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The History of Union for Democratic Communications through *The Democratic Communiqué*

Ronald V. Bettig and Aaron Heresco

This essay examines the history of the Union for Democratic through a close reading of the organization's newsletters and journals issued under the title of The Democratic Communiqué. It addresses the organization's evolution and that of its newsletter/journal based on archival research. It discusses the origins of the Union for Democratic Communications and highlights its activities and mission since the mid-1980s. It also considers the successes and re-current problems faced by the organization over the last 30 years.

James Tracy interviewed Vincent Mosco for the Spring 2006 issue of *The Democratic Communiqué*, in which Mosco recounts the origins of the Union for Democratic Communications (UDC).¹ Mosco recalls communicating with a group of graduate students the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 1978-1979. This collective, made up of Martin Allor, Sara Douglas, Fred Fejes, Tom Guback, Eileen Meehan, Jennifer Slack and Janet Wasko, published a newsletter called *Communication Perspectives* supported by “critical researchers, practitioners and activists from literally all over the world.”² When *Communication Perspectives* was formally dissolved in 1986 it passed its mailing list and remaining assets on to the UDC and outstanding subscriptions were completed with two issues of the *Democratic Communiqué*.

In March 1979, Thomas Guback took the lead in organizing a work-shop conference at Urbana along with his students. Dallas Smythe was among the participants. At this meeting, talk began about establishing an organization to hold regular conferences. The group met periodically over the next two years, leading to the foundation of the UDC and its first conference in Philadelphia in 1981. The emphasis was on academic work in the field of the political economy of communications and an attempt to build bridges to those involved in non-academic cultural and labor-oriented work. The expectations were that the organization would provide “a network of people who stay in touch, meet regularly at conferences, and support one another's work.”³

Karen Paulsell produced the first newsletters for the Union for Democratic Communications with the title *News and Notes*, to which we did not have access.⁴ The first issue in our archives is dated April 1985 but includes no volume or issue number.⁵ It is typical of the *The Democratic Communiqué* as it appeared until 1996. Across the masthead are drawings that reflect the history of communications: face-to-face, a manuscript, a printed book, a revolving drum symbolizing moving pictures, a photo camera, a film camera, a radio, a television, an audio or video cassette, and a satellite (though not in that order). It included drawings and comics that became a standard feature of the newsletter. A delightful comic in the issue depicts the White House from which we hear: “But Nancy...why *CAN’T* I join the UDC...I *AM* still the Great Communicator, aren’t I?? and then “Just go back to sleep, Ron, hon...” The issue was printed on light brown paper with a slightly thicker stock and ran 12 pages in an 8 and ½ by 11 newsletter format. It was folded in half with a mailing label to the addressee. At the time the publication was sent to members as well as like-minded organizations on the mailing list. The cost of mailing via the U.S. Postal Service was 22 cents per issue.

The table of contents on the first page listed ANNOUNCEMENTS, CONFERENCES, DEMOCRATIC COMM. IN ACTION, JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS, UDC CONFERENCE REPORTS and UDC NEWS. The cover stories were “Independent Producers and Documentary Crisis,” announcing a day-long conference organized by the Film Arts Foundation and the Association of California Independent Public Television Producers, focusing on “the documentary as a medium for exploring diverse personal, ethnic, political and intellectual points of view.”⁶ Karen Paulsell (also the Business and Production Manager of the UDC) contributed a second cover article entitled “Critical Arts in So Africa.” A special department, “Democratic Communications in Action,” featured television and radio programming, screenings, journal announcements, and a media literacy course. “Conferences” announced a meeting on electronic publishing and message networks; the 39th University Film and Video Association conference; an Iowa TV Criticism Symposium with “symposians” Les Brown, Muriel Cantor, Caren Deming, Todd Gitlin, and Horace Newcomb; the 15th General Assembly and Conference of the International Association for Mass Communication Research in New Dehli; and, the 13th Telecommunications Research Conference with the theme, “Equity: Social and Economic Issues.”

The UDC Conference reports were drawn from the Second National Conference and Meeting of the UDC in Chevy Chase, Maryland, October 19, 1984 with the theme “Communications and Empowerment.” Reports on panels included “Community Empowerment through Media: Cable Television;” “Communication Policy in the Caribbean” concerning Grenada, Nicaragua, Cuba; “Telecomm Policy in Transition;” and, “Plenary: Democratic Communications in Action” written by Jim Schwoch, Mark Schulman, Noreen Janus and Janet Wasko. UDC News included an announcement of the first meeting of the new Steering Committee in Washington, D.C. and a Cinco de Mayo picnic in Santa Monica, California. Janet Wasko, then at Cal Poly Pomona, edited this issue, then a bi-monthly. Book reviews appeared soon after with Eileen Meehan serving as Book Review Editor. Later issues included “Changes in Scenery,” listing new addresses of UDC members and even birth announcements.

UDC members organized regional conferences in these early days supported by 10 percent of the organization's revenues. Established chapters included the West Coast, a New York chapter, and Midwest. These conferences provided opportunities for UDC members to gather between national conferences in more intimate settings. The front cover of the January 1985 issue (Vol. V, No. 1) featured a brief report by Steering Committee member Fred Fejes on the Midwest regional meeting held in November 1985 in Madison, Wisconsin. Members from four states attended. Paper topics ranged from a study of the rating industry to analyzing satellite policy and Third World upheaval. Fejes reported that the meeting also included "a tour of the Madison bars where UDC members interacted with the indigenous peoples of this Midwestern city."⁷

The May 1986 (Vol. V, No. 3) issue introduced subscriptions to UDC WORKS, of which there had been an earlier edition comprised of a collection of UDC members, addresses and their publications/media works. The summer issue of that year listed annual membership fees of \$10 for Student or Low Income, \$20 Regular membership, \$30 Sustaining Member, and \$100 Institutional Membership for up to 10 members that included the *Communiqué* and UDC Works. A separate subscription to the *Communiqué* cost \$15 for one year (six issues) and \$20 for Overseas Airmail. A separate subscription to UDC Works cost \$6 each including postage and handling. UDC Works later became a directory with names and addresses of UDC members and included with payment of annual dues.

The January 1986 (Vol. 5, No. 1) issue identified the *Communiqué* as the "official newsletter of the Union for Democratic Communications." The editorial staff consisted of Editor: Janet Wasko, Business Manager: Karel Paulsell, Copy Editor: Carlos Rede Calderon, Technical Consultant: Alice Slaughter, Book Review Editor: Eileen Meehan, Special Features Editor: Mark Schulman, and Translator: Federico Subveri-Velez. The list of Contributors reflected the international make-up of the UDC, including Jan Servaes (Belgium), Jan Ekecrantz (Sweden), Keyan Tomaselli (South Africa), Preben Sepsrup (Sweden), Michele Mattelart (France), and Jörg Becker (FRG). The first numbered issue (Vol V, No. 6) in our archive appeared Nov-Dec 1986.

In 1987, Volume VI still ran announcements, activist and academic meetings, calls for participation and reports on regional-chapter and national UDC meetings, book reviews, and up-dates. Vol. VI No. 2 (March-April 1987) announced "The *Demo Comm* joins the InfoAge" with the editorial offices reachable through Bitnet at node#: 10052@OREGON 2 and the following year also through PeaceNet-jwasko. With this volume we begin to see the publication of brief academic works submitted by members. A front cover story in Vol. VI No. 6 (Winter 1987/88) entitled "Wall Street Firm Yellow Dogs Labor: Information Black-out" (no author) was about Dun & Bradstreet, a major Wall Street credit-rating firm, denying financial data to the AFL-CIO and several affiliates. This issue also included an article by Peter Franck with "Some Thoughts on the Mass Media, Social Change and the First Amendment," under the heading "Viewpoints." Vol. VII, Issue No. 1, 1988 has a cover story by Carlos R. Calderon entitled, "General Electric: Inside the War Machine" that is continued in Issue No. 2. Vol. VIII, No. 5/6 (misidentified as Vol. II) included a "Special Feature Section" on "The Reagan Legacy" with articles by Dan Miller ("Reagan's Farewell Scenes:

Torching the Wall”), Clay Steinman (“Academic Freedom at Commuter Universities: Market Metaphors and the Public Interest), and Carlos Calderon (“The Teflon President and the Fourth Estate”). The issue also announces that a book, *Communications for and Against Democracy*, drawing on fourteen conference papers from the fourth national conference of the UDC held in Ottawa, April 28-May 1, would be published by Black Rose Books (Montreal). The *Communiqué* became listed among the 569 periodicals in the 1989 edition of the *Progressive Periodicals Directory*. Also with Vol. VIII, Sandy Emerson joined Janet Wasko as co-editor.

Sandy Emerson took over as editor of the *Communiqué* with Vol. IX, No. 1 while Janet Wasko remained on board as Book Review Editor. Vol. IX, No. 2 included a lengthy article by Colleen Roach of Queens College and steering committee member on “The Movement for a New World Information Order,” with a subsection, “UDC Strategy for NWICO,” in which she warned that the momentum built with the “Grass Roots” UDC/NY conference in October 1989 should continue, and to be “wary of the UDC becoming ‘just’ an academic organization.” Her concern was that if the organization remained “largely academic” the “membership will stagnate.” She continued:

Since academics can always find a group of “leftees” at the mainstream conferences, there is no pressing reason for new members to come to our gatherings if they are simply another academic forum. This is even more true for activists, who will feel lost at such gatherings.

Secondly, Roach encouraged the UDC to “actively promote feminism and feminist issues” through its support for a new phase of NWICO, and to make the 1990s a “decade of ‘renewed feminist action.’”⁸ This issue also published the minutes of the August 6, 1990 Audio Conference Online and the Preliminary Program for the 1990 “Annual Conference” at the University of California, San Diego, October 11-14, 1990, themed “World Information Order: Initiatives for Cultural Autonomy.” Herbert I. Schiller was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award at this conference, later re-named the Dallas Smythe Award after Smythe’s passing in September 1992. Since then, the membership was routinely asked to submit nominations for the award. The Steering Committee made the final decision based on the nominee’s role in the UDC, contributions to the field of communications research or media production, availability and cost.

No issue was published in 1991. With the 1992, Vol. 10, No. 1 issue Jon Bekken took over as editor with Janet Wasko continuing as Book Review Editor. A student of Herbert Schiller, Bekken had a strong background in media activism as editor of *The New Indicator*, the alternative leftist monthly published at U.C. San Diego, and was a member of the Industrial Workers of the World. He insisted that the printing of the *Communiqué* be done by a union printer, Harbinger Publications, Columbia, S.C, using recycled paper. He was already in trouble at the University of Central Arkansas that had notified him that his contract would not be renewed “because my students and I have been too aggressive in using the state Freedom of Information Act and in trying to get the University to follow it.”⁹ The issue included

a preliminary program of the UDC meeting May 7-10, 1992 at Trent University, Peterborough. Marc Raboy urged that time at the conference should be taken up “to explore ways in which the UDC can adopt “a more activist stance, both by linking up with appropriate communication projects in the broader community and by sponsoring action-based projects of our own.”¹⁰ The following issue was the first to appear in English, French, and Spanish, as voted for at the UDC conference in May 1992. Bekken wrote that “[a]rticles, announcements and other material may be submitted in any of the three languages” and asked that contributors “provide a summary in other languages as well.” Official UDC notices were translated and published in all three languages. The issue included minutes of the UDC Business meeting taken by steering committee coordinator Kate Kane. A treasury report by Jackie Byars noted that the UDC’s current balance was \$1,800 and that memberships were down, with only 41 members joining or renewing since January 1992. As editorship and leadership of the UDC shifted to a new generation, there came complaints that the contents of the *Communiqué* had become “too academically-oriented, neglecting present and prospective UDC members engaged in media work.” Bekken encouraged “those sharing this concern to submit articles, graphics, etc. speaking to their needs and interests.”¹¹ Indeed, there was no artwork in Vol. X (No.3). However, announcements of conferences, meetings, and reports on activism were still abundant, as well as book reviews. This issue was the last attempt to produce a tri-lingual version of the *Communiqué*.

The minutes of the business meeting held at the 1993 conference in San Antonio, Cuba, December 2-6, 1993, published in Vol. XII(1) March 1994, put the costs of printing and mailing the *Communiqué* at roughly \$500-\$600 for each issue, making up the biggest non-conference expense. This concern led to the consideration of cutting back on the number of issues or sending the newsletter out via bulk mail instead of first class. Again, there was concern about declining membership and the need to spread awareness of the UDC at other conferences and meetings. Here we find the first suggestion (and not the last, indeed up through 2012 steering committee meetings) that, if the budget permitted, the UDC was to purchase mailing lists from other groups with similar goals and political issues. Membership fees at the time were: \$30 Regular, \$10 Student/low income, \$50 sustaining, \$45 for household, and \$30 for subscription only, with no membership or directory. Postage stamps were replaced with a First Class, U.S. Postage Paid stamp out of Columbia, S.C. from the printer. The collegiality of the UDC is underscored in Vol. III (No. 1), March 1995 with a short notice from Bekken: “UDC Seeks Tenure/Promotion Referees” in which he asks for “tenured full professors willing to act as referees...familiar with academic literature relevant to UDC concerns” to contact him.

Vol. XIV(2), May 1995 announced the creation of a UDC web site (<http://kows.web.edu.net/udc>) to include articles from the *Communiqué* and other material including contributions from UDCers. This issue also includes an excerpt by Robert McChesney from the *Monthly Review*, “Is There Any Hope for Cultural Studies?” by which he questioned. Whether there is “any hope for cultural studies to survive as a politically left enterprise: anticapitalist, antimarket, predispossessed, prodemocratic, and therefore socialist.” He argued that the “socialist political project of cultural studies has receded over the past

two decades.” In his view, “cultural studies without explicitly radical politics is uninteresting and produces work of no greater or lesser value than that of mainstream social science.” He continues that for cultural studies to “reassert the radical political project” two measures were necessary: “to develop a more systematic critique of capitalism and the market, and that it pay closer attention to actual movements for social change.” He finds many in cultural studies that share some of these concerns but that “the trajectory of the field is in the other direction.”¹² He added that “[a]t its worst, cultural studies has elevated individual consumption of commercial culture to the level of political activity, or it regards any signs that oppressed individuals do not accept the ideology of the ruling class *in toto* as a significant political gesture.”¹³ Most members of the UDC shared these views in works published elsewhere.¹⁴ It was about this time that Tom Guback argued that the term “critical” communications research had become meaningless.

Jon Bekken announced his resignation as editor as of the October 1996 UDC conference. He had served in this role for six years. With volume 15, editorship passed to Lee Artz at Loyola University Chicago, with the first issue (Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring/Summer 1997) guest edited by Chris List. The newsletter format gave way to a journal format with the intent of becoming a quarterly publication. It included a call for scholarly papers of 10-12 pages for Volume 15.2, Fall 1997 that would address African-Americans and communications in the U.S. Volume 15.3, Winter 1997 was to be devoted to the current character and state of the political economy of U.S. media. These issues are missing from our archives, as are issues from 1998 and it is not clear whether they were ever published, although the next issue we have in our archives is from Spring 1999, labeled as Vol. 16 No. 3 suggesting that at least two issues were published during this time.

The cover includes the logo of the UDC that is still in use at the present. It is made up of a lower case “u” with the “d” filled in with an image of a globe and a lower case “c,” the “u” and the “c” are connected with a swoosh. This issue stated that the *democratic communiqué* (in lower case) was to be published three times a year with co-editors: Virginia Keller, Chris List, Dave Lippman, and Deborah Tudor at Loyola University Chicago. Sheila Smith-Hobson served as book reviews editor. Its content reflect the continued emphasis on scholarship and praxis, with articles such as “Building Capacity Through Community Video Training” by Jesikah Maria Ross, “The Guatemala Radio Project,” an interview by David Lippman of José Oliva, “Privilege and Penalty: The Dialectics of Racism in the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank” by K.R. Kamphoefner, a video review of *Spin* by Gabriel Gomez, “The Performance Art of American Politics” Norman Solomon, and “Cinemas of the African Diaspora—A Course Syllabus” by Elspeth Kydd. The issue totaled 52 pages.

A four-page *UDC DEMOCRATIC NEWSLETTER* (upper case) was published in December 1999 reporting on a self-criticism session held at the conference at the University of Oregon, Eugene, with the theme “Communication, Culture and Environments” asking: 1. “*Who are you and why are you here?*” answered with activists and academics, practitioners because of the politics and, “because it is cool;” 2. *What is UDC? What should it be?* answered with sharing ideas, concern about more academics than activists, whether the UDC is just conferences, a resource for grad students doing critical work, and “[o]ne defining fea-

ture—focus on critical political economy and democratic work; 3. *How should we get there?* answered by being more activist, more outreach, political resolutions, alternative media outreach and more. The renewal notice on the last page announced that only 100 out of 300 UDC members were currently paid up. These are the same re-current questions and issues that are reflected in the past issues and the topic of conversation among members of the Steering Committee and other members at the present time. A raffle of UDC members who donated copies of their books raised more than \$400 to be used to fund special projects and travel grants for low-income members to attend conferences. The newsletter also announced a UDC History Project led by Ellen Riordan seeking to create a collective historical account of the UDC from its first meeting in 1981 to the 2001 conference and asked members to share ideas, materials, and labor power. Rick Emrich took over website coordination. This newsletter also announced the intent of publishing conference papers related to the 1999 conference theme: “Communication, Culture and Environments.”

There appear to be no publications in 2000 as the next issue in journal format is Vol. 17 Number 1, Spring 2001 co-edited by Virginia Keller, Chris List and Deborah Tudor with the address in Oak Park, Illinois. Based on an Ebscohost search, the journal had obtained an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN 1555-8967) an identifier code for any journal. The feature articles included “Sports, Spectatorship, and Classism: The Cultural Environment of the New Stadia and Arenas in the United States,” by Jim Wittebols; “Poliglossia in Women’s Films: Carlota Joaquina,” by José Gatti; and, “Telling My Lais: War Crimes and Reconciliation,” by Peter McGregor. The issue included two book reviews and a “Course File: Teaching Alternative Film to Liberal Studies Freshman,” by Deborah Tudor, re-confirming the UDC’s commitment to pedagogy. The course provided students with a very basic introduction to Hollywood style (with which they were familiar) but also to art house, foreign, documentary experimental and avant-garde. The class was also required to explore the local cinematic scene in Chicago by attending screenings of alternative films, film festivals, and films by local filmmakers. We cannot tell from our archives whether additional issues of volume 17 were published. A re-current problem throughout the history of the *Communiqué* has been a lack of submissions.

An issue of *the democratic communiqué newsletter* appeared in December 2001 sent from the College of Communications at the Pennsylvania State University, University Park, with the support of the college dean. Kate Kane served as editor of the newsletter. It included a Treasurer’s Report from treasurer Chris List for income and expenditures from October 31, 1999 through April 30, 2001. Over this period the cost of printing and shipping the *Communiqué* totaled \$3,829, again the largest expenditure incurred by the UDC. The six-page newsletter also contained the new steering committee and biographies of each member: Ashley Overbeck, Ron Bettig, James Compton (Steering Committee Coordinator), Ellen Riordan, Rick Emerich, Jim Wittebols, Christine Quail, James Tracy, Chris List (treasurer of the UDC and editor of the *Communiqué*), and Kate Kane (editor of the *communiqué* newsletter.) Doctoral students comprised half of the committee. Commenting on why he continued on the Steering Committee, Jim Wittebols stated: “Because UDC provided a needed link for me when I first started at Niagara [University] a sociologist in a communica-

tion studies program, I needed to connect to other radical scholars in the discipline.”¹⁵ The newsletter noted that a “lively discussion about the *Communiqué*” took place at the Ottawa business meeting and raised the question of whether it should be refereed coming to the agreement that the next issue would be partially refereed. This would allow “refereed” papers to move to the top of Curriculum Vitas from “Other Publications” that as we are all aware count the most in promotion and tenure decisions where quantity (and quantification) mattered more than quality (and qualitative research). It would also solve the problem of finding outlets for political economy of communications research that had been a long-term struggle.¹⁶ The newsletter announced that it could now be received via email or in hard copy sent through the U.S. Postal Service.

This issue appeared as Volume 18 appeared in Summer 2002 edited by Christine List at Chicago State University and Patricia Mazepa at Carleton University. Assistant editors were listed as Emmanuel Alozie (Governor’s State University), Jyotsna Kapur (Southern Illinois University), Michael Karlberg (Western Washington University) and Brian Murphy (Niagara University). This issue announced that the *Communiqué* would be published annually with subscription rates at \$35 per year for institutions and \$15 per year for individuals. The issue was titled “Democratic Communications in a Branded World” with a bright red cover and the UDC logo across the bottom. The issue included a selection of papers from the UDC’s 20th anniversary conference held in Ottawa, Ontario in May 2001. The Editor’s Note stated that the theme was partly inspired by the work of the conference keynote speaker, Canadian journalist and activist Naomi Klein, who in 1999 had authored *No Logo: Taking Aim at Brand Bullies*. The conference attracted a combination of academics, journalists, media producers, policy analysts and activists. The papers in the issue explored a number of different ways that the practice of branding was being extended into areas beyond traditional commercial space, and how the many struggles for democratic communications, and democracy in general, continued. The editors expressed special thanks to the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada for supporting both the conference and the publication of this issue.

In April 2003 a *Communiqué* newsletter covered the 2002, October 10-13 UDC conference held in State College, Pennsylvania coordinated by Ronald Bettig, Jeanne Hall, Jennifer Proffitt, Christine Quail and Ian Steinberg, supported by an army of College of Communications colleagues and graduate students. The conference included 28 panels, workshops and screenings featuring more than 100 media scholars, activists and practitioners. Media activists and alternative production included members of Media Tank, Radio Prometheus, and *Voices of Central Pennsylvania*. Additionally, independent filmmaker Tony Buba gave an evening address, entitled, “Tales of an Independent Filmmaker, Or How I Haven’t Had a Real Job Since 1968.” Two other independent filmmakers screened their most recent works, Kurush Canteenwala (*New Empire*) and John Schmitt (*Power from the People*). The newsletter included the bios of the Steering Committee and the announcement of a revamped UDC website (www.udc.org) thanks to Jim Tracy. Ronald Bettig and Jennifer Proffitt established a Penn State listserv open to anyone who registered with the site - - not just UDC members (eventually the number of subscribers became four times greater than the

number of registered UDC members). Jennifer Proffitt maintained the listserv. Treasurer Chris List reported the highest treasury balance in UDC history; \$9,180 in the U.S. account and an additional \$2,000 in the Canadian Conference Account.

Like Volume 18, Volumes 19 Spring 2004 and 20 Spring 2006, were themed issues based on conference titles. Volume 19, edited by Christine List, was entitled “Democratic Communications and Global Justice,” and opened with the key-note address by the Dallas Smythe Award recipient Edward Herman followed by juried articles submitted to the conference. Kate Kane served as editor of Volume 20, Spring 2006, entitled, “Axis of Empire,” the theme of the April 22-25, 2004 conference hosted by the College of Mass Communications and Media Arts at Southern Illinois University. Jyotsna Kapur served as guest editor, with the journal being printed by SIUC Printing. It also announced the transition to a bi-annual, fully-refereed journal with James Tracy at Florida Atlantic University serving as editor. With Volume 21 Number 1, Spring 2007, the *Democratic Communiqué* had established an Editorial Advisory Board to enhance its credibility in the field.¹⁷ This issue began a tradition of cover photos or illustrations. Hanno Hardt submitted the cover photo of a compesino in which one only sees a hat, an arm and hands clutching a book. Brandon Tarpley did the cover design and Maris L. Hayashi is credited with the journal layout.

In Tracy’s Editor’s Introduction he raised two proverbial questions: “Do we really need another journal devoted to media studies?” and “How can such realistically compete with Journal such-and-such published and distributed by a major house?” His answer is that

in North America especially there are almost no organizations and very few periodicals dedicated to the political economy-oriented research UDC has sought to advance for almost thirty years. This condition has profound implications for what approaches are deemed legitimate for studying the media and thus for how academic inquiry concerning media is shaped.¹⁸

The issue contains four compelling articles including a revised transcript by Norman Solomon, “The Military-Media-Industrial Complex,” based on his address to the UDC at the 2006 conference, and four book reviews. With this issue the journal became regularly available via the UDC website <http://www.democraticcommunications.org> and where it is also possible to find earlier issues including some of the newsletters discussed above (the earliest being Vol. 6, Winter 1987/1988). The UDC had lost its www.udc.org domain name when it was not renewed and claimed by another organization. Ebscohost also includes full-texts available online from 2007-2009. Mailing of hard copies of the issue to registered UDCers continued through the College of Communications at Penn State throughout the U.S., and later by Brian Murphy at Niagara University for Canadian members during this period.

The cost of publishing a hard copy as well as the likely loss of support for mailing the issues at Penn State initiated a discussion of turning the *Communiqué* into a peer-reviewed electronic journal. The Steering Committee exchanged a large quantity of emails and discussions during conference calls concerning the transition. Largely to the efforts of Jim Tracy, Maris Hayashi, and Joanne Parandjuk (all of Florida Atlantic University) using the Florida

Online Journals System Volume 24 Number 1, 2011 became the open access issue published electronically. The Union for Democratic Communications maintains its copyright through the Creative Commons licensing system. The electronic editions are accessible through the re-vamped UDC website. Additionally, a Union for Democratic Communications Newsletter, edited by John Sullivan, first appeared in January 2012. It provides news and notes concerning the UDC. The shift from print to the web increased accessibility and the profile while lowering costs.

Key Debates:

It is important to remember both the informal beginnings of the *Democratic Communiqué* as well as the historical dearth of dedicated academic outlets for work in political economy. These two background facts help contextualize the historical and contemporary developments of the work of both UDC and the *Communiqué*. One of the key debates within the *Communiqué* has taken place perhaps more as a subtext than an overt discussion. Differences in theory were not as salient as differences in direction or perspective. As Vincent Mosco noted regarding a 1981 meeting of the UDC: “We had our differences of view over the balance between academic and non-academic involvements, between an emphasis on broadly political economic work and other kinds of work—cultural, labor-oriented work. But we managed to hold together.”¹⁹

We can see this continuing tension throughout this historical review of the *Communiqué*. At the same time, the efforts to connect scholarly work with activism and media makers has by-and-large been successful, especially in the early versions of the newsletter promoting alternative media, other progressive conferences, and activists projects. The effort to connect the UDC with the New World Information and Communication Order included discussion about the UDC becoming a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) in order to participate in UNESCO debates, as well as links to the Communication, Culture and Environment movement. The conference programs indicate the continuous presence of media makers and activists. At the same time the UDC has helped young scholars grow within the academy. With the evolution from a newsletter to a peer-reviewed journal it continues to be a central outlet for developing the political economy of communications and its theoretical underpinnings. Indeed, the UDC and *Communiqué* became a welcome, and much needed, home for radical scholars and scholarship.

Due to the nature of political economic work and the prevalence with which it is ostracized within the academy, large-scale academic debates have generally taken place outside of the *Communiqué*. In purely professional terms, the cohort of political economists is fairly tight-knit and faces similar challenges in academic tenure processes that undervalue critical work in political economy. In this context, the *Communiqué* has generally debated more with other journals and disciplines, for example the direction of cultural studies as articulated by McChesney above. The Spring 2008 issue of the *Democratic Communiqué* included an article from Stephen Marmura connecting Habermas’s concepts of system, lifeworld, and

colonization to an analysis of surveillance in mass culture. This article does not directly engage arguments to be found in the *Communiqué* but rather addresses larger concerns in political economy as to theoretical heterogeneity. As an attempt to reframe the field of political economy—or perhaps provide an alternate path for its study—this article can be seen an engaging in a long-term debate over political economy and how to apply various perspectives to the field. Internecine debates within the political economic ranks have certainly occurred, yet have not traditionally taken place within the confines of the *Communiqué*.

The *Communiqué* reflects an ongoing emphasis on class analysis but has explicitly sought to integrate work that focuses on gender and race. Other works draw on critical legal studies, theory, empirical approaches to social problems (though not mainstream empiricism of the Dominant Paradigm, primarily social behavioral and cognitive effects research) and historical/archival studies. Despite the primary focus of political economy there have been a few recent overtures attempting to bridge the traditional divide between political economy and cultural studies. For example, the Spring 2009 edition contains an article by David W. Park suggesting that Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus* can be a fruitful theoretical approach for considering political economic issues. Graham Murdock had done the same in a chapter in *Rethinking Communication* on audience activity, in which he placed the economic determinants in the first, rather than last instance, and uses Bourdieu to link cultural capital to class.²⁰ Thus, while cultural studies have been a problematic in the *Communiqué*, there have been some shifts that are making cross-border work more common.

The history of the *Communiqué* also highlights on-going problems in the UDC itself. One of these has been a consistent need for UDC members and other scholars to submit quality material, especially now with the higher standards required by peer-review. Despite its long history, it is not always the first choice for submissions as scholars seek publication in the journals of the mainstream communications organizations with higher visibility and marketing power (and therefore greater weight with promotion and tenure committees). At Penn State UDCers worked hard to gain the same recognition as these other outlets by educating the administration and colleagues. Such efforts are required at institutions where UDC members are active. A second issue raised above concerns the essential role of conferences or whether that is what the UDC is primarily organized around. Conferences are indeed central to the UDC. They are a site for strengthening old ties and establishing new ones. Eileen Meehan referred to the “UDC family” in the acknowledgements in her book *Why TV is Not Our Fault*.²¹ Ronald Bettig likens UDC conferences to his experiences of the church camps of his youth. They re-energize UDC members to carry on the struggle for social justice and peace.

The conferences provide the opportunity for the UDC to maintain its commitment to bringing together activist scholars, progressive activists and media producers. We learn much from each other. Additionally, the UDC is an excellent starting point for graduate students and beginning scholars as the atmosphere is encouraging and supportive. Many current and former members give credit to the organization as one of their key entry points into the academy and finding their site in the struggle. A recurrent problem however, is finding conference hosts. Organizing and finding funding to host a conference takes a tremendous

amount of effort. Although the UDC provides some financial support, much of it comes from the institution serving as host. This means dealing with administrators that do not see the value in the opportunity to host a UDC conference. The need for a site is compounded by the relative youth of UDC members in their academic careers. A UDC host committee requires members with enough academic capital to dedicate their time, recruit graduate student helpers, and clout with administration. For many years finding a host required much arm-twisting, guilt-tripping, and begging on the part of Steering Committee members. Yet the experience of hosting a UDC conference is extremely rewarding.

Maintaining membership rolls also involves much work, especially getting UDCers to pay their annual dues and retaining participants in conferences. The membership coordinator of the Steering Committee plays an essential role. Again, there is much interest in the UDC as indicated by the number of listserv subscribers. Getting them to join and attend conferences is another matter. The Steering Committee is dedicated to recruitment by holding meetings at other conferences, distributing literature and talking-up the UDC. This effort should be taken up by all members. The website makes it easier to point prospective members in this direction. The role of the Steering Committee coordinator is also essential and takes much time in organizing conference calls, setting agendas, and assigning duties. It takes true commitment. It is also important that there be some relative experience with the UDC for the Steering Committee. Institutional memory and history can help the committee avoid re-current problems. At the same time, new members bring fresh ideas and energy to the committee but it requires dedication and commitment. The conference at Florida State University marks thirty years since the first national conference was held. As James Carey often stated, human beings live in and through communication. Hence there always will be a role for the Union for Democratic Communication to make sure living as such is done in an equitable, just, and practical manner with the ultimate goal of the realization of our full human potential.

Appendix A
UNION FOR DEMOCRATIC COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS

Life Time Achievement Award

Herbert I. Schiller (1990)

Dallas Smythe Award

Santiago Alvarez (1993)

Thomas Guback (1996)

Oscar Gandy (1998)

Eileen Meehan (1999)

Janet Wasko (2001)

Edward Herman (2002)

Vincent Mosco (2004)

Manjunath Pendakur (2005)

Dee Dee Halleck (2007)

Peter Philips (2009)

Robert McChesney (2010)

John Downing (2012)

Yuezhi Zhao (2013)

Appendix B

UNION FOR DEMOCRATIC COMMUNICATIONS CONFERENCES

First National Conference and Meeting of the Union for Democratic Communications, Philadelphia, PA, April 1981.

Second National Conference and Meeting of the Union for Democratic Communications, “Communications and Empowerment,” Chevy Chase, MD, October 19-21, 1984.

Third Biennial Union for Democratic Communications National Conference, California State University, Los Angeles, February 27-March 1, 1987.

Union for Democratic Communications, “Communications, Culture, Socialism,” Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, April 29-May 1, 1988.

1989 Conference and Annual Meeting of the Union for Democratic Communications, “Grassroots Communications,” Hunter and Marymount Colleges, New York, NY, October 26-29, 1989.

1990 Annual Conference of the Union for Democratic Communications, “World Information Order: Initiatives for Cultural Autonomy,” University of California, San Diego, October 11-14, 1990.

Union for Democratic Communications Conference, “Feminism(s) and Cultural Resistance in the Americas,” Trent University, Peterborough, Canada, May 1992.

Union for Democratic Communications Conference, “Media, Culture and Popular Hegemony; A Pan American Dialogue,” International School of Film & Video, San Antonio, Cuba, December 2-6, 1993.

Union for Democratic Communications Conference, “Communication Issues for the 21st Century: Revisiting Social Responsibility in a Multicultural Society, University of Texas, Austin, March 30-April 2, 1995.

Union for Democratic Communications Conference, “What’s Left? Critical Communications in the Belly of the Corporate Beast,” Loyola University Lakeshore Campus, Chicago, IL, October 10-13, 1996.

1998 National Conference Union for Democratic Communications, “Media, Democracy and the Public Sphere,” University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, June 11-14, 1998.

Union for Democratic Communications Conference, “Communication, Culture, and Environments,” University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, 1999.

20th Anniversary Conference of the Union for Democratic Communications, “Democratic Communications in a Branded World,” Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, May 17-19,

2001.

Union for Democratic Communications Conference 2002, "Democratic Communications and Global Justice," The Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA, October 10-13, 2002.

Union for Democratic Communications Conference, "Axis of Empire," Southern Illinois University, St. Louis, MO, April 22-25, 2004.

Union for Democratic Communications Conference, "Against the Neoliberal Tide," Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL, November 3-5, 2005.

Union for Democratic Communications Conference, "Enclosure, Emancipatory Communication and the Global City," Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, BC, October 24-27, 2007.

Union for Democratic Communications Conference, "Aftermath and Renewal: The New Age of Resistance" Buffalo State/Niagara University, Buffalo, NY, May 27-29, 2009.

Union for Democratic Communications Conference, "Democratic Communications, Equal Rights and Social Justice," The Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA, October 11, 2010.

An International Conference of the UDC, "Climates of Change: Democracy Movements, Media, and Global Environments," Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL, May 10-12, 2010.

Notes

1. James F. Tracy, "On Mosco Street: An Interview with Vincent Mosco," *Democratic Communiqué* 20, no. 1 (2006).
2. "A Note of Thanks," *Democratic Communiqué* 5, no. 5 (1986).
3. Tracy, "On Mosco Street: An Interview with Vincent Mosco," 2.
4. Janet Wasko, Correspondence, 2 February 2012.
5. In-text citations from *The Democratic Communiqué* in this essay and notes follow the format in which they appeared in the publication.
6. "Independent Producers and Documentary Crisis," *Democratic Communiqué* 1(1985).
7. Fred Fejes, "Midwest Regional Convenes in Madison," *Democratic Communiqué* V, no. 1 (1986).
8. Colleen Roach, "A Movement for a New World Information Order," *Democratic Communiqué* IX, no. 2 (1990).
9. Jon Bekken, "From The Editor," *Democratic Communiqué* X, no. 1 (1992).

10. Marc Raboy, "Imagining New Goals and Objectives for the Millenium," *Democratic Communiqué* X, no. 1 (1992).
11. Jon Bekken, "From the Editor," *Democratic Communiqué* X, no. 3 (1992).
12. Robert McChesney, "Is There Any Hope for Cultural Studies," *Democratic Communiqué* XIV, no. 2 (1996).
13. *Ibid.*, 16.
14. Eileen R. Meehan, "Between Political Economy and Cultural Studies: Towards a Refinement of American Critical Communication Research," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, no. 3 (1986); A. O'Connor, "The Problem of American Cultural Studies," *Critical studies in mass communication* 6, no. 4 (1989); Mike Budd and Clay Steinman, "Television, Cultural Studies, and the 'Blind Spot' Debate in Critical Communications Research," in *Television studies : textual analysis*, ed. Gary Burns and Robert J. Thompson (New York: Praeger, 1989).;
15. James Wittebols, *The Democratic Communiqué Newsletter* December, 2001(2001).
16. Ronald V. Bettig had a conference paper rejected by one of the mainstream communications organizations with the reviewer, who most likely did not even read the work, rejecting it on the grounds that "Marxist research is irrelevant with the dissolution of the Soviet Union." The Speech Communication Association could not decide in which division to place his submission on "Critical Perspectives on the History and Philosophy of Copyright;" whether the Qualitative Studies division or the Communications Philosophy division. It eventually published the essay as a lead article in a themed issue of the SCA journal on the public domain: R. V. Bettig, "Critical Perspectives on the History and Philosophy of Copyright," *Critical studies in mass communication* 9, no. 2 (1992).
17. The Editorial Advisory Board includes Robin Andersen (Fordham University), Lee Artz (Purdue University, Calumet), Ronald Bettig (Pennsylvania State University), Bonnie Brennen (Temple University), Mike Budd (Florida Atlantic University), John D. H. Downing (Southern Illinois University), Oscar H. Gandy, Jr. (University of Pennsylvania), Robert A. Hackett (Simon Fraser University, Canada), Dee Dee Halleck (Independent film and video artist), Hanno Hardt (University of Ljubljana, Sovenia), Eileen R. Meehan (Louisiana State University), Robert W. McChesney (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Catherine McKercher (Carleton University, Canada), Vincent Mosco (Queen's University, Canada), Manjunath Pendakur (Southern Illinois University), Norman Solomon (Independent journalist and author), Gerald Sussmann (Portland State University), Janet Wasko (University of Oregon), and James H. Wittebols (University of Windsor, Canada).
18. James F. Tracy, "Editor's Introduction," *Democratic Communiqué* 21, no. 1 (2007).
19. Tracy, "On Mosco Street: An Interview with Vincent Mosco," 2.
20. Graham Murdock, "Critical Inquiry and Audience Activity," in *Rethinking Communication*, ed. Brenda Dervin (Newbury Park, Calif.: SAGE publications ; Published in cooperation with the International Communication Association, 1989).

21. Eileen R. Meehan, *Why TV is not our fault : television programming, viewers, and who's really in control*, Critical media studies (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

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- . "From the Editor." *Democratic Communiqué* X, no. 3 (Winter 1992): 2.
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- Raboy, Marc. "Imagining New Goals and Objectives for the Millenium." *Democratic Communiqué* X, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 11.
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- . "On Mosco Street: An Interview with Vincent Mosco." *Democratic Communiqué* 20, no. 1 (2006): 1-16.
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