the Liberal Arts

Sponsored by

The Department of Communication and

The William A. Kern Professor in Communications

College of Liberal Arts, Rochester Institute of Technology

Sue Barnes

The Fifth Annual Media Ecology Convention is turning into an exciting event. We have panels on **blogs, video games, digital poetry, media ecology theory, Canadian contributions to media ecology, and visual ecology**. Along with the panels, we will hold **tributes for Walter Ong and Neil Postman**. Featured presentations will be made by **Denise Schmandt-Besserat, Gary Gumpert, Sue Drucker, and Douglas Rushkoff**. Two plenary panels are also scheduled: **The Future of Literature in Digital Environments** and **The Future of Digital Media and the Internet**.

As a special added attraction, private **tours of RIT's Cary Graphic Arts Collection** will be conducted by the Collection's Curator, David Pankow. The Cary Graphic Arts Collection is one of the world's premier libraries on the history and practice of printing. To find

out more about the collection visit:
<http://www.rit.edu/cary>.

We have a stimulating three days of events planned, including a luncheon sponsored by the William A. Kern Professor of Communications (Diane Hope), multimedia events, a campus nature walk, and a complementary copy of Douglas Rushkoff's *Exit Strategy* with paid MEA memberships.

The conference hotel is the Radisson Hotel Rochester Airport (585) 475-1910 located on the RIT Campus. There is a free shuttle service available to and from the airport. **Pre-registration forms are available on the MEA website.**

Check the blog (www.rit.edu/~sbbgpt/mea-rit/) and the website (www.media-ecology.org) for conference updates. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email Sue Barnes (sbbgpt@rit.edu). We look forward to seeing you in Rochester!!

Notes from Members

Jim Morrison <jcm46@comcast.net>

My term appointment as Scholar-in-Residence in the Department of Organizational and Political Communication at Emerson College has been renewed, and beginning next school year I will be serving as Graduate Program Director. We're looking to expand our M.A. Program in Organizational and Corporate Communication, from about a dozen students a year to twice that number. We feature an exciting, enhanced curriculum focusing on strategic and proactive communication, small classes, and close mentoring by a faculty consisting of both academics and practitioners with extensive experience in industry. If there are MEA members who have promising students interested in this field, or are themselves interested, we would appreciate hearing from them. We are looking for both students about to graduate and people who already have some work experience.

Those interested can contact either me <james_morrison@emerson.edu> or our department Chair, Dr. Phillip Glenn <phillip_glenn@emerson.edu>. Our mailing address is 120 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116.

Bucy, Erik <ebucy@indiana.edu>

> *Media Access: Social and Psychological Dimensions of New Technology Use*

> Erik P. Bucy and John E. Newhagen (Eds.) > Publisher: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004 > Hardcover: \$69.95 > Paperback: \$34.50

> Media Access, a new book edited by Erik Bucy of Indiana University and John Newhagen of the University of Maryland, presents a series of original studies examining the social and psychological dimensions of new technology use. Although much research attention and policy discussion relating to the digital divide remains focused on physical access to information and communication technology (ICT) the studies gathered here demonstrate that differential use of ICTs is a more telling, and problematic, indicator than simple measures of computer and Internet access. While demographic markers have been employed to track whether the digital divide is widening or receding, profitable use of new media hinges more on the motivations, individual-level characteristics, and abilities of individual users -> dimensions of access whose critical evaluation requires novel approaches, typically at the individual level, and often involving intensive data-gathering techniques. This volume covers three aspects of media access research: cognitive effects, social and cultural consequences, and studies geared toward media access to the public sphere. Interdisciplinary and multi-methodological in nature, the studies collected here rely on large-scale survey data, psychological explanations inferred from experimental data, and cultural explanations derived from depth interviews and ethnographic methods. Media Access should be of interest to a wide variety of teachers and scholars interested in issues relating to technology adoption, public access to new communication technology, and research relating to the digital divide.

President's Message

Cycles II

Lance Strate, Fordham University

In the last issue of *_In Medias Res_*, in a column entitled "Cycles," I wrote of our sadness over the loss of Walter Ong.

And even as that issue was being delivered to the MEA membership, and less than two months after Ong's death, media ecologists mourned the passing of Neil Postman on October 5, 2003. For many of us, Neil Postman was a mentor, colleague, teacher, and friend. For all of us, he was a gifted speaker and writer, an incisive critic, an insightful philosopher, and an exemplary educator.

He formally introduced the term "media ecology" in 1968, in an address delivered at the annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, and founded the Media Ecology graduate program at New York University in 1970. Postman went on to serve as Chair of the Department of Culture and Communication at NYU during the 1990s, earned the highest academic rank of University Professor in 1993, and was awarded the new Paulette Goddard Chair of Media Ecology in 1998. From his first book, *Television and the Teaching of English*, published in 1961, to his most recent, *Building a Bridge to the Eighteenth Century*, published 38 years and some 20 books later, Postman was instrumental in establishing media ecology as a field of inquiry. And through such classics as *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (co-

authored with Charles Weingartner), *Crazy Talk, Stupid Talk, The Disappearance of Childhood, Amusing Ourselves to Death*, and *Technopoly*, Postman helped us to better understand media, technology, communication, and language.

The Media Ecology Association was founded by five of Neil Postman's former students, and Postman himself served on the first MEA Board of Directors and on the Editorial Board of our journal, *Explorations in Media Ecology*. Moreover, he was the Keynote Speaker at the MEA's Inaugural Convention in 2000 (the text of his address is published in our *Proceedings*, which can be found on our website (<http://www.media-ecology.org/publications/proceedings.html>). In that address he explained that "as I understand the whole point of media ecology, it exists to further our insights into how we stand as human beings, how we are doing morally in the journey we are taking." As the MEA continues on its own journey, we will most assuredly miss having Neil Postman with us as a guide and companion. But the road ahead will be an easier one for us, because we had Neil Postman to light our way.

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Jonathan Druy has set up online memorials for (cont. on p. 4)

President's Message (cont.)

Walter Ong

(www.rememberingwalterong.com) and

Neil Postman

(www.rememberingneilpostman.com),

and I want to take this opportunity to recognize and commend his work. I encourage you to visit these web sites if you have not done so already, and to post your thoughts if you are so moved. Also, we will be publishing a special issue of *Explorations in Media Ecology* devoted to Ong later this year, and a special issue devoted to Postman next year.

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As our annual convention provides us with a yearly ritual of renewal for the media ecology community, we have recently renewed the virtual community formed through our electronic discussion list. The media ecology listserv had been plagued by antiquated software that left subscribers without important options such as "digest mode" (perfect for those worried about e-mail overload), and that left the list vulnerable to viruses and spam. Over the winter holiday, MEA Executive Secretary Janet Sternberg transferred the listserv to its new home at the University of North Carolina's [ibiblio.org](http://lists.ibiblio.org). On behalf of the MEA I want to express our gratitude to Janet for taking on and completing this task, and I also want to thank our new hosts for their hospitality. You can subscribe to the new, improved MEA listserv through a web-based interface, and manage your options that way as

well. Simply point your browser to <http://lists.ibiblio.org/mailman/listinfo/mea> and follow the directions. I urge all MEA members to sign on, at least on digest mode, as the listserv is our most efficient and fastest way of informing you about official MEA activities, and other matters of interest to media ecologists. Of course, the discussions themselves can be quite stimulating, and the list is a great resource where you can post queries and gather information and opinions about any topic in the media ecology galaxy.

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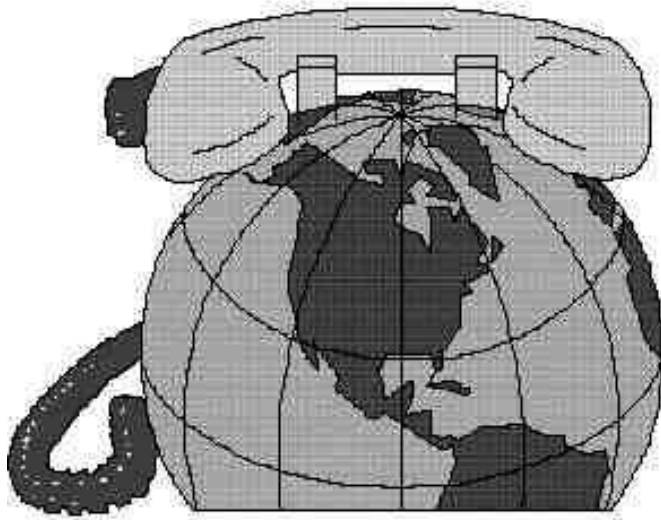
The MEA's cycle of renewal comes every year, as we send out our membership dues notices. Our association needs your support, and your presence, which is why I ask you to send in your 2004 membership dues as soon as you can. This year, through the generosity of MEA Board member Douglas Rushkoff, dues-paying members will receive a free copy of his latest novel, *Exit Strategy* (while supplies last). If you need a copy of the membership form, you can download it from our website (<http://www.media-ecology.org/joinmea>), and we have a PayPal option for folks living outside of the United States. And please spread the word about the MEA, and encourage others to join. The MEA needs your help to continue our cycle of growth and development, and to continue in our mission, to carry on the legacies of Neil Postman and Walter Ong.

Notices of Interest

The twenty-seventh Annual Meeting of the **Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender** will be held **October 14th - 17th at Saint Mary's College in South Bend, Indiana**. You are invited to submit proposals for panel presentations, roundtable discussions, 250 word abstracts, or completed papers that focus around the theme of this conference "Challenges in a Changing Intercultural Environment." We will explore such issues as: Intercultural Thinking in Everyday Life; What is Happening to Women in Other Parts of the World; Clashes of Western Feminism with Cultural Identity; etc. To submit a creative presentation, panel proposal, paper or extended abstract, send three copies, along with a cover letter and title page with complete author information by June 1, 2004 to Linda Berdayes, Communication Studies, Dance & Theatre, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, 46556, Phone: 574-284-4919, Email: lberday@saintmarys.edu. Personal Identifying information should only appear in the cover letter and title page.

MEA members may be interested in learning about the formation of **the Consortium for the Study of Urban Communication**. This consortium grew out of an NCA sponsored symposium held in Oct. 2003 at Emerson College at which time several members of MEA participated. The starting point is the notion that cities are inherently environments of communication, meeting spaces for interaction and/or observation. Digital cities represent an important dimension of urban environments as well. What do Media Ecologist have to contribute to the understanding and enhancement of these environments? What can research and insights provided by media ecologists add to the study and design of urban centers? **A seminar is being planned in conjunction with the National Communication Association convention in Chicago in November, 2004. Anyone interested in learning more about the consortium or the seminar please contact Gary Gumpert or Susan Drucker at: 516-466-0136; listra@optonline.net or sphsd@hofstra.edu.**

The **U.S. chapter of the International Institute of Communication** is dedicated to bringing together upper level media professionals, communication scholars, and public officials for the purpose of providing a forum for deliberation and analysis. At a time when convergence and globalization characterizes the communication landscape a critical need exists for the coming together of those concerned with the public and social future of the communication world. It is equally important that research, public service, and the economic viability of the communication sector be preserved. For information about U.S. Chapter membership in the IIC, **please contact U.S. Chapter President Gary Gumpert at: 516-466-0136; listra@optonline.net.** For information about the international organization go to: <http://www.iicom.org/index.htm>.



SLEEPWALKING INTO THE 21ST CENTURY ?

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