

## Preface

The *Canadian Journal of Communication* is pleased to present this double issue dealing with social cohesion and culture. The concept of social cohesion is interesting for communication scholars because it speaks to one of their central concerns, the enrichment that communication brings about. One can find that concern expressed in James Carey, as Nancy Duxbury points out in her introduction to this volume. Carey speaks of the transformative elements of communication and specifically the building of human friendship and social bonds through communication. That same concern with the enrichment can be found differently expressed elsewhere. For example, Robert Babe claims in both his article "Economics and Information: Toward a New (and More Sustainable) Worldview" (CJC, Vol. 21, 2) and in his subsequent book, *Communication and the Transformation of Economics: Essays in Information, Public Policy, and Political Economy* (1996, Westview), that there is a basic difference between communication scholars and economists. Communication scholars see exchange and interaction as enriching, and they seek to describe the nature of that enrichment. Economists, on the other hand, reduce exchange to its bare essentials from which one can predict behaviour. Specifically, they reduce exchange to the price one person is willing to pay another for a good or service. Economists may be interested in the factors affecting a person's willingness to pay a certain price, but the reductive exercise that price represents is the central issue for them.

Social cohesion is of interest to communication scholars because it represents a way of viewing enrichment brought about in part by communication in a cultural context. Social cohesion can also be seen as a desiderata, a goal of the design in societal communication systems that might, for example, find its way into a broadcasting or telecommunications statute in our increasingly heterogeneous societies within a homogenizing world.

This double issue of the CJC on social cohesion and culture is also important because it brings to our pages the perspectives of knowledge workers, many of whom are not to be found in academic institutions. The vast majority of scholarly journals in communication make public the research and reflections of academics whose first engagement is with concepts rather than the extensive intricacies of the social realities of which they speak. In governments, businesses, social organizations, and in the consulting sector, one can find practitioners who are informed by and apply the concepts of academics, watch the dynamics of their applications, and reflect on both the ideas and the manner in which they have applied them. Such applied knowledge often is coded into future practice. It often finds its way into the grey literature of internal documents of governments and other organizations. It may form the basis of a separate literature such as development studies. But in too few instances does it find its way directly back to

academe to inform scholars and assist them with the assessment of their concepts and with the formulation of new ones. This issue is meant both to help circulate ideas with respect to social cohesion and culture and also to bring some of these ideas into the scholarly communication realm.

A third reason why the CJC was interested in publishing these papers is that they reflect the considerations of a practising, worldwide, knowledge community concerned with building and maintaining social integration in changing conditions. For this reason, as well as others, we did not subject contributors to the normal blind, peer review process. Rather we attempted to capture the nature of the discourse at the conference. Thus, we hired editors to work with each of the contributors to assist them in clearly articulating their ideas in a concise and precise manner. We believe the results, the contents of this issue, have been well worth the effort and trust that our subscribers and other readers will benefit from this publishing experiment.

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*Rowland Lorimer, Publisher, Vancouver, BC*