

comfort with their lack of opportunity for participation in the formal program. The 1984 program chair Huey Perry of Southern University scheduled a student section with three panels to allow for greater graduate and undergraduate participation. The student panels covered such topics as black students and the exercise of political power on and off campus, national politics and public policy, and urban governance.

Since presidential politics dominated the conference, this article would not be complete without a brief report on NCOBPS executive officers. The outgoing president of the organization, Lucius Barker was succeeded by Huey Perry of Southern University. The new president-elect is Michael Preston of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. The local arrangements were handled by Elsie Scott of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives and Joseph McCormick of Howard University.

For more detailed information about NCOBPS, the organization, copies of the program or information about specific papers, contact Huey Perry, NCOBPS President, Department of Political Science, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA, or the individual section chairs for 1984.

Program Committee

Political Theory: Charles Henry, University of California, Berkeley.

Comparative Politics: Gloria Braxton, Southern University.

International Relations: Patrick Bellgarde-Smith, Bradley University.

Political Parties, Elections and Political Parties: James C. Smith, Jackson State University.

Race in the American Political Process: Government and Politics at the National Level: Dianne Pinderhughes.

Public Administration, Public Policy and Black Americans: Mitchell Rice, Southwest Texas State University.

The Uncertain Path of Law: Courts, Race and Politics: Michael Combs, Louisiana State University.

Urban Politics, Public Policy: William Nelson, Ohio State University.

State and Local Politics: Franklin Jones, Texas Southern University.

Career Professional Development and Black Political Scientists: P. Bai Akridge, International Business Machines.

Students and the Profession: Sybil LeDuff and Blanche Smith, Southern University; Meredith Neilson, Howard University; Curtina Moreland-Young, Jackson State University.

Local Area Participation: Fred Hutchinson, Atlanta University.

The Scholar's Roundtable in the Electronic Age*

T. O. Schlesinger**

Plymouth State College

Social science and its practitioners have much to gain from moving scientific communication more rapidly into the electronic age. Clearly we benefit from the fullest direct personal contact with all it implies in human terms, at national, regional, and other types of meetings. But there are limitations: we can't all get there; it's very expensive; time and resources constrain us once we're there (even "drifters" can still only be in one panel room at one time); formal panels are just that, and the choice of papers is blighted by career pressures to produce or publish; informal roundtables and workshops lack written record, and so on.

Nor is the long-distance conference call an alternative. To "reach out and touch" them all is much too expensive, requires simultaneous availability of all participants regardless of time zones, and creates an atmosphere of pressure which

*This proposal owes much in stimulus and data to Michael Pearson, Computer Services, Plymouth State College, NH.

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inhibits deliberate, reasoned contributions. And mail? Forget it!

Proper use of current technology, linking computer with telephone, however, provides an alternative to *supplement*, not replace, personal contact. Many political scientists will by now have read about, and some may be participants in, "computer bulletin board services" (BBS). In hundreds of situations across the country, and some internationally, these now enable thousands of people who share a specific interest to exchange information. This is happening right now, night and day, every day of the year. Current topics range from medical science and jurisprudence through sports, aviation data, and computing, to games and outright trivia.

The term "computer" is misleading here. No one but the organizer of a Board, or BBS, as they are called, needs to know any more about computing than they know about their typewriter, with skill comparable at most to the rudimentary beginnings of word processing. In fact, a computer is not essential; one needs only a "dumb" terminal and the device called a *modem* which enables that terminal to access a computer over telephone lines. That combination costs less than many commonly used typewriters. There are still telephone line costs, but because computers may use special networks such as Telenet, Tymnet, and Datapac, these are much lower than for voice communication.

Proper use of current technology, linking computer with telephone, however, provides an alternative to supplement, not replace, personal contact.

Participants in a BBS share no common time schedule, as they can access the Board at their convenience. The comments they enter are available to all participants. Private messages among participants can also be exchanged by

"electronic mail." Access can be controlled to any degree desired. Participants who use a properly equipped computer, rather than a terminal, to access the BBS, may "download" the text into their system and with a printer convert it into "hard copy," i.e., what we used to call paper.

We should organize scientific, scholarly equivalents of the BBS in political science. Let us see briefly how this would work. A panel of scholars is convened by a moderator using invitations communicated in any way whatever. They are given access instructions to the panel. On first contact, which occurs completely at the participant's personal convenience, the latter would encounter on the video monitor screen an opening statement by the moderator, probably stating issues to be discussed.

The participant may then (1) take notice of said "comment" and cease contact ("log-off") for time being; (2) respond with another "comment" right then, which is intended to be read by all other participants; (3) send a message addressed to the moderator or any other participants; (4) take actions (2) or (3) at any later date and time; (5) make a written record of the proceedings (if so equipped). The system can easily and very conveniently enable all to know immediately who is "up to date," i.e., has read all current comments and other such panel housekeeping data.

The present need is to identify those who are interested, and the extent to which the technical capacity already exists, i.e., those who now use a terminal/modem or microcomputer/commo-software combination for any purpose, e.g., to access their campus mainframe or ICPSR, or those who have no hardware, but are interested. While the latter might obviously acquire equipment, the possibility of special funding for this purpose should be considered and discussed in view of the potential for greatly increased scientific interchange.

An attempt to create an informal group meeting of interested persons will be made at the annual meeting in August through the microcomputer applications demonstrations coordinated by ICPSR.

Whether attending or not, interested persons are requested to contact me at the Social Science Department, Plymouth State College, Plymouth, NH 03264. □

Decade Outlook Addresses Fundamental Problems in Social Sciences

The Committee on Basic Research in the Behavioral and Social Sciences, National Research Council, invites *PS* readers to submit ideas on leading research questions for the next ten years and on new resources needed to enable rapid progress to be made on fundamental problems in the behavioral and social sciences. Responses and inquiries should be addressed to: Committee on Basic Research in the Behavioral and Social Sciences, National Research Council, 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20418.

The Committee on Basic Research in the Behavioral and Social Sciences is a National Research Council unit established in 1980 to assess and improve the vitality of research in the behavioral and social sciences. The first Committee report, *Behavioral and Social Science Research: A National Resource* (1982), was a general statement of the scientific value, significance, and social utility of behavioral and social science research. A second Committee report, currently in preparation, derives from a 1983 symposium on "Knowledge in Social and Behavioral Science: Discoveries and Trends Over Fifty Years."

These two Committee projects concentrated on the past record and present dimensions of behavioral and social science. There is now a national commitment to expand the future scientific and technological base. Promising new research directions must be canvassed, resources needed to foster prospective advances must be defined and evaluated, and priorities for additional scientific research spending must be developed and rigorously scrutinized. These processes are now occurring in nearly every major branch of science.

The Committee has therefore agreed to undertake a Decade Outlook on Research Opportunities in the Behavioral and Social Sciences, with the formal participation of the National Research Council's Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, and the Social Science Research Council. This project, supported by the National Science Foundation, the Russell Sage Foundation, and other sponsors, will be completed in 1986.

The Decade Outlook will study scientific frontiers, leading research questions, and new resources needed over the next decade, roughly 1986-1995, for rapid progress on fundamental problems in the behavioral and social sciences. The final report is to contain recommendations for research resources, facilities, and programs that may provide a high level of returns to fundamental knowledge. Research areas and new resource needs will be identified by the Committee with substantial advice from many distinguished senior-level, mid-career, and promising younger scientists.

Committee on Basic Research in the Behavioral and Social Sciences

Neil J. Smelser (co-chair), Department of Sociology, California, Berkeley.

R. Duncan Luce (co-chair), Department of Psychology, Harvard.

John A. Ferejohn, Department of Political Science, Stanford.

Lawrence Friedman, School of Law, Stanford.

Victoria Fromkin, Graduate Division and Department of Linguistics, California, Los Angeles.

Rochel Gelman, Department of Psychology, Pennsylvania.

Leo A. Goodman, Department of Statistics and Department of Sociology, Chicago.

James G. Greeno, Learning Research and Development Center, Pittsburgh.

Eugene A. Hamnel, Department of Anthropology, California, Berkeley.

Leonid Hurwicz, Department of Economics, Minnesota.

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James Morgan, Institute for Social Research, Michigan.

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Kenneth Prewitt, Social Science Research Council.

Barbara Gutmann Rosenkrantz, Department of the History of Science, Harvard.

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Liaison Representative:

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Conference Group on Representation and Electoral Systems Reports on Negotiations

Leon Weaver

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The Spring 1984 issue of *PS* (p. 283) summarized negotiations between the

Conference Group (CG) and the International Political Science Association (IPSA) for inclusion of a Special Meeting on representation and electoral systems at the 1985 (Paris) meeting of IPSA. Here is an update report concerning these negotiations as of June 15, 1984.

Our proposal for the Special Meeting was disapproved by the IPSA Program Committee on the ground that they had more requests for such meetings than they could accommodate. The following compromise alternative has been developed with the IPSA Secretariat. The IPSA conference program will list an organization meeting of an IPSA Study Group or Research Committee on Representation and Electoral Systems. It will be necessary that it be held at a time that will not conflict with any of the regularly scheduled panels. Therefore the undersigned has proposed to the IPSA Secretariat that our meeting be scheduled for 5:15-7:15 p.m. on any of the following dates at their option: August 17, 18, or 19. The meeting will be co-chaired by Vernon Bogdanor and myself. The principal purposes of the meeting would be: (1) to discuss the proposal that there be an IPSA Study Group or Research Committee on Representation and Electoral Systems; and (2) to afford an opportunity to interested participants to share their current research findings and plans. To the latter end the following procedure will be used: participants wishing to present papers or statements of work in progress will be encouraged to put summaries on wall posters in the assigned conference room and have copies of their papers ready to be dispensed and discussed with interested participants. Materials for the posters will be provided at the conference Secretariat. People interested in presenting papers in accordance with the above described procedure are requested to send the title of the paper to the undersigned at their earliest convenience so that it may be listed in the conference program. We trust that this procedure will be sufficient to enable participants to obtain whatever funding their universities can provide.

There is a possibility, but no assurance, that partial reimbursement of travel expenses of participants in this session can