communicating in the information society

edited by Bruce Girard and Seán Ó Siochrú
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UNRISD
United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
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Authors

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* Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) is an international campaign working to ensure that communication rights are at the heart of the information society. CRIS is active in the WSIS process at every level, collaborating with NGOs with similar aims; it also promotes communication rights at the World Social Forum and other events, and through national-level campaigns. CRIS was initiated by the Platform for Communication Rights, a coalition of NGOs involved in media and communication around the world. See www.crisinfo.org.
James Deane is executive director of Panos London and one of the founding members of the Panos Institute. He was formerly director of Panos’ Communications and Social Change Programme, and author of several publications on new information technologies and developing countries. He has advised and been a consultant to many international organizations including the Rockefeller Foundation, the World Bank, the Department for International Development in the United Kingdom and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). He has an M.A. in International Communication and Development and is a visiting fellow at the London School of Economics.

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Jean-Claude Guédon is a historian of science by training and a professor of comparative literature (University of Montreal). He has spent the last 10 years of his life studying the social and cultural effects of the Internet, as well as the evolution of scholarly publishing in a digitized and networked context. He has worked with the Internet Society, several francophone organizations, and, more recently, with the Open Society Institute. Actively engaged in the open access movement within scholarly publishing, he is also involved in the promotion of open source software. He is a member of various boards or steering committees, such as the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD), Canadian National Site Licensing Project (CNSLP), Electronic Information for Libraries (eIFL) and Open Source Initiative’s (OSI) Information Sub-Board.

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William McIver, Jr., is assistant professor in the School of Information Science and Policy at the University at Albany in the United States. His areas of research are database systems, and social and community informatics. He co-edited the book, *Advances in Digital Government:*
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Technology, Human Factors, and Policy (with Ahmed K. Elmagarmid, Kluwer, Boston, 2002). He is a member of the Information Technology and International Cooperation research network of the Social Science Research Council. Professor McIver has a B.A. from Morehouse College and a Ph.D. from the University of Colorado at Boulder, both in Computer Science.

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Dafne Sabanes Plou is a freelance journalist and social communicator from Argentina. She has been a member of the Association for Progressive Communications Women’s Networking Support Programme (WNSP) since 1994. At present, she is regional co-ordinator for the WNSP for Latin America and the Caribbean, and regional co-ordinator for the field testing of the Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) in Latin America. From 1991 to 1999 she was chairperson for the Latin American region of the World Association for Christian Communications (WACC), and from 1992 to 2000, she was chairperson of the Latin American and Caribbean Communications Agency (ALC). She is the author of several articles, papers and books, including Global Communications, Is There a Place for Human Dignity? (WCC, Geneva, 1996) and Peace in Troubled Cities (WCC, Geneva, 1998).

Antonio Pasquali is a highly respected communication scholar in the Spanish-speaking world. In his writings, from Comunicación y cultura de masas (1962) and Comprender la comunicación (1974), to La comunicación cercenada (1990) and Bienvenido global village (1998), he combines scholarly reflection with experience in politics and in the field. Between 1974 and 1975, he presided over the Venezuelan ministerial commission that worked on the Venezuelan Radio and Television Project (RATELVE), an initiative in favour of a new policy for public communications. From 1978 to 1989, he held high-level positions at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), including Assistant Director-General for Communication.

Marc Raboy has a Ph.D. from McGill University and is full professor and head of the Communication Policy Research Laboratory in the Department of Communication, University of Montreal. He is also senior
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Silvio Waisbord is a senior programme officer at the Academy for Educational Development in Washington, DC. He was associate professor at Rutgers University between 1995 and 2003. He has written and co-edited several books and articles on media policy in Latin America, development communication, media globalization and journalism. He received a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California at San Diego.
Foreword

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) has been supporting research on the interaction between societies and informational developments since it held the Information Technologies and Social Development Conference in Geneva in 1998. This has resulted in a range of publications on many aspects of information-related change. However eclectic their subject or origin, a number of common themes have emerged. One is recognition of the multiple interplays between societies, and the adoption, appropriation and development of informational technologies: interplays that refute any simplistic notion of technological determinism. Another, consequently, is the necessity for critical thinking, debate and the transparent and accountable making of choices if appropriate informational strategies are to be adopted in any society.

It therefore seemed fitting, on the occasion of the first World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)—which is also the first UN-sponsored world summit to specifically seek the formal participation of civil society—for UNRISD to emphasize the importance of societal perspectives on information society debates. It invited Bruce Girard and Seán Ó Siochru of Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS), a civil society organization active in the WSIS process, to select and edit a collection of essays on what they saw as core issues. I am very pleased to present the result, along with an introduction from the editors, which makes clear both the rationale for the selection of individual contributions and the questions they, as a collection, pose for the ongoing debate.

And the debate is ongoing. WSIS 2003 in Geneva will lead to WSIS 2005 in Tunis, and who knows what beyond. In the meantime, individual nations and agencies will be developing their information-related strategies and making large investments accordingly. If few now argue that information and communication technologies (ICTs) alone will solve their problems, not many articulate a clear vision of what ICTs can contribute to internal social and economic development, as distinct from their role in enabling globalization. Three decades ago, in the 1970s, UNRISD research brought to light the social and developmental inadequacies of an earlier revolution that was led by technology: the Green Revolution. This time I would hope that the ongoing debate will be enriched by sufficient disinterested research on informational developments within societies so as to avoid such disappointing discoveries in the future.

I would like to thank the government of the Netherlands for its particular interest in and support for UNRISD’s work on the social
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impacts of information technology. I also acknowledge the support of that
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core funding.

Thandika Mkandawire
Director
UNRISD

November 2003
## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>American Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABN</td>
<td>African Broadcasting Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>acquired immune deficiency syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALC</td>
<td>Latin American and Caribbean Communications Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>AOL</td>
<td>America Online, Inc.</td>
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<td>APC</td>
<td>Association for Progressive Communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASL</td>
<td>American sign language</td>
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<tr>
<td>AT&amp;T</td>
<td>American Telephone and Telegraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATM</td>
<td>asynchronous transfer mode (in &quot;Locating the information society within civil society&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATM</td>
<td>automatic teller machine (in &quot;A community informatics for the information society&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWORC</td>
<td>Asian Women's Resource Exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAZ</td>
<td>Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<td>BCE</td>
<td>Bell Canada Enterprises</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMC</td>
<td>BioMed Central</td>
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<td>BOAI</td>
<td>Budapest Open Access Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Control Advisory Panel</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>Canadian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>compact disc</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD-ROM</td>
<td>compact disc—read-only memory</td>
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<td>CEE</td>
<td>Central and Eastern Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIRA</td>
<td>Community Informatics Research Application Unit</td>
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<td>CIRC</td>
<td>Community Informatics Resource Center</td>
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<td>CNN</td>
<td>Cable News Network</td>
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<td>CNSLP</td>
<td>Canadian National Site Licensing Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>COTS</td>
<td>commercial off-the-shelf</td>
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<td>CPSR</td>
<td>Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility</td>
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<td>CRIS</td>
<td>Communication Rights in the Information Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>DeCSS</td>
<td>Decryption of Contents Scrambling System</td>
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<tr>
<td>DMCA</td>
<td>Digital Millennium Copyright Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNA</td>
<td>deoxyribonucleic acid</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOS</td>
<td>disk operating system</td>
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<td>DVD</td>
<td>digital versatile disc</td>
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<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<td>ECOSOC</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>eIFL</td>
<td>Electronic Information for Libraries</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FCC</td>
<td>Federal Communication Commission</td>
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<td>FEMNET</td>
<td>African Women’s Development and Communication Network</td>
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<td>FIRE</td>
<td>Feminist Interactive Radio Endeavour</td>
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<tr>
<td>FM</td>
<td>frequency modulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-8</td>
<td>Group of Eight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>United Nations General Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>gross domestic product</td>
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GIS  geographic information systems
GPS  global positioning system
HIV  human immunodeficiency virus
HTML hyper-text markup language
ICANN Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
ICASA Independent Communication Authority of South Africa
ICCCPR International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESR International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICT information and communication technology
IDRC International Development Research Centre
IEC International Electrotechnical Commission
ILO International Labour Organization
IMF International Monetary Fund
INCP International Network on Cultural Policy
IP Internet protocol
IPRs intellectual property rights
ISO International Organization for Standardization
IT information technology
ITU International Telecommunication Union
IWTC International Women’s Tribune Center
LBC Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation
LDC least developed country
MB megabytes
MDG Millennium Development Goal
MIS management information systems
MIT Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NDLTD Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations
NEAR National Electronic Archive Repository
NGO non-governmental organization
NIH National Institutes of Health
NWEEO New World Economic Order
NWICO New World Information and Communication Order
OAI Open Archive Initiative
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OI organizational informatics
OP Optional Protocol
OSI Open Source Initiative
PANA Panafrican News Agency
PBS Public Broadcasting Service
PDF portable document format (Adobe Acrobat)
PEN Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists, and Novelists
PLoS Public Library of Science
PrepCom preparatory committee
PRSP poverty reduction strategy papers
RAP Reform Advisory Panel, International Telecommunication Union
RATELVE Venezuelan Radio and Television Project
SABC South African Broadcasting Corporation

X
Acronyms

SCI  Science Citation Index
SLETP  Sri Lanka Environmental Television Project
STM  science, technology and medicine
TAMWA  Tanzania Women’s Media Association
TCP  transmission control protocol
TDD  telecommunications devices for the deaf
TIA  Total Information Awareness
TNC  transnational corporation
Tulip  The University Licensing Programme
UDHR  Universal Declaration on Human Rights
UMTS  Universal Mobile Telecommunications System
UN  United Nations
UNCSW  United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
UNDAW  United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
UNDP  United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIFEM  United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNRISD  United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNU  United Nations University
UNU/IIST  United Nations University/International Institute for Software Technology
UNU/INTECH  United Nations University/Institute for New Technologies
USAID  United States Agency for International Development
W3C  World Wide Web Consortium
WACC  World Association for Christian Communication
WCCD  World Commission on Culture and Development
WENT  Women’s Electronic Network Training
WHO  World Health Organization
WiFi  wireless fidelity
WIPO  World Intellectual Property Organization
WNSP  Women’s Networking Support Programme
WSIS  World Summit on the Information Society
WTO  World Trade Organization
Bruce Girard is a researcher, writer and educator active in development communication and communication rights issues. He is a member of the CRIS Interim Coordinating Committee Working Group.

Seán Ó Siochrú is a media and communication writer, consultant and activist. He is a member of the CRIS Campaign Strategy Working Group.

Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) is a campaign to ensure that communication rights are central to the information society, as a means to enhance human rights and to strengthen the social, economic and cultural lives of people and communities.

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) is an autonomous agency engaging in multidisciplinary research on the social dimensions of contemporary problems affecting development. Its work is guided by the conviction that, for effective development policies to be formulated, an understanding of the social and political context is crucial. The Institute attempts to provide governments, development agencies, grassroots organizations and scholars with a better understanding of how development policies and processes of economic, social and environmental change affect different social groups. Working through an extensive network of national research centres, UNRISD aims to promote original research and strengthen research capacity in developing countries.

Current research programmes include: Civil Society and Social Movements; Democracy, Governance and Human Rights; Identities, Conflict and Cohesion; Social Policy and Development; and Technology, Business and Society.

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