The Development of Applied Communication Research

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Applied communication research is a concept that emanated from the “speech” tradition in the communication discipline. Scholars working from the “journalism” tradition saw no need for such a concept because they assumed that all of their research necessarily had “applied” value. On the speech side of communication, the idea of doing “applied” research was a revolutionary one, a reaction in revolutionary times to what some saw as a hidebound conflict over control of the theoretical and methodological heart of the discipline. Indeed, the idea of “applied” took many forms and became a covering term for a number of research and professional agendas.

In this chapter, we trace the development of the concept of applied communication research primarily from a political and institutional standpoint. As this handbook illustrates, the terms applied communication and applied communication research have come to describe a number of strands of scholarship and to serve a variety of purposes. Any attempt to trace more fully the historical development and emergence of all of the various strands of scholarship; to provide details about the contents of the Journal of Applied Communication Research and other applied publications; to identify all significant applied communication scholars, teachers, and practitioners; to discuss the applied communication units of the various professional communication associations; or to compare various courses or curricula in applied communication, although undoubtedly worthy projects, is beyond the scope of—and the space allotted to—our chapter. Instead, this essay is informed not only by our research into the development of applied communication but also by our unique involvement in that process over more than 3 decades, including, especially, our perspectives as the first three primary editors of the Journal of Applied Communication Research (Hickson, 1973–1980; Cissna, 1981–1986; Eadie, 1990–1992).

We begin by delving into the evolution of the communication discipline to understand how the concept of “applied communication research” became a natural solution for a number of political tensions. Consequently, we start by reviewing how a group of teachers and scholars came to form the discipline, describe the struggles that early writers faced in defining the discipline and its scholarship, and show how the concept of research that could be called “applied” burst into consciousness in 1968. We continue by showing how the early development of the Journal of Applied Communications Research (JACR) capitalized on a newly found enthusiasm for doing socially relevant work, how the Applied Communication Section of the National Communication Association (NCA) aided the acceptance of the word applied, and how the purchase of JACR by NCA set the stage for “applied communication research” to mature.
Issues Influencing the Development of Applied Communication Research

Since the founding of the communication discipline, the field has coped frequently and repeatedly with four interrelated issues. These issues set a political agenda for the development of the communication discipline.

The first issue concerns the discipline’s search for respectability within the academy. Like many other “new” disciplines, communication scholars struggled for respectability in both academic and public circles. In fact, the need to establish a separate academic unit in communication was driven largely by a desire to develop respectability within the university as teachers rather than as scholars. Founding a distinctive discipline was seen as a means by which communication scholars could gain some importance and not be dominated by former colleagues, mostly in English departments.

The second issue was the desire to build a research-based body of knowledge about communication. The belief that communication is both an important activity and a significant area of study has roots in the earliest philosophical writings of a variety of cultures. Attempts to describe what constitutes effective communication and the impact of such communication have survived from early writings as cultural knowledge, and basic courses in public speaking still rely to a great extent on teaching that received cultural knowledge rather than on a body of contemporary knowledge built from systematic research. Many successful attempts have been made to validate that cultural knowledge, however, and from those attempts, new knowledge and theory have been generated. Efforts to move beyond those basic principles to produce sophisticated understandings of message production and effects, the social and cultural generation of meaning, and the impact of communication technology have led to a growing body of specific knowledge. The extent to which this knowledge is distinguished from knowledge claims made by other disciplines sometimes is uncertain, however, and difficulty in making those distinctions has kept communication scholars from achieving the recognition that scholars from other disciplines have received.

The third issue involves the need to generate knowledge that contributes to solving social problems. Although communication scholarship has always exhibited a rather practical bent, often it has been directed more toward improving pedagogy than toward solving social problems. Furthermore, the scholarship of the field can be criticized as somewhat parochial, being created primarily for one’s colleagues and students. In recent years, however, applied communication research efforts have been directed specifically toward the solution of social problems.

The fourth issue concerns the need to insure that the public is aware of and uses communication-based knowledge. Communication professors have succeeded in convincing their university colleagues that communication skills are essential to effective citizenship and to success in everyday life. As a consequence, some form of communication study is required of many, if not most, university students in North America. The rising popularity of communication as an academic major in the United States also has produced a pool of graduates who have begun to make their mark on corporate and societal institutions. As more and more students have become exposed to communication principles, often via engaging, highly effective teaching, the communication discipline is starting to be seen as an ordinary part of university education, and communication students increasingly are looked on as having the ability to contribute to organizational and societal life from unique perspectives. Still, to date, the discipline has produced no scholar whose work instantly comes to mind when educated people think of the study of communication. We have, however, a cadre of commentators who appear on the national scene as critics and analysts of various communication events, and these scholar–teachers have
made the public, policy makers, and scholars from other disciplines aware of the insights that communication research can provide in understanding and managing problematic situations.

Although communication has been understood from its earliest academic roots as a “practical discipline” (see Craig, 1989; see also Barge & Craig, this volume), academics in communication needed to be convinced that research, other than investigations into how to improve instruction, was necessary. In the earliest statement about the need for research in communication, James A. Winans (1915) wrote:

I hold that by the scholarship which is the product of research the standing of our work in the academic world will be improved. It will make us orthodox. Research is the standard way into the sheepfold.

We have lacked scholarship. We complain of prejudice and unjust discrimination, and we have grounds; but we had best face the truth. In the long run men pass for what they are. We have lacked scientific foundation for our special work. (p. 17)

Winans had to work hard to gain acceptance for his point of view. The result of his efforts was that many members of the communication discipline came to view research and theory building as necessary evils for academic respectability. Eventually, however, efforts to promote research within the discipline were successful enough that by the middle of the 20th century, a small body of theory began to emerge. Efforts to build theory and conduct research were spurred on by successes in researching communication disorders and in a burgeoning interest in media effects and propaganda. Interest in the study of communication (e.g., persuasion, group dynamics, and interpersonal relations) by scholars in other disciplines also began to influence the culture of the field. Eventually, the development of a more rigorous research culture in the field, along with a growing consciousness of the necessity for social relevance, birthed the notion that communication research could concern “applied” matters without threatening the discipline’s potential standing in the academy.

In the sections that follow, we outline how a research culture developed in the communication field, how discussions and conflicts eventually led to a call for socially responsible research, how the field reacted to that call, and how the term applied was used both to start a journal with a particular agenda and to label a unit in the field’s largest disciplinary society that had another agenda.

The Struggle for Disciplinary Identity and the (Sudden) Emergence of Applied Communication Research

We now take for granted that communication is a discipline whose scholarly understanding necessarily leads to application. That idea, however, has been axiomatic for a relatively brief period, fewer than 40 of the nearly 100 years since the establishment of a formal discipline of communication. Indeed, the founding of the discipline was driven primarily by a perceived need to separate from the field of English and to be seen as different from the discredited elocution movement (Gray, 1964). To gather information on how the idea of “applied communication research” emerged, we consulted the archives of the field’s journals, newsletters, and convention programs in an effort to gauge the concerns of the field’s leaders over time. We found that the concept responded at least as much to political disputes within the discipline as it did to scholarly ones.

It is entirely possible that parochial concerns, such as regional rivalries and jockeying for prestige within the academy, were as responsible as anything else for the formation in
1914 of the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking (NAATPS), the first name of the organization now known as NCA. James M. O’Neill, the first president of NAATPS, recalled in 1928 that the idea of a separate organization first was proposed in 1913 among a rump group of public speaking teachers who met following the conclusion of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) conference, itself a new organization founded only 2 years earlier in 1911. The group decided to mail a questionnaire to more than 100 members of the NCTE section for teachers of public speaking, with the results indicating wide support for a new organization (O’Neill, 1928). The sticking point was whether the new organization should be independent of or affiliated with NCTE, with the vote split about equally for each choice. After the NCTE section met again in 1914 without reaching a decision, 17 members of the section decided that they would break away and form their own organization (Cohen, 1994).

The founding group was interesting in at least three ways. First, its membership was entirely from colleges and universities, although the NCTE section contained a large number of high school teachers. Second, these 17 members hailed heavily from the Midwestern United States and overwhelmingly represented large state, often land-grant universities, such as the universities of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Third, the organization they formed was not the first organization devoted to public speaking. A separate organization, the Eastern Public Speaking Conference, was founded in 1910 at the initiative of Paul Pearson of Swarthmore College, and its first conference included members from many of the highly selective, private universities in the Mid-Atlantic states. Although this organization expanded to include national participation, convention attendance came primarily from the Northeast, including from such Ivy League institutions as Columbia, Cornell, Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, and Yale. Winans of Cornell and Irvah L. Winter of Harvard, 2 of the 17 founders of NAATPS, also were among the founding members of the Eastern conference, but once NAATPS became established, the Eastern conference lost some of its appeal. Eventually, public speaking as a field of study disappeared at most of the institutions that had formed the Eastern Public Speaking Conference (Cohen, 1994), and the organization took on a regional identity as the Eastern Speech Association, now called the Eastern Communication Association (ECA).

The new national association needed members, so it opened its doors as widely as the founders felt was comfortable. It welcomed not only those who taught public speaking at any level of education but also those academics who developed students’ or clients’ vocal abilities; those who worked to correct speech disorders, such as stuttering; and those who taught dramatic performance.

A year after voting to establish the association, the group launched a journal, the Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking. In its initial issue, Winans (1915) published his frank assessment of the new field, a section of which was quoted previously. Winans found the new discipline to be lacking an intellectual core, and he called for research, which he contended was needed to provide some empirical basis regarding the superiority of particular teaching practices and to resolve philosophical differences. Although Winans’s call led to the establishment of a Research Committee, whose work continued well into the 1950s, progress was slow. The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking functioned for many years more like a newsletter than what we now think of as a scholarly journal. It published position statements on the discipline, often ones originally delivered as speeches at the association’s annual meeting, and included quite a few contributions describing the structure of individual courses or curricula. The popular “News and Notes” column, with which contemporary readers of Spectra (NCA’s newsletter) are familiar, was published originally in this journal. Aside from an occasional attempt at building theory (most notably by Charles H. Woolbert [e.g., 1917] of the University of Illinois), the closest the
journal came in its early years to publishing what contemporary scholars call “research” was in the area of speech correction, primarily on stuttering.

This trend continued for many years, even after the association began publication in 1934 of *Speech Monographs* as an outlet for longer, more serious pieces of scholarship, as initially that journal was dominated by scholarship in what then was called “speech science.” Although this speech-science work could be termed “applied” in the sense that its results could be translated into clinical practice, its authors were at least equally concerned with developing theories of how the vocal mechanism worked and of the psychological and physical barriers that must be overcome to eliminate stuttering. Hence, the concept of “research” was slow in taking hold in the new discipline, whose members thought of themselves primarily as “teachers” rather than as “scholars.” If research itself was a problem, distinguishing “applied research” was superfluous.

Despite their differences, the founders of the new discipline had one overriding concern: to devise the best possible methods for teaching people to be effective public speakers. They assumed that people used this ability to make positive differences in their lives and in the lives of those around them, but that assumption, for the most part, was unstated and never tested. The term public speaking proved to be awkward as a name for a national organization, and, consequently, members of the association soon settled on speech as a covering term for their concerns. By 1918, the association changed its name to the National Association of Teachers of Speech (NATS), a name that persisted until 1946, and renamed its journal as the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, which is still its name today.

In a 1922 speech at the NATS annual convention and subsequently published in 1923, Woolbert attempted to define the discipline of speech. He distinguished between speech as an activity and speech as a discipline. He described the activity of speech as any face-to-face communication; thus, Woolbert defined the discipline of speech as “the study and practice of such data as speech the activity as helps the student and the practitioner to adjust himself to his environment and to be useful to his fellows” (p. 2). Woolbert (p. 3) characterized the domain of the discipline as including the study of (1) speaking and all forms of talk, including the rhetoric underlying speech; (2) oral reading and performance of the words of others; (3) production of sound through the vocal mechanism; and (4) speech science, a “body of significant and useful facts and principles” drawn primarily from the other three areas of the discipline and contributing to their development. The primary goal of this work, according to Woolbert, was to advance teaching. No one quarreled seriously with Woolbert’s definition of the discipline for many years.

Almost half a century later, in 1968, the idea that communication research should be focused on socially relevant concerns burst on the scene. The “burst” came in the form of an invited paper that one of the “Young Turks” of the field, Gary L. Cronkhite, presented to the New Orleans Conference on Research and Instructional Development, which was published in Kibler and Barker’s (1969) book-length report of that conference. The New Orleans Conference was highly influential, as it essentially recommended a major revision of Woolbert’s (1923) definition of the discipline and constituted a turning point in the development of the field. The conference advocated changing the covering term of the field from the then 60-year-old speech to speech-communication, which led to renaming the national association from the Speech Association of America (SAA) to the Speech Communication Association (SCA). Titling his paper “Out of the Ivory Palaces: A Proposal for Useful Research in Communication and Decision,” Cronkhite (1969) argued that communication scholars must do more to make the results of their research public and to assure that research addresses the “real communicative problems of a real society” (p. 115). Not only was the conference influential in the field but Cronkhite’s essay also
was influential within the conference, as the following 7 of the conference’s 27 recommendations dealt with social relevance:

RECOMMENDATION 9: The conferees encourage colleagues to accept the view that the central concern of the speech-communication area is with spoken symbolic interaction and is thus socially relevant.

RECOMMENDATION 10: The conference participants encourage speech-communication scholars to design and execute research dealing with the speech-communication dimensions of current social problems.

RECOMMENDATION 11: The conferees encourage speech-communication scholars to make every effort to apply the findings of their research to the solution of contemporary individual and social problems.

RECOMMENDATION 12: The conferees encourage scholars in the speech-communication area and where appropriate the Speech Association of America, to pursue representation of their positions at all levels of government.

RECOMMENDATION 13: The conferees encourage scholars in the speech-communication area to recognize their continuing obligation to expose what they consider to be instances of unethical communication.

RECOMMENDATION 14: The conferees vigorously encourage speech-communication scholars to include a broader cultural, geographical, and racial representation in our professional associations.

RECOMMENDATION 15: The conferees encourage speech-communication scholars to make a continuing effort to communicate pertinent content and research findings to the general public through appropriate channels. Such efforts should be accorded the respect and appreciation of the profession. (Kibler & Barker, 1969, pp. 24–27)

These recommendations provided a mandate for the discipline: Some (particularly 12, 14, and 15) quickly became part of the ongoing agenda for the national association, whereas others (9, 10, and 11) took longer to develop, and one (13) only recently has become a significant concern of the association’s leadership.

Cronkhite’s (1969) essay may have provided the catalyst for action, but some of its ingredients had been bubbling for quite some time prior to 1968. The earliest indicator probably was the formation of the National Society for the Study of Communication (NSSC). As Weaver (1977) recounted the story, Elwood Murray, a leading social-scientific scholar, contacted James McBurney, President of SAA, and asked him to arrange a time during the 1949 convention when a group of social scientists could discuss the formation of a group that would affiliate with SAA. That meeting led the next year to the formation of NSSC as a separate organization. NSSC was intended to be interdisciplinary and focused on producing social-scientific results that could be used outside of the laboratory. Many of the founding members were affiliated with industrial and governmental organizations. Over time, the influence of the nonacademics faded, and, perhaps not coincidentally, in 1968, NSSC revised its focus somewhat and renamed itself the International Communication Association (ICA).
Other trends also were important. In 1953, the Eastern Speech Association undertook the first of many efforts to popularize speech and communication research. The association founded a publication called *Today's Speech*, which was intended to be a general interest magazine; later, that magazine took on an exclusively scholarly mission and eventually became *Communication Quarterly*. In addition, SAA began publishing *Speech Teacher* (later *Communication Education*), with Ewbanks's (1952) essay in the inaugural issue calling for scholars to do socially relevant research. Furthermore, growing interest in intercultural communication, particularly in Black rhetoric and speech patterns (see Buck, 1968; Burgess, 1968; Gregg & McCormack, 1968; Nash, 1967; Smith, 1966), probably also contributed to the readiness of the discipline’s members to react positively to Cronkhite’s (1969) call.

The reaction to the recommendations of the New Orleans Conference and to Cronkhite’s (1969) essay urging the field toward greater social relevance was swift. At the 1968 SAA summer conference, a Committee on Social Responsibility in the Discipline was formed. This committee had several foci, including providing a forum for those who believed that SAA was not welcoming to people of color, in general, and African Americans, in particular. Evidence suggests that such contentions were correct: Jack Daniel (1995), an African-American member of the committee, recalled cowering in his hotel room at the 1968 SAA annual meeting after he and his wife were awakened by a group shouting racial epithets outside his door.

In addition, the next year, SAA’s summer conference, held in Chicago, was titled the “Conference on Social Engagement” (Roever, 1969), and drew 250 people, a large attendance for a summer gathering. Lyndrey Niles, of Federal City College, argued for the discipline spending more time studying the present rather than doing so much historical work. Thomas Pace, of Southern Illinois University, took the position that those teaching speech should undertake in situ research in their communities, escaping both the dingy library basements and half-acre computer centers, a direct slap at the battle for theoretical and methodological dominance in the field that was raging between the more traditional rhetoricians and the generally younger quantitative social scientists. Perhaps the fact that the conference was held in Chicago, home of the uproarious 1968 Democratic National Convention the previous year, encouraged participants to press for change. The conference, as a whole, was devoted to encouraging members of the association to engage actively in their communities, and such engagement itself provided fodder for a type of research suited to the times. The conference report was mimeographed and made available to the members of the organization, but little else was heard of the conference.

Still, the winds of change in the communication field were blowing at gale force from 1968 to 1970. SAA wrote a new constitution and changed its name to the Speech Communication Association (SCA), the Committee on Social Responsibility spawned the Black Caucus, and intercultural communication became a theme of the 1970 annual meeting under First Vice President William Howell.

Changes were afoot in the country as well. The civil rights movement was in full swing, anti-Vietnam War protests had become significant, and the women’s liberation and gay liberation movements were underway. Clearly, an underlying change in societal values occurred in rather short order, with many students and faculty on college and university campuses fervently engaged in the quest for relevance. For many, relevance meant that what students were learning should have some pragmatic application in contexts outside the university, whether personal or professional.

Others in the field, however, counseled a more measured approach to change, including Marie Hochmuth Nichols in her 1969 presidential address to the SAA convention, which she provocatively titled “The Tyranny of Relevance.” Blankenship (2001) reported...
that a number of SAA members, including more than one former president, attended the speech in order to walk out of it in protest. Thus, the excitement about a call to conduct socially relevant research amidst a time of change became the backdrop for founding the first publication of the communication field that used the word *applied* in its title.

### The Institutionalization of Applied Communication Research

In 1971, Mark Hickson, III completed his doctoral dissertation at Southern Illinois University, codirected by Thomas Pace, who was one of the key participants in the 1969 SAA summer conference. Hickson’s dissertation employed participant observation to analyze a community action agency. Two weeks after graduation, Hickson was conscripted into the U.S. Army, where he was assigned to desk duty at the Pentagon. Concerned with maintaining his viability as a university professor during his military service, he submitted several papers to conventions and journals during that first year. Although a number of his submissions were accepted for presentation at conventions, the journal submissions were another story. As with many young professors (privates, too), he became frustrated with the process.

Hickson met Don Stacks while both were working at the Pentagon, and they worked together on various military publications, eventually becoming frequent research collaborators. Both had relatively practical approaches to the communication discipline and were members of the Metropolitan Washington Speech Communication Association, where they interacted with Niles, Patti Gillespie, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Andrew and Darlyn Wolvin, Jerry Hendrix, Joanne Yamauchi, and others, including Ray Falcione, who was very interested in the emerging area of organizational communication.

Hickson attended the 1972 ICA convention in Atlanta, where he participated in a multiple-day event designed to begin construction of the first communication audit program, which sought to provide organizations with reliable data about their internal communication that could be compared with other organizations. This program attracted so many participants that the paper presentations had to be abbreviated to allow time for them all. At the conclusion of those sessions, Gerald Goldhaber (see 1993), from the State University of New York at Buffalo, assumed responsibility for continuing the audit project, with Howard Greenbaum, who was at Motor Parts Industries, as the cochair. For Hickson, the audit project confirmed that the communication discipline had social relevance and could provide information that could be meaningful outside the halls of academia.

For some months, Hickson and Stacks discussed the absence of publication outlets within the communication field for ethnographic and participant–observational studies and for applied research, and the possibility of creating a new journal to fill this gap. They had access to an MT/ST (magnetic tape/Selectric typewriter), which allowed them to edit on the machine and set type without utilizing a printer. Through this low-budget approach, they thought they could produce a journal that sold for $4.00 per year for two issues. Besides, they reasoned, not entirely tongue-in-cheek, if they owned it, they could publish in it. Within a year, while both still worked at the Pentagon, Hickson and Stacks founded the *Journal of Applied Communications Research*.

Although they had some initial funding, subscriptions were necessary to keep the journal afloat; consequently, they began soliciting manuscripts, editorial board members, and subscriptions, utilizing Hickson’s personal contacts, as well as SCA’s *Spectra* and ICA’s *Newsletter*. Initially, they were more successful in securing library subscriptions than individual subscribers, with hundreds of libraries purchasing the journal. Occasionally, they sent copies gratis to libraries, hoping that after a library had three issues on hand, it would continue with a subscription, and sometimes that worked. After the third issue,
Winter–Spring 1974, both Hickson and Stacks left the Army: Stacks went on to complete his doctoral work; Hickson returned to Mississippi State University where he had taught for a year prior to serving in the Army. Although Stacks continued to be involved in supporting the journal, he no longer contributed physically to typing the pages, and most of the responsibility fell to Hickson as editor. Initially, Mississippi State University provided facilities for the journal through the campus newspaper office, and after 2 years, the Office of Graduate Studies and Research contributed some monetary support.

JACR, however, was not the only applied project underway in the evolving communication field. Hickson and Greenbaum cochaired the organizational communication abstracts project, the purpose of which was to create a single place where all of the information on organizational communication from various disciplines could be found in one index. Although contemporary studies of organizational communication were not concerned typically with social problems, the “field-study” nature of much of that research led a number of communication scholars to assume that organizational communication research inherently was “applied.” The organizational communication abstract project began with a volume by Greenbaum and Falcione (1975) and was published annually through the auspices of the American Business Communication Association and the ICA, and, later, Sage Publications, until it was discontinued after the 1985 volume. During that period, the index moved from an 87-page paperback to a hardback text of 384 pages.

The area of organizational communication developed largely along two lines. One line was founded at Michigan State University and concerned the analysis of communication structures in organizations (e.g., Rogers & Farace, 1975; Rudolph, 1973). The other approach focused on interpersonal relationships within organizations and resulted from the work of Charles Redding at Purdue University. Redding had been one of the founders of ICA, and he had ties to several of its nonacademic founders. In those days, ICA was the only professional association in communication with a division devoted to organizational communication research; SCA’s interest group structure included a unit titled “Business and Professional Speaking.” The ICA communication audit project was perhaps the last large-scale effort by that organization to promote close cooperation between academics and nonacademics. The project generated considerable enthusiasm initially, and a certification process was created to train ICA members as auditors. The audit process proved to be comprehensive but more costly and time-consuming than most organizations were willing to tolerate. As a result, it attracted little corporate support and operated on a limited budget, provided primarily by ICA’s Organizational Communication Division (Goldhaber, 1993). Once the division and ICA Board of Directors decided to abandon the project in 1978, all of the procedures and measures became public property, with individual researchers being allowed to use them freely, as long as the ICA name was not invoked.

From the outset, however, Hickson and Stacks thought that JACR could not and should not be limited to organizational communication. They believed that articles for the journal should (1) address significant social issues and (2) utilize data (or capta, that which is taken from experience) collected in an environment other than the university. In fact, in JACR’s first issue, only one article concerned organizational communication; the others dealt with political communication (Gonchar & Hahn, 1973) and documentary broadcasting (Flannery, 1973), along with Hickson’s (1973) opening essay. As the journal developed, it focused attention on context to analyze the unique qualities of the types of places where communication occurred, with, for example, early articles on health communication (Ayres, Brand, & Faules, 1973), marketing (King, 1974), marital communication (Feldman & Jorgensen, 1974), intercultural communication (Peterson, 1975),
and child rearing (Blumenfeld, 1976). The approaches used in these articles varied from fieldwork and participant observation to theoretical to criticism to experimental. In 1975, Hickson published what became the first of many special issues, symposia, and forums in *JACR*, with a brief symposium on organizational communication, featuring short contributions by Greenbaum, Falcione, and Goldhaber that originally were presented at the 1975 ECA convention.

Situated research also was showing up occasionally in other journals, due primarily to a few communication scholars’ interests in qualitative methods, in general, and ethnography, in particular. Gerry Philipsen’s (1975) article, “Speaking ‘Like a Man’ in Tempestville,” elaborated on human interaction within a specific subculture (a blue-collar, low-income neighborhood on the south side of Chicago) and was the precursor to much of the ethnographic work that was undertaken later by a wide range of scholars, including Dwight Conquergood (e.g., 1988, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1994, 1995), whose theoretical, methodological, and ethnographic scholarship transformed performance studies and contributed to critical ethnographic and social justice orientations to applied communication as well (see also Ellingson, this volume; Frey & SunWolf, this volume). Similarly, Robert Nofsinger’s (1975) article, “The Demand Ticket: A Conversational Device for Getting the Floor,” led the way for the use of various methodological approaches to the study of conversation/discourse, which also later influenced applied communication research (see Tracy & Mirivel, this volume).

The idea of applied communication was making itself manifest in the professional communication associations as well, although initially, at least, for different reasons than was the case in the scholarly journals. In the mid-1970s, SCA revised its interest group structure to include divisions (units, such as Rhetorical and Communication Theory, that represented major areas of study); commissions (units, such as Freedom of Expression, that represented secondary or emerging areas of study); sections (units, such as the Community College Section, that represented members by their institutional affiliations); and caucuses (units, such as the Black Caucus, that provided institutional homes for the concerns and political agendas of “underrepresented” groups within SCA). Through the efforts of Jane Work, a Vice President of the National Association of Manufacturers (and wife of SCA’s Executive Secretary William Work) and Darrell Piersol, an executive with International Business Machines (IBM), the sections included one titled “Applied Communication.” From the beginning, that section had something of a multiple identity: Although it was intended to provide a home for nonacademic members of SCA, it also functioned as a place for academics who were interested in consulting and as an outlet for presenting applied communication research.4

This dual, multiple identity of the Applied Communication Section (APCOM) was reflected at the 1977 SCA convention in Washington, DC, the first to include programs sponsored by the new section. The section sponsored only two programs that year: a business meeting for interested individuals and a scholarly panel titled “Applied Communication: Four Meta Papers,” featuring scholars Redding, John Wiemann and David Schuelke, Larry Browning, and Michael Burgoon presenting position papers about their conceptions of applied communication research. Described as the “debut” program for the new section and chaired by Lillian Davis of IBM, the abstract of the panel published in the convention program indicated that the panel was “designed to establish the perspective and goals for future programs on this topic” (Speech Communication Association, 1977, p. 56).

The first official “directory” of participants in the Applied Communication Section was published in the first issue of the *APCOM Newsletter*, which followed the 1977 convention.5 APCOM’s “Mission Statement” described its purposes as “to provide a forum
for the discussion, study, and analysis of issues pertaining to the application of communication principles to communication problems in government/business/industrial organizations” (Applied Communication Section, n.d.). In addition, the newsletter sought to provide opportunities for academics and communication specialists in those organizations to talk and work together.

Early leaders of the section included Davis, who served as the first chairperson of that section, and Jane Work, who served as the second chairperson. These two nonacademics were followed in the position of section chair by Browning, a University of Texas organizational communication scholar who also was an active organizational consultant, and by Andrew Wolvin, University of Maryland, a listening scholar who had significant interests in training. To some degree, the new unit did provide a home for nonacademics, as the first group of APCOM participants included members affiliated with, among others, Blue Cross-Blue Shield, the U.S. Air Force, Caterpillar Tractor Company, the Salvation Army, and the National 4-H Council.

The 1978 SCA convention saw nine programs sponsored by APCOM, including a business meeting and a “continental breakfast and idea exchange” on applied communication, as well as panels on program evaluation and intervention strategies, supervisory communication (with equal representation of practitioners and academics), communication and learning in business, the role of the applied communication consultant, the physician–patient relationship as a model for organizational consulting, and one on communication problems in academia, cosponsored with the Association for Communication Administration. The most memorable, and controversial, program concerned “Certifying the Communication Specialist.” Chaired by William Eadie, the program involved short presentations by several academics, followed by responses from several practitioners. The most notable presentation came from Davis, one of the respondent–practitioners, who told the large crowd in no uncertain terms that SCA should not become involved in certifying practitioners. After that program, the issue was dropped and has not been considered seriously since then.

The regional communication associations also were beginning to demonstrate an interest in the idea of “applied communication.” The Eastern Speech Association created a section in 1976 with Gerald Phillips (Pennsylvania State University) as its first chairperson (for whom NCA later named its award for distinguished applied communication scholarship) and Donna Sacket of Prudential Life Insurance as vice chairperson (Wolvin, n.d.). In 1979, the Southern Speech Communication Association (SSCA) had its first programs on applied communication—a panel chaired by Hickson and cosponsored by the Communication Theory and Speech Education divisions on “Communication Applications,” and another program consisting of five papers on “Applied Communication Research” sponsored by association Vice President Carl Kell. Two years later, the Communication Theory Division, again, sponsored an applied communication panel, titled “Applied Communication Research, 1981,” also chaired by Hickson. (Interestingly, the call for papers for that SSCA program appeared in the November 1979 issue of JACR; p. 134.) In 1982, an Applied Communication Caucus was listed as a sponsor of panels, and in 1985, the Applied Communication Division was founded officially, with Deborah Weider-Hatfield as its first chair and Karl Krayer as vice chair. Neither of the other regional communication associations, Western or Central, ever formed an applied unit, although both now house applied work within other interest groups.

By 1980, SCA’s Applied Communication Section had grown to 478 members (Faules, Kline, Parrella, Work, & Rudolph, 1981), and JACR had been published for 7 years. In 1980, Hickson ran a brief advertisement in SCA’s Spectra, titled “Journal for Sale,” hoping that someone would relieve him of the responsibility of producing the journal and
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assuring that the journal continued. The advertisement caught the attention of several communication faculty members at the University of South Florida (USF).

The Development of the Journal and the Section

The Department of Communication at USF had a regionally known and respected master’s program. Its faculty included John Sisco (department chair), Jon Keith Jensen, David Carter, and Kenneth Cissna (who had joined the department in 1979). The faculty believed that publishing a journal, even a small and fledgling one, might improve the department and publicize its efforts, and the journal’s focus on applied communication seemed consistent with the department’s emphases. Thinking back on those times, Carter wrote that acquiring the journal was “one of many means of enhancing the quality and recognition of our programs” and served to “establish a voice in the application of communication theories to ‘real-world’ issues of the day” (personal communication, December 9, 2004). Consequently, arrangements were made for USF to purchase JACR from Hickson, assuming the journal’s name, ownership of the copyright on the first eight volumes, and physical possession of the back issues, which the department at USF hoped might be sold. Jensen became its first editor, with Cissna serving as coeditor, a term that presumably provided some undefined status. Michael Lewis was named book review editor; Nancy Newell Taylor served as business manager; and Carter, Sisco, and Bryan Burgess of USF’s General Counsel’s office completed the Publication Board. They dropped the “s” that Hickson had given to the word communication in the journal title, and, no doubt going unnoticed by many, slightly renamed it the Journal of Applied Communication Research, the name that has continued to the present.

Under Jensen’s direction, the team set about promoting the journal and producing its first issue under USF ownership. Jensen described his conception of applied communication and the journal this way:

To many, the phrase “applied communication” denotes the use of principles, procedures, methods, or techniques, in non-university settings. Hearing the phrase “applied communication,” some think of their consulting work, others of training people in specific skills, and others recall that study they read that didn’t occur on a campus, didn’t fit the formulas for an experiment, but made good sense and was interesting.

Of course, all of these may be applied communication; for any individual, any one may be. But as we begin our ambitious task of publishing a journal titled “Applied Communication Research,” we feel, as an editorial board, and I feel, as editor, a need to understand how each and all of the meanings we have for “Applied Communication” can coexist and all contribute to our understanding of what it means to “communicate.”

Although Hickson (1973) envisioned a journal of situation-specific, microlevel studies that used participant–observation methods, and was aimed at achieving social relevance, the focus shifted slightly at USF. The “Notice to Contributors” for the issues published at USF included this statement of publication policy: “The Journal of Applied Communication Research publishes articles focusing on questions and problems regarding pragmatic social phenomena addressed through the analysis of human communication.” Furthermore, it stated, “It is the intent of the Publication Board that the articles not be characterized by any particular context, methodology, epistemology, or conclusions.”
Having shaped the first USF issue of *JACR*, Jensen died unexpectedly the evening of July 8, 1981, without seeing the page proofs of that issue, which were waiting in his department mailbox to review the next day. Cissna became editor and Carter coeditor, but the focus of the journal remained unchanged and the same policy statement continued to appear.

The journal continued to face many of the same issues it experienced during Hickson’s ownership and editorship, including that the range of submissions was not nearly as broad as the conceptualization of applied communication research offered by the editor. The next year, Cissna used an “Editor’s Note” to explain his conception of applied communication research and to elaborate on the policy statement developed by Jensen and the initial Publication Board of the journal. Applied communication research, Cissna (1982b) wrote, “contributes to knowledge by answering a real, pragmatic, social question or by solving a real, pragmatic, social problem...through the analysis of human communication” (pp. iii–iv). Thus, applied communication was not considered to be isomorphic with organizational communication, although some applied communication is conducted in organizations and some organizational communication scholarship is applied. Applied communication research, Cissna maintained, did not require researchers to adopt or eschew any particular research methods, or to use or avoid using quantitative designs and statistical analysis.

Shortly thereafter, in an effort to enhance the stature of the journal, Cissna (1984) published acceptance and rejection statistics for the 4 years that USF had published *JACR*, showing that only 16% of unsolicited manuscripts had been published. Although this figure was down considerably from the early years of *JACR*, nearly half the published articles were “thematic” or “invited,” categories with higher rates of acceptance. Equally important, the number of unsolicited manuscripts submitted had more than doubled from 17.5 during Hickson’s ownership to more than 40 per year.

During the years that USF owned *JACR*, a number of important statements about applied communication research were published in outlets other than that journal. A series of “Research Editorials” appeared in *Spectra* under the direction of SCA’s Research Board and its chair, Roderick Hart of the University of Texas. Many of those editorials addressed issues related to applied communication research, including “Researchers as Brethren” by Phillips (1981, p. 2), in which he asserted that “pure research is nothing more than the preliminary phases of applied research,” and Ronald Gordon’s (1982) take on “practical theory” (see Barge & Craig, this volume). The most provocative of the essays, by Donald Ellis (1982), called applied communication “The Shame of Speech Communication” for being “an intellectual whorehouse” that was “narrow, theoretically vacuous, without a research base, and, just as an aside, morally degenerate and politically naive” (p. 1). This essay caused quite a stir and even occasioned another research editorial in response contesting it (Hugenberg & Robinson, 1982), as well as a number of letters to the editor. Perhaps the most significant of the editorials, though, in terms of its long-term impact, was Eadie’s (1982, p. 1) essay, in which he made “The Case for Applied Communication Research,” arguing that “applied communication...represents a kind of research” rather than, as with SCA’s Applied Communication Section, merely a place of employment. Eadie had been emboldened to write his essay because of the success of Browning’s term as chair of APCOM, where research rather than consulting practice had been the focus of the convention programming, as well as because of the connection that Cissna had begun to forge between APCOM and *JACR* (see below). That same year, SCA’s Legislative Council voted to establish an Organizational Communication Division, which helped to mark further the distinction between applied and organizational communication research (see also Frey & SunWolf, this volume).
These years also saw important articles about applied communication research published in other scholarly journals in the field. Hickson (1983) proposed, in an article published in the *Southern Speech Communication Journal* (*SSCJ*), making ethnomethodology and participant observation the primary methods for applied communication research. Gerald Miller and Michael Sunnafrank (1984) argued for theoretically grounded applied communication research in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Dan O’Hair (1988) edited a thematic issue of *SSCJ* on “Relational Communication in Applied Contexts.” In addition, book-length works concerning applied communication began to appear, including John Cragan and Donald Shield’s (1981) *Applied Communication Research: A Dramatistic Approach* and an applied communication book series under the editorship of Teresa Thompson published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (e.g., Nussbaum, 1989; Ray & Donohew, 1990), which included what might now be looked upon as the first effort at producing a “handbook” of applied communication, although it was not called that then (O’Hair & Kreps, 1990). In addition, during the late 1980s, other journals with applied bents were developed by commercial publishers, including Erlbaum’s *Health Communication* under the editorship of Thompson and Sage’s *Management Communication Quarterly*, coedited by JoAnne Yates, Christine Kelly, and Paul Feingold.

The USF group continued to be concerned with having enough manuscripts of sufficient quality to fill the journal. One of the strategies that Cissna and his colleagues used to assure that they could publish the journal, which continued to be a semiannual publication of approximately 80 pages, even as they developed an acceptance rate that was comparable to the major national communication journals, was to publish issues that addressed particular themes, with articles derived from sources other than the unsolicited manuscripts sent to the editor. One useful source of manuscripts involved collaboration between *JACR* and SCA’s Applied Communication Section. From 1981 to 1983, APCOM issued a special call for convention papers on a particular theme, with the best work being considered for publication in *JACR*. The first symposium, on “Conversation in Interviews,” appeared in the Fall 1981 issue, featuring three articles (Adams, 1981; Ragan & Hopper, 1981; Watson & Ragsdale, 1981) and a brief response (Meyer, 1981). A second APCOM-related symposium on “Ethics in Communication Consulting” appeared in the Fall 1982 issue, with articles by Browning (1982) and Teresa Harrison (1982). The final, jointly produced symposium, “Strategies for Planned Change” (Cissna, 1983), became a full issue featuring five articles, as well as a set of related book reviews and a review of journals that published work on the topic. Cissna also published two other thematic issues or symposia, including one on “The Application of Communication Theory to Communication Practice” (Cissna, 1982a), which featured articles by seven noted theoreticians of human communication, including Ernest Bormann, Frank Dance, B. Aubrey Fisher, Stephen Littlejohn, and Lee Thayer, and another thematic issue guest-edited by David Smith (1985) of USF that included five articles on doctor–patient communication. The tradition of special issues, symposia, and forums, prominent during USF’s ownership, continued to serve *JACR* well in future years.

After 5 years as editor, Cissna stepped down, and his colleague, D. Thomas Porter, assumed the editor position. Porter continued the policies and practices of the previous USF editors, although his term was a brief one. He published only three issues, after which most of the issues were thematic and edited by a USF faculty member: Smith (1988) edited a second issue on “Values in Health Communication”; Arthur Bochner (1989) produced an issue on “Applying Communication Theory to Family Practice”; Lynne Webb (1990), of the University of Florida, served as guest editor for an issue on “Communication and Aging”; and Carol Jablonski (1990) edited an issue on “Organizational Rhetoric.” The one issue from this period that contained unsolicited manuscripts was described as the
The Development of Applied Communication Research

product of the “Board of Directors,” a group that then included Bochner, Burgess, Cisna, Navita Cummings James, Loyd Pettigrew, Smith, and Marsha Vanderford.

The most significant development in the late 1980s, however, was an interest on the part of SCA in producing an applied communication publication. Although informal discussions began as early as 1985, in 1987, SCA’s Administrative Committee, under the guidance of James Chesebro, Chair of SCA’s Publications Board, began exploring a number of options for an applied publication, ranging from a slick magazine format similar to Psychology Today to a traditional scholarly journal much like SCA’s existing journals (Chesebro, 1987; Chesebro & Shields, 1988). Those who were involved agreed that an SCA-sponsored applied publication should be part of its “outreach strategy” to the general public and that readability was a significant feature. In letters written to Chesebro by Bochner (March 12, 1987), Cisna (March 12, 1987), and Porter (February 27, 1987), Board of Directors of JACR at USF made clear that it supported having SCA assume ownership and control of the journal, thinking that it was in the best interests of the journal and of the emerging field of applied communication, and certainly not wanting SCA to develop a competing applied communication journal. Eventually, SCA decided to purchase JACR from USF, issuing its call for a new editor in February 1989.

To mark the transfer of JACR from USF to SCA (as well as to inaugurate the new doctoral program in communication at USF), Robert Avery, Chair of SCA’s Publications Board, and Bochner, Chair of USF’s Communication Department, explored holding a conference on applied communication in Tampa. Cisna was designated as conference director and the “Applied Communication in the 21st Century: Tampa Conference on Applied Communication” occurred in March 1991. All of the major conference papers, along with most of the replies to those papers, a series of postconference reflections, and appendices that documented the conference (naming the conference participants, explaining the conference design, and listing the recommendations of the conference) were subsequently published in book form (Cisna, 1995).

Eadie was chosen as the first editor of JACR published under the auspices of SCA. Eadie (1990) established three criteria for applied communication research: That the research (1) “thoroughly explores a specific communication problem or situation, or its results are immediately applicable to specific communication problems or situations”; (2) “reveals significant and substantive information about the situation being explored”; and (3) “is securely based in theory but its purpose is not immediate theory building” (p. 2). Eadie’s first issue, which appeared in the summer of 1991, invited leading scholars to address the agenda of applied communication research and included articles by renowned organizational theorists Karl Weick (with Browning, 1991) and James March (1991), as well as articles by communication scholars Browning and Leonard Hawes (1991), Timothy Plax (1991), and Gary Kreps, Lawrence Frey, and O’Hair (1991). JACR flourished as an SCA journal, becoming a quarterly publication, with 96 pages per issue, although the number of pages has varied since then. Under Eadie’s editorship, it took its outreach mission seriously, and, in addition to a section for “research reports,” included two new sections “applications” (review essays on how research findings could be applied) and “commentaries.” At the urging of James Gaudino, SCA’s Executive Director, Eadie worked with Science Press, the printing house for SCA’s journals, to design a more reader-friendly format, one that included pictures of the authors, a 4-color cover and 2-color printing, and wide margins containing pull-quotes.

Eadie favored publishing a wide range of scholarship and discouraged proposals for thematic issues. However, his editorial board’s response to the treatment of both Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas during Thomas’s confirmation hearings for a seat on the U.S. Supreme Court convinced Eadie that JACR could be used for activism purposes, if
pursued in a scholarly manner. Consequently, he accepted a proposal by Julia Wood, a member of his editorial board, to publish a symposium on sexual harassment. Wood's proposal was groundbreaking, as she wanted both to expose and analyze sexual harassment episodes that had occurred within the communication discipline. Eadie put out a call for such stories and received 37 of them, mostly from women, but a few from men (including one by an individual who had been accused of sexual harassment). The stories were turned over anonymously to Bryan Taylor and Charles Conrad (1992) and Mary Strine (1992), who wrote “microlevel” and “macrolevel” assessments, respectively, of them. The stories referenced by those scholars in their assessments were printed in the journal, guest-edited by Wood (1992), so that readers could view the “data” from which these scholars were working. That special issue concluded by acknowledging those individuals who wished to be recognized as having contributed stories, some of whom were referred to in the analyses.

Eadie (1993) reported that many people continued to misunderstand applied communication to mean organizational communication, despite over 20 years of efforts by editors Hickson, Cissna, and himself, as well as others (e.g., O’Hair & Kreps, 1990) to suggest otherwise. Although the journal received and published its share of studies of organizations, Eadie also published studies on instruction (in educational, corporate, and public settings); health, environmental, and risk communication; political communication; intergroup communication; media; new communication technologies; and the treatment of communication apprehension. He even received a submission to JACR, which was published during the next editor’s term, that included as a coauthor a man who was homeless (Schmitz, Rogers, Phillips, & Paschal, 1995). The published research included articles utilizing a range of quantitative, qualitative, and rhetorical methods.

In the end, although very successful, the format of the new JACR also was very expensive; Eadie exhausted his page allotment well before his final issue, and SCA’s Publications Board decided to switch to a style that made JACR conform to the other NCA journals. The “Applications” section was dropped after Eadie’s editorship concluded, along with pictures of the authors, wide margins, and pull-quotes, and commentaries became less frequent. Rather than something new and innovative, JACR subsequently became much like the other NCA journals because both the high number of submissions and their quality required that the pages of JACR should be devoted to publishing as much as possible of the best available applied communication scholarship.

Wood was named the second SCA editor of JACR. She reported that selecting her as editor, as with Eadie’s selection as SCA’s first JACR editor, “conveyed the message that JACR was about more than organizational communication” (personal communication, December 4, 2004), as neither of them were known as organizational communication scholars (interestingly, nor were Hickson or Cissna). To avoid any inference that organizational communication somehow was a defining feature of applied communication or of the journal, Wood solicited a special issue on applied family communication guest-edited by Gail Whitchurch and Webb (1995).

Not until the third SCA editor, David Seibold, did SCA select a scholar who significantly identified with organizational communication. Compared with his predecessors, Seibold’s conception of applied communication research favored somewhat more “theory-driven socially relevant research” from authors who were “committed to advancing scholarship” (personal communication, December 16, 2004). As Seibold (2000) wrote later, whatever differences there might have been between his conception and those of his predecessors were less matters of boundaries than of emphases. He also attempted, not as successfully as he wished, to encourage submission of reports of large-scale, often grant-supported, research projects (personal communication, December 16, 2004). Seibold also
commissioned several special issues, including two especially significant ones that suggested alternative metaphors and directions for applied communication scholarship. Frey (1998), following up on a brief symposium in Communication Studies 2 years earlier (see Frey, Pearce, Pollack, Artz, & Murphy, 1996), in a full issue of the journal, presented the case for putting applied communication research to the service of social justice and included five exemplar studies that promoted social justice, as well as a response essay by Barnett Pearce (1998; see also Frey & SunWolf, this volume; Seeger, Sellnow, Ulmer, & Novak, this volume). Sandra Petronio (1999) served as guest editor for an issue on translating scholarship into practice, and Ellen Edwards and Howard Giles (1998) produced an issue of the journal on intergenerational communication.

Of the next four editors, O’Hair, Joann Keyton, Timothy Sellnow, and, currently, Laura Stafford, Keyton is most identified with organizational communication. O’Hair attempted to encourage more policy-making research, but, like Seibold, was somewhat disappointed with his success in attracting such submissions (personal communication, December 6, 2004). O’Hair also commissioned, in 2000, a special forum on defining communication scholarship, which included contributions from several previous editors of JACR (Cisnna, 2000; Eadie, 2000; Seibold, 2000; and Wood, 2000), as well as contributions from Keyton (2000; who became the next editor) and from Frey (2000). During her editorship, Keyton implemented, to good effect, a requirement (that continues today) that all work published in JACR include a section on how the results could be applied. These editors also continued the practice of devoting journal space to special issues, with O’Hair publishing special issues or forums on communication and managed care (K. Miller, 2001) and on funded research (Buller & Slater, 2002); Keyton having issues devoted to irrationality in organizations (Treheway & Ashcraft, 2004) and Institutional Review Boards (Kramer & Dougherty, 2005), and Sellnow publishing a special issue on the 2005 Atlantic hurricane season (Gouran & Seeger, 2007); a special section on “Best Practices in Risk and Crisis Communication” (Venette, 2006), and a special forum titled “Toward Purposeful and Practical Models of Engaged Scholarship” (Barge, Simpson, & Shockley-Zalabak, 2008), as well as a series of commentaries on translating research into practice (see Petronio, 2007). Stafford has planned a special issue on health and healing from a narrative perspective, as well as one on communication and distance, and a joint forum between JACR and Communication Monographs, in which four scholars (Celeste Condit, Lawrence Frey, Mary Lee Hummert, and Matthew Seeger) answer the question, “Has communication research made a difference?” and readers respond to those essays. Stafford also has initiated a feature, called “In Point of Practice,” wherein an established scholar synthesizes his or her program of research and offers practical applications, and she published the first autoethnography to appear in JACR (Tillman, 2009).

After SCA’s acquisition of JACR, the association also initiated an applied communication book series under the editorship of Kreps. The series was short-lived, but published one film (Adelman & Schultz, 1992) and nine books. In 1994, it became apparent to the SCA leadership that this publication venture was bigger and more expensive than it had anticipated. Although the SCA book series was terminated, Kreps started two new applied communication book series with Hampton Press, which had copublished the earlier volumes, one on “Health Communication” and the other on “Communication as a Social Organization,” both of which continue to the present. Other applied communication books also appeared, including Cragan and Shields (1995) and textbooks by Buddenbaum and Novak (2001) and Harris (1993).

In 1995, SCA’s Applied Communication Section successfully petitioned SCA’s Legislative Council to become a division, a move that changed its identity in the SCA structure formally from a unit for individuals who shared having nonacademic employers to a
unit whose content represented a substantive part of the discipline. Simultaneously, the Legislative Council approved the establishment of a Training and Development Commission, a move that effectively removed the concerns of training and development practitioners from being a major focus of APCOM. As a division, APCOM instituted awards for an outstanding article and book, as well as awards that honored top convention papers. In 1994, a year before APCOM formally became a division, SCA inaugurated the annual Gerald M. Phillips Award for Distinguished Applied Communication Scholarship, which was an association-wide award that honored a body of applied communication research. Given first to the University of Iowa’s Samuel Becker, subsequent recipients, in chronological order, include Everett Rogers, Donald Cushman, Patricia Hayes Andrews, Kreps, Seibold, Frey, Michael Hecht, Eileen Berlin Ray, Harold L. Goodall, Jr., Brent D. Ruben, Philip Palmgreen, Lawrence Rosenfeld, Wood, and Cissna. Since its inception, APCOM’s outstanding article award has been given to three articles on social issues in communication in organizations, three articles on social influence processes (one in a health setting and two in group settings), and one article each on risk communication, crisis communication, and communication and social justice.

Conclusion

In 1997, the Speech Communication Association changed its name to the National Communication Association. The series of events that began in 1968 with a recommendation to change the association’s name to include the word communication, along with recommendations for the discipline’s scholars to engage in socially relevant research, came full circle with the elimination of the word speech from the association’s name at a time coincident with the maturation of the concept of applied communication research. That concept now is situated comfortably within the lexicon of communication scholars, even as applied communication scholars continue to contest its precise meaning (see Frey & SunWolf, this volume). Members of the communication discipline now accept having a strong applied dimension to the field’s scholarship, and articles published in JACR are respected for their quality and recognized for the scope of their contributions to the field. In fact, recent analyses of communication journals indicated that JACR had moved up from 42nd of the 44 journals ranked in 2003 to 27th of 42 journals ranked in 2004 (Zarefsky, 2005) and to 20th in 2007 (Taylor & Francis Group, 2008).

Although prompted most immediately by the dramatic events of the 1960s both from within the communication field and outside it, the transformation of the field to one that accepts applied communication scholarship was rooted in older concerns, ones that the field has faced throughout its history: achieving academic respectability, developing a research-based body of knowledge, contributing to solving social problems, and informing the public of the potential uses of communication knowledge. It is likely that these themes will recur as the field of communication continues to develop in the 21st century, with applied communication research as a robust contributor to its scholarly dialogue.

Notes

1. We acknowledge that the roots of the communication discipline are ancient and that some type of study of communication has been part of formal education from its earliest recorded times. We begin our story, however, at the time when U.S. universities were separating faculties into distinct academic “disciplines,” and from this standpoint, communication is a relatively new field of study.

2. The conferees wrestled with what to call the discipline other than speech. Some advocated changing the name to “communication,” but such a change was disputed by claims that the
“speech” tradition would be lost in doing so. Conferees compromised on “speech-communication,” but the hyphen between the words was dropped quickly by most users, including those in the Speech Association of America, in favor of the compound noun speech communication.

3. During the 8 years that Hickson served as editor of JACR, he coauthored one article in the journal (in addition to a brief, lead essay in the inaugural issue), and Stacks authored another.

4. The new interest group structure did not include a unit devoted to the study of organizational communication; consequently, scholars interested in that topic were drawn to the Applied Communication Section as a possible home for their work within SCA.

5. The early editions of the APCOM Newsletter were neither dated nor numbered, although we have been able to reconstruct the dates and order by examining the texts of the issues. Cisnna was given copies of several early newsletters, as well as the mission statement, by Andrew Wolvin.

6. These two paragraphs, handwritten on a single page of a legal pad, were among Jensen’s papers that were found in his office after his death.

7. NCA recently launched a new effort to connect the scholarship of the field to the general public with Communication Currents, a free, online, Web-based “ezine,” under the editorship of Keyton and tailored to a public audience (see http://www.communicationcurrents.com). Now in its fourth year, whether this e-zine will result in the communication field becoming better known and respected by the general public is yet to be determined.

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