

of radio, of course crops up frequently—and always incorrectly, as “Gugliemo.” Finally, Latin Americanists might find it a bit odd that the term “American” is used in the title and throughout the book to mean “belonging to the United States.”

These comments, however, should not diminish the value of Schwoch's work. The book's in-depth examination of the history of the U.S. radio industry and its lasting influences on Latin American broadcasting makes it a valuable document for those lecturing or researching in the fields of mass communications, international relations, and Latin American studies.

Organizing the data glut

Organizations and Communication Technology edited by Janet Fulk and Charles W. Steinfield. Newbury Park, Cal.: Sage, 1990. 328 pages. \$38.00 (hard), \$18.95 (soft).

A review by Leah A. Lievrouw
University of Alabama

Declaring that “we are in a data glut,” the editors of this book have set out to bring readers up to date with current theoretical thinking on the uses and impacts of communication/information technologies in organizations. As a summary of the field, this collection of theoretical essays succeeds on two main counts, but it also illustrates certain weaknesses in the field. First, it brings together in one volume writers whose recent work has been widely cited and discussed but scattered

throughout the literatures of information science, communication, management, and technology studies (e.g., Markus; Allen and Hauptman; Trevino, Daft, and Lengel; Beniger). Second, the book presents some exciting theoretical ideas about the relationship between communication technologies and social behavior that are applicable beyond the organizational setting (e.g., Contractor and Eisenberg; Fulk, Schmitz, and Steinfield). At the same time, however, the volume illustrates that organizational communication studies remain in the grip of traditional “effects”-type models—those that enumerate the features of various technologies and then attempt to tie those features to specific behavioral or organizational outcomes in cause-effect relationships.

Regarding the first point, the book allows the reader to compare and contrast many current ideas about the role of communication media (especially “new” media like computer-mediated communication systems) in organizations. It is interesting to note the growing influence of symbolic interactionist and structuration theory in organizational studies (seen here in the essays by Trevino, Daft, and Lengel; Fulk, Schmitz, and Steinfield; and Contractor and Eisenberg). This trend, which owes much to the work of Weick and his colleagues, constitutes an important departure from the simpler functionalist theories of the past; several chapters in this collection cite Blumer, Mead, Goffman, and Giddens as sources. It is not enough to use straightforward descriptions of task variables, situation variables, and media characteristics to predict orga-

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organizational behavior; researchers now recognize that organizing is the product of a constantly evolving or "emerging" set of perceptions and meanings shared by the people who are involved in the organizing process.

Second, and perhaps most important, several theoretical "pearls" in this collection have the potential to transcend the narrow applied context presented here and to contribute to answering the larger question of how communication media and any kind of social organizing are related. The best example is the chapter by Contractor and Eisenberg, who demonstrate how communication networks and communication media are recursively co-determining at individual, dyadic, and group levels of analysis. Markus's Critical Mass Theory is another widely applicable framework, especially for policy studies. It examines the importance of the number of people that are actually linked by a particular medium. As he has done in several other recent works, Beniger argues that control is the driving concept in the organizing process, whether in early forms of social organization, in formal industrial-type organizations, or in the design of information technologies. Like the best of the other contributions here, his essay successfully escapes the technologically driven "effects" paradigm, focusing on human action instead of the particular features or capacities of particular media.

This point brings up the fact that linear, causal models still seem to be the major source of theory in this area. Nass and Mason, for example, compile a "fundamental list of key variables" for the study of informa-

tion technologies—that is, a list of their features that might affect behavior. (Incidentally, the Beniger and Nass/Mason chapters are presented together as a section entitled "Two Views of Information Technology," but the relation between the two—or the rationale for associating them—is not made very clear.) Zmud's essay visualizes the flows of communication in a given organization as the "organizational information system," or OIS, which resembles a structure of networked computers. He locates communication technologies in this structure and then explains how they may provide more opportunities for a worker to engage in "Strategic Information Behaviors" (e.g., misrepresenting a situation to serve his or her own interest). Zmud does not discuss the obvious ethical questions his essay raises or their potential impact on the organization and its development.

The last section of the book, "Information Technology and Organizational Design," leaves the impression that the causal relationship between technology and behavior continues to dominate theoretical approaches to organizational communication studies. All three essays in this section (by Huber, Allen and Hauptman, and Keen) describe ways that technology drives or can rearrange the shape of organizations. Because they get the last word, these essays lead the reader to conclude that, while perspectives are expanding in this specialty, decisions continue to be made as though technologies are the creators of, and not the creatures of, human communicating and organizing.

There are a few other minor weak-

nesses in the book. For example, though the editors make some good observations about the state of theory in this area, their review of why theory is necessary and how it should be evaluated is somewhat didactic, since the audience should already know the value of theory building. Also, the editors seem to rely to a great extent on contributors who are now or were formerly associated with the Annenberg Program at the University of Southern California, while passing over certain important perspectives (notably Weick's).

These are small criticisms, however. On the whole, this book is a fine overview that updates and lends structure—"organizes"—this evolving literature for a diverse audience.

Verdict: engaging

Popular Trials: Rhetoric, Mass Media, and the Law edited by Robert Hariman. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990. vi + 257 pages. \$32.95 (hard).

A review by Janice Schuetz
University of New Mexico

Few scholars will quarrel with the claim that the mass media use popularized trials as a focal point for their discussion of related social issues. *Popular Trials: Rhetoric, Mass Media, and the Law* is a collection of nine essays that focuses on the media's construction, reporting, and creation of social effects about trials. Despite the title, legal issues and processes are not central to the essays.

The seven core chapters explain how the media's coverage of popularized trials affects public knowledge about social, political, and moral issues. Each essay uses a different trial and approach to discuss the effects of media coverage. Lucaites considers the political ramifications of the 1705 impeachment trial of Dr. Henry Sacheverell in the British House of Commons. Bernabo and Condit discuss how the press coverage of the 1925 Scopes trial affected public discussion of the conflict between science and religion. Dee contrasts the liberal, conservative, and moderate press coverage of the Chicago Seven trial in 1969. Lewis identifies how issues about the law, the family, and psychiatry emerge in the media's discussion of the John Hinckley case in 1982. Drucker and Hunold compare the video techniques used in CNN's coverage of the 1985 Claus von Bulow trial with the way video is used in talk shows and soap operas. Williamson focuses on the press and television coverage of the San Diego trials of Major Roger Hedgecock in 1984 and 1985. Gustainis explains how the defendants of the Catsonville Nine trial used the media to gain a legitimate forum for their dissent on religious grounds against the Vietnam War. Brummett closes the book by suggesting reasons that television coverage distorts public knowledge about trials.

The essays draw several similar conclusions about the rhetorical effects of media coverage of trials: The media's rhetoric about the trial determines whether or not a trial is popularized; the media popularize trials by emphasizing personality, power, and morality; the media turn