

In Medias Res

"In the Middle of Things"

The Newsletter of the Media Ecology Association

www.media-ecology.org

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President's Message

Out of the Maelstrom **Lance Strate, Fordham University**

MEA members attending our annual convention this year were treated to a preview screening of *McLuhan's Wake*, a new documentary about Marshall McLuhan's life and laws of media. Edgar Allan Poe's short story, "A Descent into the Maelstrom," was brought to life by director Kevin McMahon to provide the film with a recurring theme and unifying image. The maelstrom was McLuhan's metaphor for the symbolic and technological forces that overpower us, the social, psychological, and cultural vectors that have swept us away. Poe's sailor escapes this trap by making order out of chaos, recognizing and acting on the pattern hidden within the whirlpool. He discovers a new way of perceiving the vortex as an environment, a new way of understanding the medium of the maelstrom.

Towards the end of the documentary, we hear Marshall McLuhan say: "Since these

forms represent really huge extensions of our own bodies, and our own nervous systems, we need a kind of ecology, or equilibrium or balance among all these services." A few minutes later, Eric McLuhan adds: "We have now at our fingertips at least the beginnings of a science of media ecology." In other words, media ecology is a science of pattern recognition, offering a way out of

the media maelstrom, a method for addressing the vortex of culture.

McLuhan emphasized pattern recognition in response to information overload, and ... this approach was central to contemporary studies in media ecology.

Many media ecologists know that McLuhan was Fordham University's first Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities, during

the 1967-1968 schoolyear. Only a few media ecologists know about Fordham's second Schweitzer Chair, a distinguished sociologist named Lloyd Rogler, who has recently retired.

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MEA Convention Draws over 200 People

Raymond Gozzi, Jr., Newsletter Editor

I found the 3rd Annual MEA Convention at Marymount Manhattan College to be just as interesting, intimate, and illuminating as our previous conventions. Many thanks again to David Linton and Laura Tropp for planning and hosting the event. Convention photos taken by Robert Francos can be found on the web, by "joining" a Yahoo group at:

<<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MEAfrancosphotos/>>. After you join, click on "photos" and you can see many images (some reproduced here). To my eye, many of us look very serious, even grim, in the photos, which is not how I recall the event at all. Maybe it is partly due to the harsh light of the flash. The medium shapes the message.

In Medias Res is a benefit for MEA members. Inquiries about and/or contributions to this newsletter should be addressed directly to its Editor. The images used herein were obtained from IMSI's MasterClips (c) Collection, 75 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945. Convention photos (c) 2002 by Robert Francos. This newsletter was supported by a generous grant from the Pendleton Fund of the Park School of Communications, Ithaca College.

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Convention Coordinators (2003), Susan Drucker,

Hofstra University, Barbara M. Kelly, Hofstra

University

(President's Message, cont. from p. 1)

By the same token, Lloyd does not know a great deal about media ecology, although we have had a number of conversations about McLuhan. A few months ago we were discussing the problems confronting academia, and the subject of the 9/11 attacks came up.

Lloyd suggested that we had all the data necessary to predict what the terrorists were up to, and pointed out that

Americans schooled in the social sciences are actually very good at analysis. The problem, he argued, is that we are not very good at synthesis, at putting the pieces together in meaningful ways. I

told Lloyd that synthesis was exactly the skill stressed by his predecessor, that McLuhan emphasized pattern recognition in response to information overload, and that this approach was central to contemporary studies in media ecology.

I certainly do not mean to suggest that media ecology can or will save the world. But our intellectual tradition can help us understand our world in new ways, and perhaps get a handle on it. Media ecology is a difference that can make a difference. Let's spread the word to our colleagues, students, and associates. Let them know about our field, about our association, about our conferences, publications, website, and listserv. Let them know that there may yet be a way out of the maelstrom of our times.

Below: David Linton & Laura Tropp



Members' News

Frederick Wasser writes: I am **moving to the Department of Television and Radio at Brooklyn College CUNY** and my new email will be fwasser@brooklyn.cuny.edu.

Bruce Gronbeck, the A. Craig Baird Distinguished Professor of Public Address and Director of the University of Iowa Center for Media Studies and Political Culture, was awarded a \$47,000 seed grant from UI's Arts and Humanities Initiative for a fall 2002 study. He and Arthur Miller (Political Science, Iowa) will be conducting a **telephone survey on midwesterners' political uses of the Internet during Campaign 2002**. Why do people seek political information and opinion from the WWW? What kinds of materials are they looking for? What kinds of sites do they visit, how often, and for how long? Ultimately, then, how should we be defining the Internet as a medium of political communication? In what ways is it--if at all--changing U.S. political culture? Those last two questions are described in the grant application as ones impinging directly on media ecology theory.

Lance Strate gave the Keynote Address at the Annual Meeting of the Rocky Mountain Communication Association, University of Denver, Denver, CO, Feb.15-16, 2002. The title of his address was "Human Communication and Human Technology: Coming of Age in the Twenty-First Century," and in his honor, Mayor Wellington E. Webb proclaimed "**that February 15, 2002 be known as Dr. Lance Strate Day in the City and County of Denver.**" Also, his book chapter, "Baseball as Medium," was published in *Baseball and the Meaning of Life*, edited by Gary Gumpert and Susan Drucker.

Sal Fallica of NYU is **Political Communication Interest Group Chair for ECA**.

Donna Flayhan has been granted **tenure, promoted** to the rank of Associate Professor, and is now Chair of the Communication and Media Studies Department at Goucher College in Baltimore, MD. (Also recently had a **baby**.)

Jim Morrison writes: On September 21 I'll be participating in the reconstitution of the **Massachusetts State Communication Association**, whose activities had lapsed until being revived recently. There will be a conference held at Regis College in Weston, MA, in conjunction with the ECA's Rhetoric and Public Address Interest Group's annual fall conference. I urge all interested to spread the word and to contact Anne Mattina [amattina@stonehill.edu] for further information. I'm also participating in a roundtable discussion that will be published in the November/December issue of *ArchitectureBoston* magazine, whose theme will be "Hype." It will look at popular culture, promotion, and the implications for the built environment: what gets built, the effects on design, and the effects on public and professional perceptions.

Treasurer's Report

Thom Gencarelli

At the beginning of FY 2002, the MEA had \$4,502.85 cash on hand. At this point in the fiscal year (post-Convention, and with only one major yearly expenditure remaining: the bill for subscriptions to EME for members who joined midstream) we have \$10,714.25. Thus, from a fiscal standpoint, it has been a very successful year--our first. We should end the year with between \$9,000-\$10,000. This strong state of affairs is the result of three factors. The first was our decision to increase membership rates from \$20 to \$40 for regular members and from \$10 to \$20 for student members. The second was the largess of David Linton, coordinator of our Convention this past June, and his institution, Marymount Manhattan College, who hosted and subsidized the event. The third factor is the course Marymount offered in conjunction with the Convention. Because this course was arranged so that the students would become introductory members of the MEA, we added an additional 59 student members.

**...it has been a
very successful
year....**

The "take" from the Convention amounted to \$7,690. This includes \$5,440 in registrations/pre-registrations and \$2,250 in program advertisements and exhibition fees. (We are still owed a \$250 payment from one vendor.) Expenses so far have amounted to \$5,034.50. (One outstanding reimbursement remains: Sunday's end-of-convention Board meeting luncheon.) The net result is that the advertising and exhibition monies should represent a profit for the Association. This has been our hope all along. For the near term, as we continue to rely on a willing host and host institution for both the venue and coordination of our Convention--with the host assuming a portion of the costs (e.g., space, program costs, etc.)--our aim is to (a) break even on the actual costs of running the Convention while (b) making this small, yearly profit from ads and exhibits that will help keep the Association on solid financial footing. Thanks to the gracious help of David Linton, Laura Tropp, and the rest of the crew at Marymount Manhattan, we have managed to achieve both.

Call for nominations to the Board of Directors

Each year, there are four positions available on the Board of Directors of the Association, which consists of 12 members elected by the Association's membership. The term of office is three years. To nominate a member, or volunteer yourself as a nominee, please contact Bill Petkanas by no later than September 15, 2002. Email (preferred): PetkanasW@wcsu.edu Phone: 860-355-2674 Mail: Bill Petkanas, Dept. of Communication and Theater Arts, Western Connecticut State University, 181 White Street, Danbury, CT 06810.

Members' News -- International Activities

Frank E.X. Dance, John Evans Professor of Human Communication Studies and of Digital Media Studies at the University of Denver was appointed this year's Xiao Zong-rang Chair Professor at Shih Hsin University in Taipei, Taiwan. Frank gave **three lectures in Taipei** during the last week of May and the first week of June.

Casey Man Kong Lum, Associate Professor of Communication and Media Studies at William Paterson University and Vice President of the Media Ecology Association delivered **three speeches in Beijing, China in May 2002**: "Global Communication: Issues and Theories" at Tsinghua University's School of Journalism and Communication (May 21); "Homeland Media in the Global Media Diaspora: The North American Experience" at Beijing Broadcasting Institute's School of Television (May 23); and "Lewis Mumford's Megamachine and Modern Global Media" at Peking University's School of Journalism and Communication (May 30). He participated in an international **symposium at the University of Tokyo** (Todai) on June 6, 2002 on "Japan's Media Environments in the Context of Global-Informationalization" conducted by Todai's Professor Shin Mizukoshi. In July, Casey also gave a speech to a group of faculty members and graduate students at the **Shanghai Teachers University, in Shanghai, China**, on "Intercultural Perspectives on Bi-lingual Education."

Wenshan Jia of SUNY New Paltz has published "**The Remaking of the Chinese Character and Identity in the 21st Century**" with Ablex. He is also co-editor of "**Chinese Communication Theory and Research**" published by Greenwood.

Thom Gencarelli will be travelling to **Lviv, Ukraine**, Sept. 6-7, to be a guest speaker at a conference, "Media Education as Part of Civic Education," hosted by the **Institute of Media Ecology at the Ivan Franko National University**. The Director of the Institute is Boris Potiatynyk. The conference is being coordinated by Natalia Habor, who attended our first MEA Convention in New York three years ago.

Gary Gumpert writes: Both **Susan Drucker** and I have just presented papers at the **International Association of Media Communication Researchers** in Barcelona on the Digital Divide and at the **International Association of People Environment Studies** conference in La Caruna, Spain at which we presented a paper on Ubiquitous Technology and Sustainable Development. We have founded a Communication and Technology Network within that association examining the relationship of communication media and the design and use of space.

Ralph Beliveau, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, ran a **study-abroad tour in Scotland** in July. He writes: I was teaching a course on the Origins of British Cultural Studies...using a book by Tom Steele, University of Glasgow...discussing the context of adult education as a main route to understand the development of CS. We met with Steele while we were in Glasgow, and had a wonderful time discussing politics and the relationship between education and citizenship.

Calls for Conference Papers, EME Journal, MEA Awards

Call for papers, **4th Annual Media Ecology Association Convention**, Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY, June 5-8, 2003. See web site www.media-ecology.org for details. Send two copies of abstracts, papers, panels, or proposals to: MEA Convention, Prof. Carol J. Drummer, School of Communication, Room 318 Dempster Hall, Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY 11549-1110, by Jan. 15, 2003. Convention coordinators: Susan Drucker (DruckerS@ix.netcom.com) (516-463-5304) & Barbara M. Kelly (Barbara.M.Kelly@hofstra.edu) (516-463-4100).

Call for Nominations for **2003 MEA Awards**. See web site www.media-ecology.org for details. Send all entries by Dec. 1, 2002, to: Lance Strate, President, MEA, Dept. of Communication and Media Studies, Fordham University, Bronx, NY 10458-9993.

Call for Papers and Panel Proposals for the MEA Program at the 2003 Convention of the **Eastern Communication Association**, Washington D.C. April 24-27 2003, Wyndham Washington Hotel. Four hard copies of completed papers or panel proposals should be sent (to arrive by October 15, 2003) to: Brian Cogan, MEA/ECA Program Planner, 2 Seeley Street Brooklyn NY 11218

Call for Submissions to **Explorations in Media Ecology**. See web site www.media-ecology.org for details. Send submissions to either of the co-editors: Lance Strate, President, MEA, Dept. of Communication and Media Studies, Fordham University, Bronx, NY 10458-9993 (Strate@fordham.edu) or Judith Yaross Lee, School of Interpersonal Communication, Lasher Hall, Ohio University, Athens, OH 45701-2979 (leej@ohio.edu). Submissions focusing on teaching and pedagogical concerns should go to the Teaching and Education editor: Sal Fallica, Dept. of Culture & Communication, NYU, 239 Greene St., Suite 735, New York, NY 10003-6674 (sjf1@nyu.edu.) Books and reviews to Book Review editor, Thom Gencarelli, Dept. of Broadcasting, Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043-9987 (gencarellit@mail.montclair.edu).

The second bi-annual **William A. Kern conference on Visual Communication: Rhetorics and Technologies 2003** is scheduled for April 3-6 2003 in Rochester, NY. Panel proposals, papers and inquires are welcome via email (dshgpt@rit.edu). Deadline for submissions is January 15, 2003. Diane S. Hope, William A. Kern Professor in Communications at Rochester Institute of Technology.



Casey Lum



Bob Logan



Judith Yaross Lee



Bill Bly & John McDaid

Members' News -- Publications & Productions

Tom Farrell (U. of Minnesota) writes: On the occasion of the 90th birthday of **Walter J. Ong, SJ**, (30 November 2002) the four volumes of his essays published under the title of "**Faith and Contexts**" will be offered at a special sale price of \$25 each. The sale will be announced in an ad in the November 2002 PMLA, which will include a promotional code that people must mention when they call in their orders. The sale will end 15 January 2003. Also, on 19 July 2002 Routledge released the **second edition of Walter Ong's "Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word."** The second edition has been reset in a new typeface, but contains no new material. Also, "**An Ong Reader: Challenges for Further Inquiry**" (Ong, Farrell, & Soukup) is scheduled to come out in the Media Ecology Series published by Hampton Press in the first week of September.

Diane S. Hope, William A. Kern Professor in Communications at Rochester Institute of Technology is the current general editor of **Women's Studies Quarterly**. WSQ is an interdisciplinary thematic journal and the oldest women's studies journal in the country, published by the Feminist Press and CUNY in cooperation with RIT. Each issue is guest edited. The last two issues are of particular interest to Media Ecology folks:

(1) _WSQ, **Women Confronting the New Technologies**, Guest Editor, Lee Quinby (Hobart and William Smith Colleges), Vol. XXIX Nos. 3 & 4, Fall/Winter 2001.

(2) WSQ, **Looking Across the Lens: Women's Studies and Film**, Guest Editor, Wendy Kolmar (Drew University) Vol. XXX Nos. 1 & 2, Spring/Summer 2002.

Paul Levinson writes: Jay Kensingler has made a low-low budget **movie of my novelette, "The Chronology Protection Case"**. First published in Analog in 1995, the story explores the implications of Hawking's "chronology protection conjecture" -- the universe may protect itself against time travel -- from the perspective of a murder mystery. Reprinted four times, nominated for the Nebula and Sturgeon awards in 1996, "The Chronology Protection Case" also introduces Dr. Phil D'Amato, Levinson's NYPD forensic detective character who appears in two subsequent stories and two novels -- The Silk Code (1999) and The Consciousness Plague (2002). "The Chronology Protection Case" is available on Fictionwise.com, along with the other short stories. The movie is currently touring science fiction conventions, and is also **showing, free of charge, at www.aetherco.com/timelinks/** -- the Web's leading site devoted to time travel.

Gary Gumpert writes: Our latest book "**Take Me Out the Ballgame: Communicating Baseball**" was published by Hampton Press this Spring. Edited by Gary Gumpert and **Susan Drucker**, it includes contributions by media ecologists including chapters by **Lance Strate** and **Stephanie Gibson**.

Michael Grabowski of NYU has just finished a PSA for PBS--"**Is my neighbor a Latino?**"--to promote awareness of the Latino population of the U.S. His two short films, "**Pancho's Revenge**" and "**A More Perfect Union**" aired in May on Maryland Public Television's "Independent Eye" hosted by Joan Jett.



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