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Post-Forum Reflections: On Becoming Organizational Communication

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With this issue, my 3-year term as Forum Editor comes to a close. During that time I have been both inspired and humbled by the opportunity to work with scholars near and far to create space for what I envisioned could be a variety of conversations about organizational communication. I began my term when the journal was entering its 20th year, and Jim Barker and I decided to mark that event by seeking essays from previous *Management Communication Quarterly* editors reflecting on their vision and hopes for the journal, whether those were realized, and the challenges each faced at the time (Volume 20, Issue 4). As I read each editor's account, I was struck by the enduring and shared commitment to support both interdisciplinary and international research and the challenges involved in doing so. I resolved to reinforce those commitments when I could throughout my service to the journal. Even though my term as Forum Editor is ending, I hope that many of the conversations begun in Forum space throughout the past 3 years are just beginning and will inspire growth in how organizational communication is understood and studied and in what it can become.

For example, working together, Lynn Harter and I coordinated a Forum discussion around the ways in which organizational and management communication scholarship can be understood as the work of the public intellectual. Through this lens, we saw inspiring examples of how researchers actively engage their communities by serving on the boards of directors for nongovernmental organizations working for social change, supporting community development efforts among the elderly, and creating public space in which scientists and citizens can learn to interact more meaningfully about scientific controversies (Volume 21, Issue 1). Taken together, this set of essays illustrates how organizational communication can be theorized and practiced in ways that create space for

participatory forums, community-based deliberation, and dialogue. The reach and impact of this scholarship extends beyond the academy and into communities as geographically dispersed as New Zealand, Ohio, Arizona, and India. Clearly, our work as public intellectuals is just beginning and has great potential for shaping what organizational communication scholarship can become at both local and global levels.

A second project continued a conversation begun in 1996 (Volume 10, Issue 1) when *MCQ* Editor Kathy Miller commissioned a set of essays to discuss the disciplinary boundaries of management, business, organizational, and corporate communication. At that time, and writing on behalf of organizational communication, Dennis Mumby and Cynthia Stohl identified a set of four central problematics that they argued implicitly shape a sense of community and identity among organizational communication scholars. Volume 21, Issue 2 revisits their essay and devotes forum space to an exchange between Mumby and Stohl, and Kirsten Broadfoot and Debashish Munshi as they seek to expand the field's theoretical and geographical boundaries in light of developments in postcolonial theory and research. In a subsequent Forum (Volume 22, Issue 2), Broadfoot and Munshi along with Natalie Nelson-Marsh construct an illustration of what it can mean to seriously consider diverse voices and alternative rationalities when studying and practicing organizational communication. In a highly ambitious project, this group of scholars set up an online community of international and interdisciplinary scholars, activists, artists, and community practitioners from Aotearoa-New Zealand, Australia, Brazil, India, and the United States, Nepal, and Nigeria to explore alternative ways of understanding organizing and communicating across the globe. In that space and for that moment in time, the organizational communication conversation expanded to include voices beyond the traditional disciplinary boundaries of organizational communication as well as from beyond the field's more traditional geographic boundaries.

A third project extended the conversation on discursive versus psychological approaches to leadership begun by Gail Fairhurst (2007) in her book *Discursive Leadership*. Working with Gail, I invited scholars from around the globe to comment on how they see the two approaches playing out in light of their own work and geographic contexts. Scholars from Scotland, Norway, Australia, and China offered their views, for example, on discursive leadership's ability to stand up to dominant approaches to the study of leadership as well as its relationship to emerging views on leadership (Volume 21, Issue 4).

Last, the international presence of *MCQ* also stands to be strengthened by the efforts of Linda Putnam and Adriana Machado Casali to coordinate a Forum discussion around the idea of "growing organizational communication programs in Brazil." In this set of essays, scholars reflect

on the history and trajectory of organizational communication studies in Brazil, as well as on the nature of connections between academia and business and between academia and communication-related professional associations. Scholars also reflect on the potential for studies of social movement and nongovernmental organizations, followed by an essay forecasting the future of organizational communication studies in Brazil.

Along with these projects, a number of organizational communication and management scholars have served as guest Forum Editors and have contributed Forum essays and reviews of scholarly books, all of whom have contributed by either beginning or continuing conversations concerning studies of meaningful work, organizational metaphor, humor, and gender. I appreciate all of their efforts. To the extent any of these conversations take hold, I will feel as if we have made some contribution to how the study of organizational communication is understood and what it can become. To the extent these conversations reach even further beyond the field's more traditional national borders, I will feel as if we successfully supported the 22-year effort to internationalize *MCQ* and the study of organizational communication.

Reference

Fairhurst, G. T. (2007). *Discursive leadership: In conversation with leadership psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



Kathy Krone (PhD, University of Texas at Austin, 1985) is a professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA. Her current research projects include an exploration of transnational women's networks, stakeholder turning points in a planned public involvement process, and the discourse of managerial conflict in Sino-American joint ventures.