

# IN MEDIAS RES

THE OFFICAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MEDIA ECOLOGY ASSOCIATION

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## President's Message:

# Making Meaning By Convention

*Lance Strate, President, MEA  
Fordham University*

Symbolically speaking, the Media Ecology Association has made meaning by convention. This is not to say that the event was in any way arbitrary. Rather, it was the result of hard work on the part of the convention coordinator Paul Levinson,

Associate Coordinator Janet Sternberg, Audio-Visual Coordinator, Mark Lipton, and many others, all of whom deserve our gratitude and appreciation. Through their efforts, the Inaugural Meeting of the MEA was a distinct success.

McLuhan said that the content of any medium is the user, and it follows that the content of the convention consisted of the participants and attendees. Together, they created a message marked by an extraordinarily high level of intellectual discourse. Unlike other academic conferences, this one was about ideas more than ideologies, and probes rather than proofs and refutations. There was an air of openness and tolerance, and an interest in exploration and experimentation that is rare to find in intellectual gatherings. Camille Paglia described the prevailing sensibility as a "pioneer spirit," and I am proud to say that at no time did anyone feel the need to circle the wagons. While media ecology has sometimes been identified as a form of technological determinism, and therefore accused of being reductionist in its thinking, it is quite clear from the convention that, much to the contrary our perspective is expansionist. Our tradition is one of a deep commitment to education, not just isolated intellectualizing. And the MEA convention served as a wonderful opportunity for expanding our conceptions and perceptions through the sharing of research, analysis, and criticism. The MEA is therefore indebted to all of the participants and attendees for making such meanings possible.

Media ecologists were the content of the convention individually and collectively. The event was not just about the members, or media ecology as a discipline—it was also about our Association. As our inaugural meeting, the message of the con-

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A benefit for MEA members, *In Medias Res* is by the Media Ecology Association. Inquiries about and/or contributions to this newsletter should be addressed directly to its Editor.

#### ***In Medias Res* Staff**

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Design Layout & Production, Sue Barnes, Fordham University

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Donald Theall.

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vention was that the MEA is in business, and that the MEA means business. A draft of our constitution, prepared by Thom Gencarelli, was discussed, revised, and voted into effect at our open business meeting. And the MEA's officers, previously operating on a provisional basis, were elected to two-year terms. We have therefore set the formal machinery of the MEA into a motion that we hope will be perpetual, or as close to perpetual as is humanly possible (shall we call it Mumford's pendulum?). In sum, while only a portion of the membership was present at the convention, the meaning of the event touches all of our members, potential members, associates, and affiliates. It sends a message of self-confirmation to the larger community—we are here to stay!

The convention served as a medium of association, organization, and intellectual exchange.

And as McLuhan said that the content of a medium is always another medium, so the convention in turn serves as content for a variety of MEA media. Obviously, it forms part of the content of this message, and of *In Medias Res*. Also, it not only spurred the development of the MEA website ([www.mediaecology.org](http://www.mediaecology.org)), it also provided content in the posting of the convention program, the electronic version of this newsletter, and others that will soon follow. Chief among them will be the convention's *Proceedings*, edited by Janet Sternberg and Mark Lipton, with submission subject to blind review. This will yield a high quality online volume that will constitute the MEA's first official publication.

Moreover, the convention sessions were videotaped, and we hope to make them available in audiovisual format as well. The convention further served as fodder for the media ecology discussion list, as conversations initiated at the meeting continued online, and expanded to include discussants who were not present at the meeting. I should also point out that the various announcements related to the convention that were distributed to other listservs, posted on other websites, and published in other organization's newsletters helped to establish our presence in the intellectual community. Through these and other efforts, our reputation and our membership continues to grow.

Certainly, one of the messages of our First Annual Convention is that there will be a Second Annual Convention. Having made meaning by convention once, we plan to extend the signifying chain, and do it again. If you find conventions worthwhile as an experience, I urge you to put next year's meeting in New York City on your calendar. If you have been turned off by conventions in the past, I urge you to give the MEA's version a try—it is everything a convention should be. Of course, we will never get our entire membership together in the same place at the same time, and there will always be members who never attend any of the events, finding ample rewards in other aspects of our Association. But for those of you interested in a face-to-face gathering, I can promise you a meaningful meeting.

If you find the MEA a meaningful organization, then let me ask you for your help in strengthening it. Pay your dues, renew your membership, and bring in new recruits. If we are to grow, it will be in large part through your word of mouth. Be the medium, spread the message!

## SCHOLARSHIP IN BRIEF

### Constructing Civilizations with Carl Couch: Introduction to an Overlooked Media Ecologist

Donna Flayhan, Goucher College

Carl Couch (1925-1994) was an interesting character and an outstanding scholar: he was a Sociologist by training, a Symbolic Interactionist by nature, and a Media Ecologist by default. As a founding and prominent member of the New Iowa School of Symbolic Interaction Studies, Couch spent the late 1960s and the decade of the 1970s in the laboratory studying social processes, temporal structures, and formal properties in everyday social interactions.

In 1980 Couch turned his gaze away from the lab and everyday social interactions and began to study the relationship between social structures, temporal structures, and complex civilizations. This turn led Couch to emphasize the centrality of information technologies in altering temporal and social structures in early civilizations. Much like Harold Adams Innis the economist, Carl Couch the sociologist began his analyses outside of the discipline of Communication and Media Studies but ultimately found that all theoretically and historically insightful roads led back to the dominant forms of communication in society.

While one might assume that a dramatic shift took place in Carl Couch's theoretical approach to scholarship when he moved from the study of people negotiating entry through a doorway in a laboratory setting to the study of the growth of complex civilizations, no such shift took place (Couch, Miller, & Hintz, Jr., 1975a; Couch 1982; Couch 1986; Couch 1990; Couch 1996). The theoretical scaffolding underpinning all of Couch's life work is a commitment to the study of form not content. Indeed, you could boil down Couch's theoretical approach in examining a dyad, a crowd, an ancient civilization, and modern information technologies to the study of forms, processes and temporality (Couch, Miller, & Hintz, Jr., 1975; Couch & Hintz, Jr., 1975; Couch, 1982; Couch, 1986; Couch, 1990; Couch, 1996).

Couch was always interested in shared, coordinated behavior that by necessity focuses attention on temporality: a shared past and a projected shared future exert pressure on coordinated

behavior in the present. Information technologies, Couch argued in his later work, alter our collective shared pasts, our coordinated behaviors in the present, and our projected futures (Couch 1982, 1986, 1990, 1996). In doing so, information technologies alter the very essence of who "we" are, what "we" plan to be, and how "we" act together to get there.

Couch's use of the ideas of Georg Simmel is most apparent in his emphasis on forms and futures, his use of George Herbert Mead is most apparent in his emphases on processes and reciprocal relationships between information technologies and social contexts (Couch 1996; Chen, 1997). This attention to form and process, not content and effects, set up a useful bias in Couch's early scholarship on the dyad that led him to reject the dominant trend in Sociology in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, Couch abhorred the fetishizing of statistical methods emerging in sociology and referred to it as the study of "statics," or "dead content" at the expense of an examination of lived formal processes of sociation. While this bias toward the study of forms protected Couch from falling into a false worship of method at the expense of theory, it also helped him to immediately recognize the significance of the work of Marshall McLuhan (1962), Harold Adams Innis (1951), and Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) as rightly concerned with form not content and a view of media as environments. It is in this theoretical context that Carl Couch the Media Ecologist was born.

Innis's emphasis on time bias in the study of communication technologies was also clearly in sync with Couch's theoretical attention to temporality. As Couch became intrigued with his unique investigation of temporal biases of media, his work added an entirely new dimension to the dominant concern with time bias and space bias in Media Ecology. While the work of Innis (1951) and Meyrowitz (1985) was highly influential in Couch's thinking about information technologies and social order, he did not share their emphasis on how media influenced social change. Couch did not examine how new media break previously established monopolies of knowledge; he emphasized continuity in thoughts and actions of large numbers of human beings due to increased cumulative shared pasts that are fostered by dominant communication technologies during the growth of early complex civilizations (1990; 1996). In *Construct-*

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## MEA To Showcase Inaugural Programs at NCA Convention

Casey M.K. Lum, Vice President, MEA  
William Paterson University

The Media Ecology Association (MEA) will showcase its inaugural program at the 86th annual convention of the National Communication Association (NCA), November 9-12, 2000. The convention will be held at Sheraton Seattle and the Washington State Convention & Trade Center (WSCTC), where all five MEA-sponsored events are scheduled.

Thom Gencarelli (Montclair State University), Lance Strate (Fordham University), and Edward Wachtel (Fordham University) served on this year's Program Planning Review Committee. Casey M.K. Lum (William Paterson University) served as the Unit Program Planner for MEA's presentation at the NCA convention. MEA is an official Affiliate Organization of NCA.

The MEA inaugural program consists of four panels and a business meeting. Of special mention is our first top paper, "Mass Media vs. Media Ecology: A New Paradigm for a New Century," by John Lee Jellicorse (University of North Carolina, Greensboro), which will be featured on the Competitive Papers in Media Ecology panel.

The following is a listing of the four MEA-sponsored panels and business meeting. I encourage you to come join us and help us celebrate MEA's inaugural program at NCA's annual convention. Note that you can access this and other convention-related information at <http://www.natcom.org> (click on "Convention").

### THE ECOLOGY OF CYBERMEDIA

When: Thursday, November 09, 12:30-1:45 p.m.  
Where: Rm 209, 2nd Floor, WSCTC  
Sponsor: Media Ecology Association  
Chair: Lance A. Strate, Fordham University

"Power to the People? Internet Technology and the Message of Freedom." Paul Kelly, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

"Cyberplaces and Their Discontents: Dealing with

Misbehavior in Online Environments." Janet L. Sternberg, New York University

"The Wrinkle in Time: Haeckel's Theorem and Civility Contextualized in Electronic Communication." Susan L. Cook, Gonzaga University

Respondents:

James W. Carey, Columbia University

### THE MEDIA ECOLOGY OF WALTER J. ONG

When: Thursday, November 09, 3:30-4:45 p.m.

Where: Rm 210, 2nd Floor, WSCTC

Sponsor: Media Ecology Association

Chair: Lance A. Strate, Fordham University

Panelists:

Paul A. Soukup, Santa Clara University

Ray Smith, Iona College

Lori A. Ramos, William Paterson University

Tony J. Palmeri, Univ of Wisconsin, Oshkosh

W Lance Haynes, Univ of Missouri, Rolla

Judith Yaross Lee, Ohio University

Bruce E. Gronbeck, University of Iowa

Frank E. X. Dance, University of Denver

Along with Innis, McLuhan, Mumford, and Ellul, Ong is one of the foundational scholars that have established the media ecology perspective. The panelists will discuss Ong's position within media ecology scholarship, the larger context of his work as part of the North American intellectual tradition that can be traced back to Pearce, James, and Dewey, and as part of the Jesuit intellectual tradition, and to consider his relevance for contemporary communication scholarship.

### COMPETITIVE PAPERS IN MEDIA ECOLOGY

When: Friday, November 10, 3:30-4:45 p.m.

Where: Rm 209, 2nd Floor, WSCTC

Sponsor: Media Ecology Association

Chair: Casey M.K. Lum, William Paterson University

Uses and Gratifications of E-Mail: A Comparison with Telephoning and 'Traditional' Letter Writing. Roopa Swaminathan, Bombay, India, Dane S. Claussen, Southwest Missouri State University

Another Hidden Dimension: A Proposed Modification of the Basic Model of Communication. Linda G. Elson, New York University



Mass Media vs. Media Ecology: A New Paradigm for a New Century\*. John Lee Jellicorse, University of North Carolina, Greensboro \*Top Paper

Respondents:

Lance A. Strate, Fordham University  
Neil Postman, New York University

### **FOUNDATIONS OF MEDIA ECOLOGY: A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON LEWIS MUMFORD**

When: Saturday, November 11, 2:00-3:15 p.m.

Where: Rm 209, 2nd Floor, WSCTC

Sponsor: Media Ecology Association

Chair: Sue Barnes, Fordham University

Panelists:

James W. Carey, Columbia University  
Peter L. Haratonik, New School University  
Casey M.K. Lum, William Paterson University  
Christine Nystrom, New York University  
Neil Postman, New York University  
Lance A. Strate, Fordham University  
Edward Wachtel, Fordham University

Lewis Mumford is among the most important contributors to the emergence of media ecology as both an intellectual tradition and a theoretical perspective on media and culture, along with the likes of Patrick Geddes, Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, Jacques Ellul, and Walter Ong. The panelists will discuss Mumford's life and encyclopedic work as a scholar, a social critic, a teacher, and an activist with a focus on his thinking about technology and human culture.

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### **MEDIA ECOLOGY ASSOCIATION BUSINESS MEETING**

When: Sunday, November 12, 9:30-10:45 a.m.

Where: Rm 214, 2nd Floor, WSCTC

Sponsor: Media Ecology Association

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## **MEA Website Committee Has Been Formed**

MEA's Executive Committee has established the Website Committee to study issues relating to MEA's website. Mary Ann Allison and Mark Lipton have been appointed to co-chair this committee. Committee members include Lance Strate, Sue Barnes, Janet Sternberg, J Metz, Ray Gozzi, Paul Kelly, Paul Levinson, Bob Logan, Susan Jacobson, John McDaid, Daniel Chandler, and Jesse Hirsch. We expect to report to the membership on the committee's findings and recommendations in the next issue of In Medias Res.

The following is the committee's charge: "With the understanding that our web site is the most accessible and comprehensive mode of communication that the MEA employs, our most public face, the charge of the web committee is to examine and make recommendations to the Executive Committee on how the existing MEA website can best serve the organization's membership and people outside the MEA who may find it of interest. Among other potential issues to be determined by the Committee's members, the Executive Committee is to receive their analysis of and recommendation on the followings issues:

- (1) site arrangements (e.g., the location of the web site, the nature, requirements and implications of site sponsorship, etc.);
- (2) procedures (e.g., how is content submitted, approved, changed; timing of postings; etc.);
- (3) content (e.g., what should be included in the web site); and
- (4) style (e.g., the design of the site as a web site of an independent scholarly association; ease of use; etc.

Consistent with MEA's organizational mission, which is to promote media ecology, the web site's objective is to serve MEA members and non-members alike with timely information relating to media ecology, as well as to promote the MEA as an independent scholarly association. The Committee's evaluations and recommendations should be closely consistent with this organizational mission and mandate."

## Report from the Vice-President and IMR Editor

Casey M.K. Lum  
William Paterson University

Thanks to all my colleagues, the Media Ecology Association has achieved a great deal since the inaugural issue of *In Medias Res* was published in Fall 1999. Some of these achievements are reported elsewhere in this issue. In this column, I summarize for you the progress of several projects. I also include a call for contributions to the next issue of *In Medias Res*.

The MEA will have its inaugural presentations at this year's annual convention of the National Communication Association (please see the corresponding column and MEA/NCA program in this issue). I encourage you to send in your completed paper or panel proposal for MEA's presentations at the NCA annual convention next year in Atlanta, Georgia. A call is also included in this issue.

The MEA Website has been established and it is co-chaired by Mary Ann Allison and Mark Lipton. The official charge is included in this issue. As of this writing, Mary Ann and Mark are organizing the work of the committee. We should have a report for you on the outcome of the committee's work in the next issue of *In Medias Res*. What is equally important to note is the fact that we are calling for your contribution to serve on the MEA Constitution Committee. I have appointed Thom Gencarelli, who came up with the first draft of the MEA Constitution, and Stephanie Gibson to co-chair this committee. Meanwhile, a few members have expressed their interest to me at the MEA inaugural convention in New York this summer; please be kind enough to contact me to re-affirm your commitment. I will work on the formal charge of the committee with Thom and Stephanie. I expect to have a report to you in our next issue.

A word or two on other matters...

Most of our current paid members should have received a complimentary copy of the special issue of *The New Jersey Journal of Communication* (Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring 2000). I just want to apologize for the inconvenience.

The following contains a call for your contri-

bution to the next issue of *In Medias Res*. Please feel free to contact me directly with your ideas and suggestions.

I just received the mailing labels of those paid members at the inaugural convention and the complimentary copies will go out the door by the time you receive this issue.

Meanwhile, it has come to my attention that some of the copies of the special issue ("The Intellectual Roots of Media Ecology") have been incorrectly bounded (page 40 jumps to page 73). If you received an incorrectly-bounded copy from me, please return it to me and I will send you a replacement immediately. We will return all the incorrectly-bounded copies to the printer for credit. I apologize for the inconvenience.

The following contains a call for your contribution to the next issue of *In Medias Res*. Please feel free to contact me directly with your ideas and suggestions.

### **Call for News, Information and Short Essay Submissions for *In Medias Res*, the Official Newsletter of the MEA**

The Media Ecology Association (MEA) is preparing its third issue of *In Medias Res*. *In Medias Res* publishes news and information, as well as short essays of interest to the MEA membership. You are cordially invited to submit news and information, as well as short essays for the following columns:

- Scholarship in Brief (short essays between 800 and 1,000 words on contributions of a scholar to media ecology as an intellectual tradition and or theoretical perspective)
- Media Ecologists At Work (short essays between 800 and 1,000 words on how media ecologists reach beyond the confines of media ecology)
- Scholarship Hot Off the Press (most recent publications by MEA members, i.e., published during the last year or two.)
- Work in Progress (research being pursued by MEA members; may include a brief call for collaborative partnership or research assistance)
- Teaching (information, ideas and resources for teaching Media Ecology-related subjects)
- Notables (brief announcements of recent achievements of MEA members)

- Appointments (recent appointments, tenure, promotion, etc.)
- Grants (information on grant opportunities: please provide title or type of grant, name of organization and, if any, contact person, submission deadline and basic contact information for inquiry)
- Conferences (information on conferences: please provide title or theme and organizer of conference and its contact info.)
- Internet Resources (please provide a brief description of your entry)
- Annotations (brief reviews of publications of interest to MEA members; please limit to 75 words per publication)
- Book Reviews (reviews of books of interest to MEA members; between 500-800 words apiece)
- We also welcome suggestions from MEA members for other kinds of submissions for future issues.

Please e-mail your submissions to Casey Lum, Editor, *In Medias Res*, Department of Communication, William Paterson University, at casey.lum@nyu.edu.

## Media Ecology Association Treasurer's Report

Thom Gencarelli

Montclair State University

At this point, I have only two items to report to the membership.

First, here at the end of our first full year as an organization (that is, since the founding members wrote their personal checks and deposited them into our newly-created bank account!), the Media Ecology Association now has \$1,650.00 in its coffers. More than half of this money is the proceeds from our very successful June Conference. Registration/membership receipts from this event alone amounted to \$880. The \$1,650 total represents fees from 55 regular members and 39 student members, or 94 total members. It includes

a \$20 donation from member Bruce Gronbeck, a \$40 check written for expenses incurred, and a \$10 bank fee for one "returned item."

We have kept costs to our members down at this early stage in our existence. The conference and membership fees were folded together for this first year. The New Jersey Communication Association and *The New Jersey Journal of Communication* were gracious enough to provide MEA Vice President Casey Lum's special issue of the *NJJC*, "The Intellectual Roots of Media Ecology," free of charge to all MEA members. As a result of such decisions, we are not exactly financially secure. However, I prefer to look at our present situation as a case of the "glass half full." After only one year with our doors open for business, we have close to 100 dues-paying members. The upcoming NCA Conference in Seattle should help in our outreach to potential new members. And \$1650 is \$1650 more than we started with, and not a bad take for a year in which we started from scratch, had to convince people to join yet another professional organization, and had to convince them that this particular organization would be well worth it.

As my second item of business, let me update you on our progress toward tax-exempt, not-for-profit status. Jeff Harmer, a C.P.A. and not-for-profit specialist at Copans & Company, an accounting firm in Newburgh, New York, explained to me that I should be able to complete the requisite paperwork without professional assistance and the expense this would incur. As a result, I now have in my possession a Form 1023 (application for 501c3 status) and a Form SS-4 (application for a tax-exempt identification number). I am working on these, and hope to complete the process—filing, IRS recognition, and Association bank account—by January. However, since January is the time to re-up your membership, and our reminder to you needs to be in the mail before this is all finally settled, your dues checks will have to be made payable to me one more time.

As of the next *In Medias Res*, I hope to report the good news that this task is complete.

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ing *Civilizations*, Couch writes (1990; p. 255),

Conflict is exciting...But in no case was conflict the foundation for more complex forms of sociation and more extended temporal structures... (p. 255). Despite the pervasiveness of conflict, the continuation of the species has not rested on conflict. Human existence is dependent on cooperation, not conflict.

It is in cooperation, not conflict, that cumulative knowledge and information technologies interact to alter previously existing social structures and exert pressure toward incremental change (see Couch 1986; Couch 1990, pp. 299-343). Along this line of insight, Couch (1986) demonstrates in "Markets, Temples, Palaces" and in his chapter (1990) "A Special Case" that it is in the markets, and among Jews, and in the lands outside of the control of the dominant power structures, where literacy is used pragmatically for purposes of survival and trade that new ways of thinking and interacting are ultimately encouraged. It is when those outcast groups begin to infringe upon the control and profits of the dominant power structures that they are conquered and their cumulative knowledge and technologies become that which scholars often attribute to "originating" in Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece, and early Rome. It is in conquest, not conflict or spontaneous invention, that qualitative historical "leaps" occur.

In an outstanding moment of Media Ecology scholarship, Couch tackles the slow change from cyclical to linear histories in Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece. He counters historians who attempt to say that Egyptians of the Second Dynasty were non-historical (1990, p. 309),

They have been characterized as non-historical on the grounds that their accounts of the past denied social change. Nonetheless they had written accounts of considerable historical depth. Their histories were distinct from modern histories. The affairs of human beings were linked to the ever-recurring cycles of celestial events. The constancy of both the cosmos and the social structure was stressed.

Couch goes on to elaborate upon the point that oral histories are most influenced by present conditions and written histories are less subject to current conditions. He explains that the celestial bias of cyclical occurrences combined with the

oral residue to foster a cyclical view of the past even as written accounts were introduced. Couch recognizes that some literates in power had to have noted discrepancies between the written event and the current situation but that it was not simply a cynical attempt to maintain power that exerted influence on their "nothing new" histories but rather that (1990, p. 310), "the cyclical mode of thought was taken for granted by most intellectuals."

Couch demonstrates that this cyclical way of thinking changed slowly and was not merely a product of totalitarian social orders; he writes about the cyclical paradigm (1990, p. 311) "Aristotle regarded it as a viable mode of analysis. He thought that he might be living before the Trojan War as well as after it." It is nuggets like this that make Couch's insights into Media Ecology a joy to read.

In this scholarship in brief I have had to sacrifice direct quotes for succinct summary, thus I encourage Media Ecologists to read Couch for yourselves. Start with (1986) "Markets, Temples, Palaces," (1990) *Constructing Civilizations*, and the post-humus publication (1996) *Information Technologies and Social Orders* so that you may be directly introduced to this unique brand of Media Ecology.

I was fortunate to know Carl Couch in the year before he died. He was quite a character. In the classroom Carl Couch was pugnacious and friendly—he loved a good fight, he hated sloppy theory, and he embraced those who understood Media Ecology as he did. Outside of the classroom he paid the price for not marching to the beat of the statistical content analysis drum. At the time of his death in the Fall of 1994 Couch was the lowest paid Professor of his rank in the Sociology Department at the University of Iowa. I know this because he posted the salaries annually on his office door. Inside his office he tacked up rejection letters from various publications that refused to print his articles. I can still hear him grumbling about bureaucrats and idiots. Within the Midwest Sociological Society, however, Carl Couch reigned supreme. As President of the Society he brought together Bruce Gronbeck, Joshua Meyrowitz, Walter Ong, and Carl Couch at the annual convention in the Spring of 1994. Now it is time that we do in textual space what Carl Couch did in the physical place of St. Louis in the Spring of 1994.

#### References

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## NOTES ON THE FIRST MEDIA ECOLOGY ASSOCIATION CONVENTION

Raymond Gozzi, Jr., Ithaca College  
with Jim Morrison, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The First MEA Convention was a lively gathering at Fordham's midtown campus, June 16 and 17, 2000. It brought together a diverse and fun group of people. It was organized by Paul Levinson, Janet Sternberg, and Mark Lipton, with assistance from a cast of thousands. A President's address was given by Lance Strate, and keynote addresses were given by Neil Postman and Joshua Meyrowitz. Prizes were awarded, bylaws were adopted, officers were elected, free lunches were served. All in all, a beautiful weekend in New York City.

I attended most of the conference, but missed Saturday late afternoon and evening. What follows are some striking thoughts, randomly noted, to give the flavor of the event.

- The message of paper is big government. Paper—in a file—in a bureau—on a floor—the people who handle the files—a bureaucracy. — James Maroosis, Fordham University
- Verve counts. — Paul Levinson, Fordham University
- Eric and Marshall McLuhan did an experiment at Fordham, showing a film on a screen which could be viewed from both sides. On the "reflected light" side, people viewed it as a regular film, taking an objective approach to discussing it. On the "light through" side, people got emotionally involved in their discussions of the film. — Eric McLuhan, University of Toronto
- Important effects of media are ecological, difficult to predict or perceive. Can we just think our way into an awareness of media effects, as many academic approaches assume? —Paul Kelly, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
- The "conditions of attendance" of a car and a computer are similar. For both, we are seated, and use our hands to change what we see through a screen. However, a car is a mechanical device which deals with the outer world, while a computer is an electronic device which deals with the inner world. As McLuhan notes, switching between the mechanical and electronic world produces anxiety. After a day in the office clicking into different realities on the computer, a traffic jam in a car pro-

duces anger. So "road rage" is an unintended consequence of the Internet. — Read Mercer Schuchardt, New York University

- Personal home pages are a spectacle of the self, an attempt to understand one's self through a medium. —Jennifer Warren, New York University
- Three Laws of Growth on the Internet—1) Moore's Law, chip capacity doubles every 18 months; 2) Metcalf's Law, the value of a network (its utility to a population) is equivalent to the number of users on the network squared; 3) Hallman's Law, the overall value of a content collection is equivalent to the value of accessible content squared. — Glenn Hauman, Bibliobytes
- The most important books are those the students read by their own choice. Goffman's *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* and McLuhan's *Understanding Media* were two such books. — James Carey, Columbia University
- Post-structuralism and Post-modernism are text-based, do not understand images. The sterility of the French style is shown by the fact that in the U.S. and Britain not one major book has been produced in this tradition. — Camille Paglia, University of the Arts
- All the great artists were losers—exiles, marginalized. Art and literature are not done by

*Continued on page 17.*

*Continued from page 6.*

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## MEDIA ECOLOGISTS AT WORK:

## David Linton Links Media Ecology and the Humanities

Salvatore J. Fallica  
New York University

According to David Linton, apart from Marshall McLuhan our most perceptive media theorist just might be one William Shakespeare. Of course, Marshall McLuhan thought so too, as he suggested in *Understanding Media*, where he writes "A fairly complete handbook for studying the extensions of man could be made up from selections from Shakespeare." Most of the time people just smile at these McLuhan probes, nod knowingly and then read on. However, David decided to take McLuhan seriously on this matter, and in doing so, he has devoted a fair portion of his professional life to applying media ecological principles to the Humanities in general and Shakespeare studies in particular.

When I say that David has devoted a portion of his professional career to these subject areas, I mean that like all "renaissance men," he has many interests and responsibilities and has made many different kinds of contributions as an educator. And even though almost everyone in New York Media Ecology circles knows him as an engaging and collegial conference participant, few might also know that he is an avid roller skater and ice skater and takes the time from his busy schedule to write a column for the Central Park Dance Skaters Association newsletter.

In an earlier life, David was a high school English teacher and a teachers' union leader and along the way he earned a Ph.D. in Media Ecology from New York University. Several years ago he was the recipient of a CSPAN Fellowship, which allowed him to study their television production practices and a National Endowment for the Humanities grant which allowed him to study with noted Shakespearean scholar Annabelle Patterson. David is now a Professor and Chair of the

Communication Arts Department at Marymount Manhattan College where he teaches a World Cinema course and an introductory course for undergraduates called Communications Today. As department chair, he leads a talented group of professors and instructors – media theorists and media practitioners – in one of the most progressive and creative communications departments in the field.

As for examining Shakespeare's plays with a media ecology perspective, David reminisces, "I was teaching the play 'Julius Caesar,' and I became interested in a line that Caesar speaks regarding Cassius, a character Caesar himself had described as a 'man who thinks too much; such men are dangerous'. A few lines later, Caesar says something rather remarkable that sort of explains Cassius' dangerous nature. He says, 'I do not know the man I should avoid/So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much and looks/Quite through the deeds of men.' And I asked the question, How is Shakespeare using the word 'reads'? Is he using it to mean that Cassius is a clever 'reader' of men, or is he also telling us something about reading and therefore about how print was perceived then. So I began to see 'Julius Caesar' as a study of various media. And you know, when you look at the play, the plot really turns on media matters. The mob, of course, can't read, and the written word brings the conspirators together through several letters. Caesar's will, his "letter," to the Roman people, is read to the unlettered multitude and along with Marc Antony's masterful soliloquy, a model of persuasion, drives them to turn on the conspirators. And there are many, many more such references to media along the way."

Of course, that's not the only play where Shakespeare seems to comment on media, as David was quick to point out. "In almost every play there are many insightful references to media materials and I believe the analytical skills of the media ecologist really adds to the study of Shakespeare, the humanities and the liberal arts. For example, in 'Romeo and Juliet,' Juliet says to Romeo "you kiss by the book," which is probably a commentary on courtier-self-improvement books."

David has taken his practice of media ecology to the various learned societies dedicated to this particular subject matter. He has made presentations at **the World Shakespeare Conference**, the **Shakespeare Association of America** and **The Renaissance Society in America**. He has also made significant contributions to various literary and Shakespeare journals. For example, he published "Shakespeare as Media Critic," in *Mosaic* (June, 1996). And after Al Pacino made his award winning documentary, "Looking for Richard," about his own search for meaning in "Richard III," David published, "You Can Call Me Al: Looking at 'Looking for Richard,'" in *The Upstart Crow*, vol. 18, 1998. Later that year, he applied media ecology principles to a related matter when he contributed a chapter of art criticism to the collection *The Book and the Magic of Reading in the Middle Ages* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998).

David's essay in this text, "Reading the Virgin Reader," was built on presentations he made at the Media Ecology Conference (1996) and the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (1998) and comprises a most original analysis of the Virgin Mary's reading behavior as depicted in various Annunciation paintings and manuscripts. Here he examines how the Virgin Mary's reading behavior is illustrated by various artists and how the particular qualities of the medium of the book influence both artist and subject. He also explores how the book itself is portrayed in these various media from the Medieval and Early Modern periods. In this chapter he breaks with the traditional notion that the Annunciation lacked any sexual passion and argues that these paintings and manuscripts reveal a world replete with sexual arousal and the book as well as the act of reading has a significant role in all of this. If you have an interest in the Humanities, this essay provides an interesting model for a media ecological approach to the field of art history.

At the 1999 Shakespeare Association Conference, David presented "Whole Lotta Shakespeare Going On," a commentary on how Shakespeare's plays are appropriated in contemporary popular culture. Of the several examples he used, one is the film "Renaissance Man," in which the makers of the film create a kind

of hip-hop "Hamlet." Now, what does this say about the role of Shakespeare in the modern mind and how does it regard the Bard of Avon?

David's most recent work is a study of Shakespearean film trailers and an inquiry into pornographic video adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. Yes, that's right, he wants to study the movie trailers to the various feature films that are either Shakespeare plays themselves or adaptations of the plays (e.g. "Ten Things I Hate About You," which is an adaptation of "The Taming of the Shrew") in order to examine how the film's distributors decide to promote their films. What do these producers want their potential audiences to know about the film and what do they think these audiences need to know? And what does that say about the role of Shakespeare and Shakespeare's work in our culture. His point here is that the movie trailer, as a sub-genre of film, presents various meta-textual material which helps to shape the reception of the primary "text," in this case the feature film. He will be presenting his findings at the Mid-Hudson Shakespeare film festival in Rhinebeck, New York on October 27th, 2000.

His other most recent work examines the various pornographic renditions of Shakespeare's plays. In this study he asks how in the age of unbridled pornographic imagery has Shakespeare's work been recruited to the pornographer's cause in order to have something to transgress. This interesting and provocative presentation will take place at a conference of the Mid-Atlantic Popular Culture Association in Albany, New York on November 3rd, 2000.

If any of you have questions for David, I am sure he would be delighted to answer your questions about his work. You can reach him through e-mail at [dsl@delinet.com](mailto:dsl@delinet.com) or you can write to Marymount Manhattan College, 221 East Seventy First Street, New York, NY, 10021-4597.

*Editor's note: Salvatore J. Fallica is an Adjunct Professor of Media Ecology in the Department of Culture and Communication, New York University, Suite 735 East Building, 239 Greene Street, New York, NY 10003. He can also be reached at [sjf1@nyu.edu](mailto:sjf1@nyu.edu). "Media Ecologists At Work" is a new column, which publishes short essays between 800 and 1,000 words on how media ecologists reach beyond the confines of media ecology. Interested authors are encouraged and welcomed to send brief proposal to Casey Lum at [casey.lum@nyu.edu](mailto:casey.lum@nyu.edu).*

# MEA AWARDS 2000

At its inaugural convention, the Media Ecology Association was proud to announce the winners of its Year 2000 Awards:

The winner of the Marshall McLuhan Award for Outstanding Book in the Field of Media Ecology was Neil Postman, for *Building a Bridge to the Eighteenth Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999).

The winner of the Walter Benjamin Award for Outstanding Article in the Field of Media Ecology was Walter J. Ong, SJ, for "Digitization Ancient and Modern: Beginnings of Writing and Today's Computers" published in *Communication Research Trends Vol. 18, No. 2, 1998*.

The winner of the Susanne K Langer Award for Outstanding Scholarship in the Ecology of Symbolic Form was Robert K. Logan for *The Sixth Language: Learning a Living in the Internet Age* (Toronto: Stoddart, 2000)

The winner of the Lewis Mumford Award for Outstanding Scholarship in the Ecology of Technics was Paul Levinson for *Digital McLuhan: A Guide to the Information Millennium* (London: Routledge, 1999).

The winner of the John Culkin Award for Outstanding Praxis in the Field of Media Ecology was Jerome Agel for his production of *The Medium is the Massage* book based on the writings of Marshall McLuhan, with graphics by Quentin Fiore (reissued in 1997 by Hardwired Press, San Francisco) and audio recording (reissued in 1998 on compact disc by Sony Music Entertainment).

The winner of the Harold A. Innis Award for Outstanding Thesis or Dissertation in the Field of Media Ecology was Donna Flayhan, Goucher College for *Marxism, Medium Theory, and American Cultural Studies: The Question of Determination*, a doctoral dissertation completed in 1997 at the University of Iowa, under the direction of John Durham Peters.

The winner of the Louis Forsdale Award for Outstanding Educator in the Field of Media Ecology was Christine L. Nystrom of New York University's Department of Culture and Communication.

The winner of the Jacques Ellul Award for Outstanding Media Ecology Activism was Stephanie B. Gibson, for her work in the campaign to eliminate capital punishment.

## Call for Nominations for the Media Ecology Association's 2001 Awards

The Marshall McLuhan Award for Outstanding Book in the Field of Media Ecology. Open to books published in 1998 or later on any topic related to media ecology. Entry requirements: Letter of nomination or self-nomination and five copies. Entrants may request simultaneous consideration for the Susanne K. Langer Award or the Lewis Mumford Award.

The Walter Benjamin Award for Outstanding Article in the Field of Media Ecology. Open to articles, essays, reviews, and book chapters published in 1998 or later on any topic related to media ecology. Entry requirements: Letter of nomination or self-nomination and five copies. Entrants may request simultaneous consideration for the Susanne K. Langer Award or the Lewis Mumford Award.

The Susanne K. Langer Award for Outstanding Scholarship in the Ecology of Symbolic Form. Open to books and articles published in 1998 or later that focus on the ecology of language, semantics, semiotics, codes, symbol systems, aesthetic form, etc. Entry requirements: Letter of nomination or self-nomination and five copies. Entrants may request simultaneous consideration for the Marshall McLuhan Award or the Walter Benjamin Award.



The Lewis Mumford Award for Outstanding Scholarship in the Ecology of Technics. Open to books and articles published in 1998 or later that focus on the history and/or philosophy of technology or science; studies of specific technologies, techniques, or media, and/or their social, cultural, and psychological effects; analysis and criticism of the technological/information society. Entry requirements: Letter of nomination or self-nomination and five copies. Entrants may request simultaneous consideration for the Marshall McLuhan Award or the Walter Benjamin Award.

The John Culkin Award for Outstanding Praxis in the Field of Media Ecology. Open to works of art, media production, professional activity or other practical applications of the media ecology approach. Entry requirements: Letter of nomination or self-nomination and five copies of the supporting materials.

The Harold A. Innis Award for Outstanding Thesis or Dissertation in the Field of Media Ecology. Open to any Masters thesis or doctoral dissertation completed for a degree granted in 1998 or later on any topic related to media ecology. Entry requirements: Letter of nomination or self-nomination and five copies.

The Louis Forsdale Award for Outstanding Educator in the Field of Media Ecology. Open to any instructor on any educational level. Entry requirements: Letter of nomination or self-nomination and five copies of supporting materials.

The Jacques Ellul Award for Outstanding Media Ecology Activism. Open to any individual engaged in political activism whose work is informed by the media ecology perspective. Entry requirements: Letter of nomination or self-nomination and five copies of supporting materials.

Send all entries to Lance Strate, President, Media Ecology Association, Department of Communication and Media Studies, Fordham University, Bronx, New York 10458. (strate@fordham.edu)

**DEADLINE: February 1, 2001.**

**Don't Forget to Submit Your Nominations for the 2001 MEA Awards**

## MEA Constitution Committee: Call for Participation

The Executive Committee of the MEA is mandated to establish a Constitution Committee for a review of MEA's current constitution. We encourage and invite interested members to contribute their knowledge and experience on professional association parliamentary matters to the work of this committee. Self/nominations should be sent to Casey M.K. Lum at casey.lum@nyu.edu or Department of Communication, William Paterson University, Hobart Hall, 300 Pompton Road, Wayne, New Jersey 07470-2103.

### MEMBERS NEWS

**Sue Barnes** has received tenure at Fordham University in the Communication and Media Studies Department. She is also the Chair-Elect of NCA's Visual Communication Commission and will be organizing the panels and presentations for the 2001 NCA Conference in Atlanta. You can reach her at BARNES@FORDHAM.EDU.

**Peter K. Fallon**, a veteran at NBC news in New York City, has accepted an Assistant Professorship in Public Communication at Molloy College in Rockville Centre (Long Island). Peter can be reached at pfallon@molloy.edu

**Paul Levinson** has been named the Director of the Graduate Program at Fordham University. He is also busy working on his third science fiction novel.

**Janet Sternberg** was elected historian of the MEA.



*Special thanks to Janet for all of her help organizing the Inaugural Media Ecology Conference.*

*Photo:  
Robert Francos*

# Minutes of the General Business Meeting of the Media Ecology Association First Annual Convention

Saturday, June 17, 2000

Fordham University, New York

Recorded by Janet Sternberg, Historian

## AGENDA:

- I. Officers' Reports
- II. Discussion and Vote on the Constitution of the Media Ecology Association
- III. Election of Officers for 2000–2002
- IV. New Business

MEA President Lance Strate started the General Business Meeting at around 9:00 a.m. Assisting Lance to conduct the meeting, which was open to all members, were Vice President Casey Man Kong Lum, Executive Secretary Susan Barnes, and Treasurer Thomas Gencarelli.

The agenda listed above, as well as the proposed MEA Constitution and By-Laws, were made available in a memorandum from Lance Strate to all MEA members distributed throughout the Convention at the registration table.

## I. OFFICERS' REPORTS

**VICE PRESIDENT:** Casey Lum presented his report using an overhead projector, and covered the following points:

Paid MEA members in 2000 will get a complimentary copy of the April 2000 special issue of the *New Jersey Journal of Communication* on "The Intellectual Roots of Media Ecology," guestedited by Casey.

Submissions for the upcoming Summer 2000 issue of MEA's newsletter, *In Medias Res*, should be sent to <casey.lum@nyu.edu> as soon as possible.

MEA will showcase four panels at the National Communication Association annual convention in Seattle, November 8/9-12, 2000. Full program details should be available soon at NCA's Web site <<http://www.natcom.org>>. Also turn to pages 4 & 5 of this newsletter.

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY:** Sue Barnes gave a brief oral report, saying that she was looking into database programs for managing the MEA mailing list, and also that she would be working with Casey on the upcoming issue of the MEA newsletter.

**TREASURER:** Thom Gencarelli presented an oral summary of his typed report, copies of which were distributed to those assembled, covering the following items:

As Treasurer, Thom has been maintaining a free checking account in his name on behalf of MEA until the Association's not-for-profit status can be established. He provided details about financial transactions with this account (mostly deposits of membership checks), and suggested that an organizational account with standard maintenance fees be established as soon as possible, because after January 2001, the bank will start charging excessive fees on the present account. He also mentioned that membership has been increasing, a trend towards which the Convention no doubt will contribute.

On this issue of establishing the Association's not-for-profit status, Thom reported that due to the complexity and volume of federal and state paperwork required, he will probably need professional assistance; so far, he's relied on advice from his personal accountant, but further consultations would involve expenditures that must be approved by the MEA Executive Committee. Thom also cautioned that according to the IRS, if the initial application paperwork is not in order, a second application is not permitted, so it's important to file correctly the first time.

Several definitions of the Association's fiscal

year for membership purposes were discussed: September to September (based on the date of the inception of MEA); aligning the fiscal year with the annual convention date; following a regular calendar year (January 1 to December 31); and rolling versus fixed expiration dates (rolling dates being more complicated to track). A motion was made and passed to follow a regular calendar year so that the current membership period is January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2000, at which time all memberships will expire and require renewal.

## II. DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON THE CONSTITUTION OF THE MEDIA ECOLOGY ASSOCIATION

The proposed MEA Constitution and By-Laws, copies of which were available throughout the Convention at the registration table, were reviewed and discussed by those assembled. Each Article was considered in turn, as follows:

Article I of the Constitution, NAME (Media Ecology Association), was approved unanimously without revision.

Article II of the Constitution, PURPOSES, stirred up a bit of discussion. Chris Nystrom proposed adding a definition of Media Ecology as "the study of the complex set of relationships or interrelationships among symbols, media and culture." After some debate, a motion was made and passed to add Chris's definition as a new Section 1, and to revise the title of this Article accordingly to "DEFINITIONS AND PURPOSES." A motion was also made and passed to add the phrase "and the larger community" to the end of the statement of purpose, which becomes Section 2 of this Article.

Article III of the Constitution, GOALS, and Article IV, MEMBERSHIP, were both approved unanimously without revision.

Article V of the Constitution, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, generated a lively exchange.

Questions addressed distinctions between the terms "Directors" and "Advisors", and the purpose of having two separate groups, a Board of Directors as well as an Advisory Board. Eventually, a motion was made and passed to approve this Article without revision, pending further review by a Constitutional Committee to be established in the future.

Article VI of the Constitution, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (comprised of the President, Vice President, Executive Secretary, Treasurer and an additional officer, Historian), was approved unanimously without revision.

Article VII of the Constitution, ADVISORY BOARD, was debated along similar lines as Article VI, Board of Directors. Stephanie Gibson brought a motion to remove the Advisory Board, but the motion was not passed, and Article VII was approved without revision, subject to further review by a Constitutional Committee to be established in the future.

Article VIII of the Constitution, APPOINTED OFFICERS, was approved unanimously without revision.

Article IX of the Constitution, COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES, was approved unanimously without revision.

Article X of the Constitution, AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION, generated some discussion about the amendment process. A motion was made and passed to revise the wording of Section 2 as follows: rather than mandating the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee to "consider the proposed Amendment," they are mandated to "place the proposed Amendment on the agenda of the next General Meeting of the Annual Convention." The other Sections of this Article were approved without revision.

Article I of the By-Laws, MEMBERSHIP, and Article II, DUES AND FEES, were both approved unanimously without revision.

Article III of the By-Laws, MEETINGS, was discussed with respect to whether Section 1 should specify summer as the time for the Annual Convention. A motion was made and passed to drop the reference to summer at the end of the first sentence of this Section, which is revised to read: "An Annual Convention shall be held once a year." The other Sections of this Article were approved without revision.

Article IV of the By-Laws, ELECTIONS, was discussed with regard to who may sit on the Nominating Committee. A motion was made and passed to revise Section 1 so that rather than limiting membership on the Nominating Committee to the Board of Directors and the Advisory Board (as previously worded), members of the Nominating Committee shall be appointed "from among the active members of the Association." The other Sections of this Article were approved without revision.

Article V of the By-Laws, DUTIES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, was approved unanimously without revision.

Article VI of the By-Laws, AMENDMENTS TO THE BY-LAWS, was discussed along the same lines as Article X of the Constitution earlier. Changes were suggested in the process for amending the By-Laws to parallel those already agreed upon for amending the Constitution. A motion was made and passed to revise the wording of Section 2 of the By-Laws to match the analogous section of the Constitution as follows: rather than mandating the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee to "consider the proposed Amendment," they are mandated to "place the proposed Amendment on the agenda of the next General Meeting of the Annual Convention." The other Sections of this Article were approved without revision.

Having thus reviewed and discussed each Article of the Constitution as well as each Article of the By-Laws, a general vote was held among those assembled, and both the Constitution and ByLaws

were approved unanimously, with appropriate revisions according to the preceding discussion and motions passed.

### **III. ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2000-2002**

Casey Lum conducted the election of officers for 2000-2002. Nominations were listed in the memorandum from Lance Strate to all MEA members distributed throughout the Convention at the registration table. Nominations proposed were: Lance Strate, President; Casey Man Kong Lum, Vice President; Susan Barnes, Executive Secretary; Thomas Gencarelli, Treasurer; Janet Sternberg, Historian. No additional candidates were nominated from the floor, and with a show of hands, the proposed nominees were elected unanimously by those assembled.

### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

Three items of new business were raised and discussed briefly.

First, plans should be initiated for a meeting of the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors and the Advisory Board, preferably to be held sometime in the fall.

Second, a Constitutional Committee should be established, to guide further review and revision of the Constitution and By-Laws, as agreed during the preceding discussion. Casey Lum will organize the formation of the Constitutional Committee.

Third, a Web Committee should be established, to review and guide further development of the Association's Web site <<http://www.media-ecology.org>>. Casey Lum will organize the formation of the Web Committee.

No further new business was raised, and all items on the Agenda having been addressed, at around 10:30 a.m. (somewhat later than anticipated), Lance Strate adjourned the General Business Meeting.



This concludes the Minutes of the General Business Meeting of the Media Ecology Association, held at its First Annual Convention, Saturday, June 17, 2000, at Fordham University, New York.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Janet Sternberg*  
*MEA Historian*  
*September 2000*

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*Inaugural Conference Continued from page 9.*

people of power. — Camille Paglia, University of the Arts

- The Media Ecology Association inherits a Promethean tradition of big ideas.—Lance Strate, Fordham University
- Questions to ask of a new medium—To what extent does it contribute to uses and development of rational thought? To what extent does it contribute to development of democratic processes? To what extent does it give access to meaningful information? To what extent does it enhance or diminish our moral sense and our capacity for goodness? — Neil Postman, New York University
- Culture is interconnected with commerce. We cannot dismiss the cultural importance of commerce. — Neil Kleinman, University of Baltimore

As the featured speaker to conclude the MEA inaugural convention, Joshua Meyrowitz (University of New Hampshire) gave a presentation on "Net Benefits and Limits: Ecologies of Information Access and Control." Professor Meyrowitz contrasted two distinctly different news eras. The first year is characterized by the tight control exercised by mainstream gatekeeper media over news and its interpretation, as during the Gulf War against Iraq. The second year has emerged with the burgeoning of the World Wide Web, characterized by a proliferation of various alternative points of view accessible with a Web browser at any place or time. During the Gulf War, mainstream news outlets generally reflected the U.S. government's viewpoint on the causes of and motives for engaging in the conflict, and they did not seem motivated to sufficiently question the government's interpretation of events, perhaps out of concern not to lose easy and convenient entree to information disseminated on deep background or off the record.

In contrast, the arrival of the Web has permitted the electronic dissemination of a multiplicity of counter-establishment viewpoints, allowing light to be shone not only on government duplicity, but also on the cozy relationships between mainstream news organizations and the government. While valid questions remain concerning the verifiability of information over the Web, it still holds the potential for rewriting the news media equation by permitting the media themselves to be held up to scrutiny and greater accountability.



### **Images from the Inaugural MEA Conference**

*Left: Neil Postman and Camille Paglia exchange notes. Above: MEA President Lance Strate .*

*Photos: Robert Francos*

*Continued on page 22.*

# CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF THE MEDIA ECOLOGY ASSOCIATION CONSTITUTION

## ARTICLE I

### NAME

Section 1. The name of this organization shall be the Media Ecology Association.

## ARTICLE II

### DEFINITION AND PURPOSES

Section 1. Media ecology is defined as the study of the complex set of relationships or interrelationships among symbols, media and culture.

Section 2. The Media Ecology Association is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting the study, research, criticism, and application of media ecology in educational, industry, political, civic, social, cultural, and artistic contexts, and the open exchange of ideas, information and research among the Association's members and the larger community.

## ARTICLE III

### GOALS

Section 1. To promote, sustain and recognize excellence in media ecology scholarship, research, criticism, application, and artistic practice.

Section 2. To provide a network for fellowship, contacts and professional opportunities.

Section 3. To serve as a clearinghouse for information related to academic programs around the world in areas pertinent to the study of media ecology.

Section 4. To promote community and cooperation among academic, private and public entities mutually concerned with the understanding of media ecology.

Section 5. To provide opportunities for professional growth and development.

Section 6. To encourage interdisciplinary research and interaction.

Section 7. To encourage reciprocal cooperation and research among institutions and organizations.

Section 8. To provide a forum for student participation in an academic and professional environment.

Section 9. To advocate for the development and implementation of media ecology education at all levels of curricula.

## ARTICLE IV

### MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Membership in the Association shall be open to individuals or institutions interested in promoting the Association's purposes and goals.

## ARTICLE V

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 1. The Board of Directors shall serve in a stewardship capacity as the principal policymaking

and fund-raising body of the Association.

Section 2. Directors shall serve for a term that is at their discretion, and shall be invited to serve each year by the Executive Committee.

Section 3. New Directors shall be selected and invited to serve by the existing Board of Directors and the Executive Committee.

## ARTICLE VI

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Section 1. The Executive Committee shall manage the Association's affairs and resources.

Section 2. The Executive Committee shall be composed of the President, Vice-President, Executive Secretary, Treasurer, and Historian.

Section 3. Each officer of the Executive Committee shall serve for a term of two years, and may serve consecutive terms.

Section 4. Officers shall be nominated by the Board of Directors, the existing Executive Committee and/or members of the Advisory Board. Officers shall be elected as specified in the **By-Laws**.

Section 5. The duties of officers shall be as specified in the **By-Laws**.

Section 6. In the event of the incapacity of an officer, or his/her dereliction of duty, the Executive Committee shall, at its discretion and in consultation with the Board of Directors, select a replacement or establish a nomination and election procedure for so doing.

## ARTICLE VII

### ADVISORY BOARD

Section 1. The Advisory Board shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Association's Board of Directors and shall advise on all matters pertinent to the Association's affairs and goals.

Section 2. The Advisory Board shall be composed of individuals selected and invited to serve by the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee on the basis of their recognized contribution to the study, research, criticism, application, and/or artistic practice in media ecology.

Section 3. Each member of the Advisory Board shall serve for a term that is at their discretion, and shall be invited to serve each year by the Executive Committee.

Section 4. Members of the Advisory Board shall be invited to the annual meeting of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee (see **By-Laws**, Article III, Section 3 and 4), and shall be invited, in writing, to offer commentary on all matters that come before the Executive Committee and the Association.

## ARTICLE VIII

### APPOINTED OFFICERS

Section 1. It shall be the duty of the President, at the request of the Board of Directors or the Executive Committee, to appoint officers to fulfill certain duties as the Association requires. All appointed officers shall serve at the pleasure of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee and shall report to them.

## ARTICLE IX

### COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

Section 1. It shall be the duty of the Vice-President, at the request of the Board of Directors or the

Executive Committee, to appoint committees and task forces as necessary. All committees and task forces shall report to the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee.

## ARTICLE X

### AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Section 1. The Board of Directors, the Executive Committee and/or any five members of the Advisory Board may initiate Amendments to this Constitution.

Section 2. Any ten members of the Association may present a petition to the Executive Committee proposing an amendment to this Constitution, which shall mandate the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee to place the proposed Amendment on the agenda of the next General Meeting of the Annual Convention.

Section 3. Amendments initiated as per Section 1 or 2 shall be distributed to all members of the Association at least one month before the Association's Annual Convention.

Section 4. This Constitution may be altered or amended, or its Articles repealed by a two-thirds majority of votes cast by the Association's membership at the General Meeting of the Annual Convention.

## BY-LAWS

### ARTICLE I

#### MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. There shall be five types of membership in the Association: Regular, Student, Institutional,

Honorary, and Emeritus.

Section 2. Regular Members shall be those individuals actively engaged or interested in media ecology education, research, criticism, application, or artistic practice.

Section 3. Student Members shall be those individuals currently enrolled on a full-time basis as graduate or undergraduate students.

Section 4. Institutional Members shall be educational, professional, business, or civic organizations.

Section 5. Honorary Members shall be individuals awarded a one-year membership in the Association by the Executive Committee for distinguished contribution to the Association.

Section 6. Emeritus Members shall be those individuals granted Emeritus status by approval of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee.

### ARTICLE II

#### DUES AND FEES

Section 1. Annual dues in the five membership categories shall be determined by the Executive Committee.

Section 2. Registration fees for the Annual Convention shall be determined by the Executive Committee.

Section 3. Subscription fees for the Association's publications shall be determined by the Executive Committee.

### ARTICLE III

#### MEETINGS



Section 1. An Annual Convention shall be held once a year. A General Meeting of the membership, open to all members, shall be held at this Convention.

Section 2. The Board of Directors and the Executive Committee shall meet at least once a year, at a place and time designated by the President of the Executive Committee. The President may also convene a special meeting at any time, upon reasonable notice.

Section 3. A quorum at the Board of Directors/ Executive Committee meeting shall be at least three-quarters of the individuals in the combined group.

Section 4. The Advisory Board shall be invited to the Board of Directors/Executive Committee meeting, but shall not be counted toward quorum. Members of the Advisory Board shall also be sent, in advance of this meeting, an agenda and reports for their input, and will be sent minutes of the meeting for their further response.

## ARTICLE IV

### ELECTIONS

Section 1. Every two years, the President shall appoint a three-person Nominating Committee, including a Committee Chair, at least 60 days prior to the Annual Convention. Members of the Committee shall be appointed from among the active members of the Association.

Section 2. The Nominating Committee shall prepare a written slate of nominees for office on the Executive Committee after soliciting the input of the Board of Directors and the Advisory Board. The Committee shall ensure that each nominee will serve if elected.

Section 3. The slate offered by the Nominating Committee shall be distributed to all members of the Association prior to the General Meeting at the Annual Convention. There shall be an opportunity for nominations by write-in and from the floor during the General Meeting to obtain additional nominees prior to the election of officers.

Section 4. Officers of the Executive Committee shall be elected, through secret ballot, by a majority of the members present at the General Meeting of the Association.

Section 5. Officers shall assume their duties at the close of the Annual Convention.

## ARTICLE V

### DUTIES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Section 1. The President shall act as the presiding officer for all Executive Committee business and affairs, shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee and at the Annual Convention of the Association, and shall serve as liaison to the Board of Directors.

Section 2. The Vice-President shall serve as the organizer of the Annual Convention or appoint a Convention Coordinator, shall be responsible for appointing all committees and task forces, and shall be responsible for the publication of the Association=s bi-annual newsletter, *In Medias Res*.

Section 3. The Executive Secretary shall coordinate all official Association correspondence and documentation, shall maintain an accurate record of the Association=s membership, and shall coordinate registration at the Annual Convention.

Section 4. The Treasurer shall administer accounts payable and accounts receivable in a timely and

effective manner as designated by the Executive Committee, and shall provide an annual financial report for publication in the Association's newsletter.

Section 5. The Historian shall serve as recording secretary, recording minutes of all meetings of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee and the General Meeting at the Association's Convention, and shall serve as the Association's archivist, maintaining and making available the ongoing record of all Association documents and proceedings.

**ARTICLE VI**

**AMENDMENTS TO THE BY-LAWS**

Section 1. The Board of Directors, the Executive Committee and/or any five members of the Advisory Board may initiate Amendments to these

By-Laws.

Section 2. Any ten members of the Association may present a petition to the Executive Committee proposing an amendment to these By-Laws, which shall mandate the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee to place the proposed Amendment on the agenda of the next General Meeting of the Annual Convention.

Section 3. Amendments initiated as per Section 1 or 2 shall be distributed to all members of the Association at least one month before the Association's Annual Convention.

Section 4. These By-Laws may be altered or amended, or Articles repealed by a two-thirds majority of votes cast by the Association's membership at the General Meeting of the Annual Convention.

**MORE HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MEA INAUGURAL CONFERENCE**



*Upper left: James Carey speaking at the conference. Lower left: Lance Strate, Mark Lipton, Lori Ramos, and Janet Sternberg Upper right: George Dussart, Barbara Jo Lewis, and Sue Barnes with Linda Burns and Mark Lipton in the background. Photos: Robert Francos*

# The MEA

*A Tetrad by Eric McLuhan, composed on June 17th  
at the Inaugural MEA Convention*

**Cultural  
programming;  
Media as cultural  
thermostats?**

**Identity,  
Coherence**

**Activism**

**Enhances Flips Into  
Retrieves Obsolesces**

**Sense of responsibility,  
purpose;  
Tribal (eco-)balance;**

**Disorder, confusion;  
Impotence;  
Passivity re media**

**Medieval university  
as guild of wandering  
scholars**

## Call for Papers and Panel Proposals

**for the MEA Program at the Annual Convention of the National Communication Association, Atlanta, Georgia November 1-4, Atlanta Hilton and Atlanta Marriott Marquis**

The Media Ecology Association (<http://www.media-ecology.org/>) invites submissions of competitive papers, panel programs and other innovative programs addressing theoretical, research, and/or methodological issues in Media Ecology, the study of the leading or defining role of technology and techniques, modes of information and codes of communication in human affairs (e.g., language and culture, technology and culture, orality and literacy, medium theory, the symbolic structure

or grammar of communication media and its implications, etc.). Each complete paper submission must include: (1) a detachable title page with the title of the paper and author name, address, institutional affiliation and e-mail address; (2) a separate 50-75 word abstract with the paper's title. Program proposals should include (1) a completed NCA 2001 convention proposal form; (2) a thematic title for the program; (3) a rationale for the program; (4) a title and abstract of each paper to be presented; and (5) names, addresses, institutional affiliations of all participants. Five copies of completed papers or panel proposals should be sent (to arrive by February 1, 2001) to Casey M.K. Lum, MEA/NCA Program Planner, Department of Communication, William Paterson University, Hobart Hall, 300 Pompton Road, Wayne, New Jersey 07470-2103.

### MEA Membership Application/Renewal Form (January-December 2001)

Please feel free to photocopy this form for yourself or your students and colleagues. Please PRINT ALL INFORMATION below:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Institutional Affiliation (please include your title or rank, if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (work): \_\_\_\_\_ (home): \_\_\_\_\_

(fax) : \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Web Page URL: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Membership Dues (please check one):

\_\_\_\_\_ US\$20 (for regular members)

\_\_\_\_\_ US\$10 (for full-time students only; please include a photocopy of your full-time student card)

I also enclose my donation of US\$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Please send your complete membership form and dues/donation to MEA's Executive Secretary, Sue Barnes, Department of Communication and Media Studies, Fordham University, Bronx, NY 10458; 718-817-4855; 718-817-4868 (fax); [barnes@murray.fordham.edu](mailto:barnes@murray.fordham.edu). Please make your checks payable to Thomas Gencarelli to avoid any difficulties in depositing to the MEA account. Thank you for joining and supporting MEA.