

IAICS: Reflections and Projections

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The Board of Directors of the International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies (IAICS) invited me as the outgoing President to provide my reflections and projections about our organization. At the conclusion of our biennial conference in Louisville, Kentucky, USA (1999), I had the honor of introducing our new President Dr. Masanori Higa of Ryukoku University, Japan. On that occasion and during my presidential address at the prior conference in Tempe, Arizona, USA (1997), I made several comments about our organization and its future. In this short essay I would like to synthesize some of those remarks and add a few projections about our future. I truly enjoyed my years as your President and eagerly embrace my continuing opportunities to help IAICS realize more of its potential for our varied areas of scholarship and for the improvement of our diverse world.

My primary reflection is very positive. IAICS is a strong and viable organization with a clear vision and a serious plan of action. Our vision requires that we transcend the artificial boundaries of academic disciplines and political nations, that we provide a forum for our scholarly skills and energies, and that we conscientiously foster the interdependence of all peoples. If we can transcend our limitations, we might utilize what we know to make our world better for all groups whatever the basis of their differences. Thus, we envision a better future through our scholarship about language and communication. To realize this vision, our plan of action has two dimensions: one is established and the other will always be in process. The established procedures are our journal, *Intercultural Communication Studies*, and our biennial conferences. The remaining challenge of our strategic plan is to expand the cooperative potential of our organization for scholarship and social improvement.

For IAICS and our broader world these are critical times of transition to an informational and communication age with frightening fragmentation. Our next conference will provide us an opportunity to apply our insights to many of these transitional concerns. Plans are for a conference in the eastern hemisphere where our incoming President Ray Heisey of Kent State University, USA, will likely challenge our social consciousness as did President Masanori Higa in his presidential address at Louisville and as I did two years before. Throughout the world, the illusions of peaceful coexistence, economic prosperity, and technological enthusiasm mask the widening gap between the haves and have-nots, the social disintegration from ethnic and religious conflicts, and a frighteningly pervasive hopelessness and cynicism about our leaders and leadership. In the frequently insular world of our scholarship, we are faced with serious choices: Do we want to restrict ourselves to the tracks of "clean" research and avoid social problems, or do we need to wrestle with the implications of what we know for the resolution of social problems?

To address our collective social concerns, can we use the wonderful opportunity of our next conference, during the summer, 2001, to make a simple alteration in all of our papers? At the end of each paper and presentation, could each of us in our own way address a single, projective question: What action does my research suggest that we should pursue as better contributors to an increasingly interdependent world? In this simple fashion we will increase our collective awareness of serious social concerns and reinforce our commitment to make these transitional times constructive for the members of IAICS, our students and colleagues, and perhaps indirectly the world. By pooling these insightful extensions we might generate an amazing agenda for our organizational future. Let us not forget that teachers and scholars nurture formative minds, including our own, for a future with an unknown agenda.

My primary projection is that we must increase our influence on each other and the others each of us will encounter in our daily lives. This projection includes two important directions for us to follow: First, we must expand the actual distribution of our ideas. We can achieve this goal by active recruitment of new members for IAICS, by increasing the library subscriptions to our journal, and by the growth of our conferences, especially the media coverage of our conferences and scholarship. We need to increase the collaboration on joint research projects that can serve to model effective intercultural and international communication. We need further to make our scholarly plan of action a vehicle for social change at least in the modest arenas where we have direct influence. Gradually this influence may carry beyond our more academic spheres of influence into broader social contexts.

Another direction for us to follow will tax our individual and collective creativity. We need to use our accumulating research ever more creatively. The editorial board of ICS has a very liberal policy regarding the use of articles from our journal and earlier conference proceedings. To increase access to these resources, the board has created an exceptional web page that identifies the tables of contents in our diverse publications.

The board will also provide prompt permission to use without charges any of our publications for reasonable projects. Examine what we regularly publish and create your own anthologies based on this readily accessible scholarship. Afterward, let the editorial board see the results and help provide publicity to promote your creative use of our collective scholarship. By all means, expand and supplement what other individuals have done by your own research, your commentaries, and the social extensions of our ideas. In this fashion the appearance of our scholarship in ICS or at our conventions is merely the beginning of its potential impact. This joint, collaborative effort can increase our collective and creative potential.

In retrospect, my years of service to IAICS have strongly stimulated my commitment to its vision and our future development. An organization is only as good as its membership will make it. May this brief perspective foster your desire to join me in a collaborative endeavor of worldwide significance. As teachers and scholars we may be very remote from positions of great social and political power, but this should not excuse the neglect of what power we have to influence increasing numbers of people to better the world through the use of our scholarship about language and communication concerns.

References

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