


Ecologue

Communication and the Environment

Winter 1997, Volume 7 (1)



Eureka! Commission Status Approved!

Happy New Year!! Happy Solstice!!! Our community of environmental communication scholars and practitioners enters a new phase with this *Ecologue*, thanks to the hard work and tenacity of many people. First, with this issue, long-time *Ecologue* editor Michael Netzley at the University of Minnesota passes the post-consumer content, recycled paper and soy-based ink to Star Muir at George Mason University. Michael's diligence kept *Ecologue* alive and we're all very grateful for that. Being the editor of a newsletter is sometimes a trial by fire, and Star would no doubt appreciate all we can do to keep his body and mind from getting vaporized.

Second, for those of us who are Speech Communication Association members, this marks the beginning of the official Environmental Communication Commission (ECC) within SCA. SCA Executive Director Jim Gaudino commented to me earlier that the proposal for the Commission was the best appeal for a new unit that he had seen to date. Then, in November, the SCA Legislative Council unanimously approved the establishment of the ECC in less than ten seconds! After working with others for years to make this a reality, it was all over in a blip, and because I had sat through hours of Council agenda items waiting for them to get to this one, for the first time in my life, I desperately yearned for a slow motion replay! A happy group of folks met later for the Commission's first business meeting (officers listed elsewhere in this issue) and plans were laid for

submitting papers and panels for the '97 SCA convention (see the call in this issue and in the January *Spectra*). The ECC will now be able to sponsor SCA panels and events in addition to all the good things formal commission status will do for those wanting to do environmental communication research. As ECC Chair, I am as excited as anyone about it all and welcome your participation. It's going to be a fun and productive year. We need to maintain 100 members, so please REMEMBER TO AFFILIATE WITH THE COMMISSION on your SCA membership renewal. If it's not listed, write it in.

Third, plans for the Conference on Communication and the Environment (COCE) continue to take shape. The big news is that THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING PAPER PROPOSALS HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO MARCH 15. The full call for papers is elsewhere in this edition of *Ecologue*. Mark July 26-29, 1997 to travel to the Thornfield Conference Center (on a lake) outside of Syracuse, New York for a stimulating yet relaxing conference. Final plans are being made for some insightful, special keynote speakers and activities. Perhaps you could combine the conference with a vacation. Syracuse is on the way to Montreal, Boston, New York City, D.C., Niagara Falls, the Fingerlakes, the Adirondacks, the Berkshires, the Appalachian Trail and lots of other wonderful places. Specifics on registration will be in the next *Ecologue* and will also be posted on the COCE listserv, the COCE

web page and at the web site of the Environmental Communication Resource Center at Northern Arizona University.

As is becoming the COCE tradition, the more interdisciplinary the better, so I urge you to circulate the call for papers throughout your networks. For conference information, keep in touch with me at the address below. Also, subscribe to the COCE listserv (where other interesting topics are also discussed) and check out the COCE web site.

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★ Priority News ★

The Environmental Communication Commission Paper deadline for SCA is February 1 (the SCA Convention is in Chicago in November)

The Conference on Communication & Environment (COCE) paper deadline HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO MARCH 15.

New Homepage for COCE:
<http://www.yorku.ca/academics/meisner/coce/>

Minutes Environmental Communication Commission Business Meeting November 25, 1996

I. Susan Senecah introduced the meeting by providing a brief background of the process leading to SCA designation of the Environmental Communication Commission. Those in attendance applauded Sue's hard work in bringing about SCA recognition.

II. The following officers were elected:
Chair—Susan Senecah
Vice Chair—James Cantrill
Second Vice Chair—Judith Hendry
Secretary—Bruce Weaver
Publications Chair—Star Muir
By-Laws Chair—Gregg Walker
By-Laws Committee—C. Brant Short, Laura Perkins, Michael Salvador
Nominating Committee—Dennis Jaehne, Connie Bullis, Gregg Walker

III. James Cantrill discussed next year's convention, expressing his goals and visions for panels.

A. The Commission may receive up to fifteen panels. Cantrill believes quality, rather than quantity should be our goal.

B. Readers need to abide by deadlines because of strict time pressures. The deadline for SCA to receive notification is March 7. Therefore, submissions must be made by February 1, 1997. The January *Spectra* will announce the Commission and the deadline date.

C. Cantrill encouraged different types of panels. For instance, some panels may be interactional, or three person discussions, or student work. Throughout this discussion, Cantrill emphasized the importance of competitive papers and well prepared presentations.

D. The following will serve as submission readers: Jonathan Lange, Judith Hendry, Ann Laffoon, Anand Rao, Jeffrey Bile.

IV. Senecah discussed the summer Conference on Communication and the Environment to be held in Syracuse, NY, July 26-29, 1997. The deadline for submission has been changed to **March 15, 1997**. A 10-page, double spaced summary of the paper and a 100 word abstract should be sent to James Cantrill, Communication and Performance Studies, Northern Michigan University, Marquette, MI 49855.

V. Lea Parker from Northern Arizona University distributed materials concerning the recently funded Environmental Communication Resource Center web site which has four goals: to serve as an electronic clearinghouse for materials related to environmental communication; to lead discussions of important topics in the area of environmental communication; to foster dialogue and debate among the multiple groups in society that produce, disseminate, report and study environmental communication; and to encourage educators at all levels to consider the impact and significance of environmental communication in the lives of their students, colleagues, and community members. Lea requests bibliographic references, and encourages members to send materials to this web site at <http://www.nau.edu/soc/ecrc> or contact her for further information at P.O. Box 5619, Flagstaff, AZ 86011-5619.

VI. Announcement: The University of Pittsburgh in conjunction with the United Church of Christ is establishing a series of debates on environmental justice.

Meeting adjourned.

Bruce Weaver, Secretary



Computer Connections

Scholars and teachers interested in environmental communication can access a tremendous amount of information about the environment from government, industry, academic and grassroots on-line services. Here are three sources, two web pages and a listserv, that focus discussion and information most specifically on communication issues and the environment. Please share other sources with the new Editor.



Conference on Communication and the Environment Listserv

An informative listserv with updates on the Conference, job openings, environmental communication issues.

To subscribe send this message, *subscribe COCE-L yourlastname yourfirstname*, to listserv@yorku.ca [i.e. subscribe COCE-L Carson Rachel]

Conference on Communication and the Environment Homepage

Resources and updates on the Conference and on environmental communication generally.

<http://www.yorku.ca/academics/meisner/coce/>

Environmental Communication Resource Center

The ECRC promotes scholarship, pedagogy and public service in all aspects of environmental communication.

<http://www.nau.edu/soc/ecrc>



Environmental Communication Commission Call for Papers, SCA 1997

The Commission invites submissions of completed papers and proposals for thematic panels, posters, and other innovative formats for competitive review. The Commission welcomes papers and proposals addressing any aspect/s of communication theory, methodology, research, criticism, or application with an environmental focus. Papers should be written to conceal authorship and should have 1) a separate title page with the author's complete address, affiliation, e-mail if available, and phone number, and 2) a separate 50-70 word abstract. Student papers and/or debut papers are encouraged and should be clearly noted on the title page. Poster proposals should include a similar title page and a 4-6 page overview of the rationale for and description of the poster material. All other proposals should include 1) a title and rationale for the program, 2) titles and abstracts of each paper or the materials to be presented, 3) the name, address, affiliation, phone number, e-mail address (if available), and role for each participant (note if student). Please make audio-visual requests explicit (fulfillment not guaranteed). All papers and proposals must be received by the planner by February 1, 1997. Send four copies of the paper/proposal to James Cantrill, Communication and Performance Studies, Northern Michigan University, Marquette, MI 49855. Telephone 906-227-2061, e-mail jcantril@nmu.edu.



Call for Papers

Deadline Extended!

Conference on Communication and the Environment

July 26-29, 1997
Syracuse, New York



Sponsored by
The Department of Environmental Studies
State University of New York
College of Environmental Science & Forestry

Following successful conferences in Alta, Utah (1991), Big Sky, Montana (1993), and Chattanooga, Tennessee (1995), the Conference on Communication and the Environment moves to Syracuse, New York in 1997. The common focus on communicational aspects of addressing environmental issues will bring together a diverse, interdisciplinary mix of professionals from academia, government, non-governmental organizations, and industry to share research and experiences. As with past conferences, stimulating formal presentations, panels, and dialogues will combine with informal interchanges and activities to encourage new collaborations, enriched perspectives, and new and strengthened friendships. It's a lot of fun.

Papers should address how aspects of communication affect our understanding of human relationships with the environment through, for example, public policy, education, action, media, public address, and conflict resolution. Scholars, teachers and practitioners from speech communication, journalism, english, environmental studies, education, ethics, history, philosophy, and the natural and physical sciences, and any other field that deals with communication and the environment are encouraged to submit proposals.

Past conferences have showcased the discourse of public policy formation and implementation, advocacy campaigns, news coverage, visual representations, the greening of business, public participation, sustainable development, wildlife protection, risk communication, consensus building, environmental justice, and ethical and philosophical dimensions. All methodologies are welcome.

Send three (3) copies of a 10-page double-spaced summary of your paper and a 100 word abstract to:

James Cantrill
Communication and Performance Studies
Northern Michigan University
Marquette, MI 49855
e-mail: jcantril@nmu.edu
906-227-2061



Further information on COCE registration, rates, special programs and featured speakers will be posted in the next *Ecologue* and on the listed homepages.

We hope to see you there!

Deadline for all submissions: March 15, 1997

Send only summaries with abstracts. Completed papers will be expected of notified presenters. All papers will be blind reviewed. Proceedings will be published.

The Presidency and the Environment



Presidential Rhetoric: The Presidency and Environmental Policy Making

February 28-March 2, 1997

College Station, Texas

The Third Annual Texas A & M Conference on Presidential Communication is focused on the presidency and the environment. This promises to be an exciting conference, well attended by policymakers, analysts and scholars from a variety of disciplines. J. Robert Cox, of the Sierra Club and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, will be the keynote speaker. For more information, please contact Tarla Rai Peterson at 409-845-5563.



Provocations

Without the gift of flowers and the infinite diversity of their fruits, man and bird, if they had continued to exist at all, would be today unrecognizable. Archaeopteryx, the lizard-bird, might still be snapping at beetles on a sequoia limb; man might still be a nocturnal insectivore gnawing a roach in the dark. The weight of a petal has changed the face of the world and made it ours.

(Loren Eiseley, "How Flowers Changed the World," *The Earth Speaks*, Ed. Steve Van Matre and Bill Weiler (Greenville, WV: Institute for Earth Education, 1983).

In the context of ecological discourse, utopianism would provide a much needed alternative to the gloom and doom rhetoric often characteristic of the movement. Far from being a diversion, utopian rhetorics can be the source of inspiration that will mobilize the forces capable of radically restructuring society. . . . [I]f "radical environmentalists" hopes for an ecological society are to survive, they must embrace the inherently utopian character of their project and establish the construction of ecotopia as the driving force behind the movement. Rather than eschew the label "utopian," "radical environmentalists" must promote the cultivation of utopian sensibilities. Indeed, if "radical environmentalists" are to address the rhetorical challenges confronting the movement, the insights of ecological thinking must now

be infused with the creative potential of utopian cultural and political rhetorics.

(John Delicath, "In Search of Ecotopia: 'Radical Environmentalism' and the Possibilities of Utopian Rhetorics" *Earthtalk*, Eds. Star Muir and Tom Veenendall (Westport, CT: Praeger Press, 1996).

However, despite its widely popular appeal, this image of the Earth as seen from outer space is problematic as the sacred symbol for our time. The photograph has been mass-marketed, reproduced in every conceivable medium, even reduced in scale to a tiny bauble that can hang from a chain like a protective amulet to be worn around the neck or dangle from a rear-view mirror. The problem is that the NASA picture, product of our most advanced technology, and symbol of our heroic journey into outer space, how touted as our new frontier, is a distancing image of the Earth that does not affirm our interconnection with a vital, living, earthly presence, but rather our separation from it. And Furthermore, the photograph of the earth from outer space in all its pristine beauty, denies the reality of humankind's despoliation of its riches.

(Elinor Gadon, "Metaphors for Birthing: Towards a New Creation Story for the Age of Ecology," *After Earth Day: Continuing the Conservation Effort*, Ed. Max Oelschlaeger (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 1992).

An Ecology of Language?

Does this sentence remind you of John Muir?

This sentence dreams of being a bird.

This inert sentence is my body, but my soul is alive, dancing in the sparks of your brain.

There are exactly three errors in this sentence.

f y cn rd ths, itn tyg h myxbl cd.

(Adapted from Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Metamagical Themas* (NY: Basic Books, 1985).

Debate and the Environment



This year the intercollegiate debate topic is *Resolved: That the United States federal government should increase regulations requiring industries to decrease substantially the domestic production and/or emission of environmental pollutants.* For the first time in over two decades, the two main forms of two-person intercollegiate debate, CEDA and NDT, are debating the same topic.

The most popular cases so far have involved policies to alleviate environmental racism, stricter mileage requirements for automobiles, stricter control of radioactive waste, and an expanded system of tradeable permits. Negative positions have focused on alternative actors for environmental actions, on the economic costs of environmental regulations, and on political effects of environmental policies on bipartisanship and on political "capital."

It is encouraging to see a new generation of thinkers focusing their efforts toward understanding some of the complexities surrounding environmental public policy. Since college debaters may end up arguing against policies they believe in, they are being forced to continually question their own assumptions regarding the desirability or feasibility of different policy options. May this ability to critically assess evidence, to integrate and compare the strength of various environmental claims, become more widespread as these students embrace the power of citizenship.

Ecologue

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Incorrect address? Don't want to receive the Newsletter? Know someone who would want to receive it? Please contact the Editor.

