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## Editorial

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This special issue of *Fieldwork in Religion* marks the beginning of what we hope will be a long and fruitful conversation between religion and communication. If, as Mircea Eliade once suggested, humankind can be best classified as “homo religiosus,” we can say that the record equally describes our species as “homo colloquitur.” Perhaps if scientists can discover a genetic root to human spirituality, as they probe more deeply they also may find one for communication.

In the collection of research that follows, from renowned communication professionals in their respective fields, our journey takes us from the nexus of the sacred and the profane with a review of the 2006 Winter Olympics and the Shroud of Turin, to questions of communication ethics in cyberspace that have far-reaching implications, to a discussion of the results of a ground-breaking survey of US religion communicators, to, finally, a clarion call for a theology of communication rights that must engage both theologians and communicators alike for the sake of the common good. It is an all too brief “walkabout” but it is a journey begun.

As you read through the issue, you may want to consider these “points to ponder” that, hopefully, will raise still others for further reflection and discussion:

- Can communication – public relations specifically – that is persuasive (i.e., religious *devotional-promotional communication* that seeks to foster love for a religious figure, living or deceased, or for a particular faith) also be ethical? Is public relations practice in general a profession or a craft or skill, or at best an emerging discipline?
- In what has become the “Wild West” frontierland of the Internet, what are some of the deeper questions about the ethical consequences of its use and of the “information society” in general? In developing a “media ecology” framework for the Internet, how can we move past an “instrumental” conception of media and communication and toward a view that encompasses a broader concern for information ethics, and, indeed, the global call for communication rights?
- Should religion communicators operate as in-house journalists (*hacks*) or advocates (*flacks*) for their respective organizations, and what are the inherent dangers both for organized religion and society at large in veering toward one pole or the other? Do those practitioners who choose to take a journalist position and downplay a managerial role somehow make their institutions less responsive to social needs and less influential in the religion “marketplace”?
- In the absence of a theology of communication rights, how best can theologians and communicators move forward not only to develop useful paradigms but to ensure that such rights have the collective support and political and social structures that will finally and fully establish the level of human dignity that all peoples deserve?

How we answer the question posed by Philip Lee in our final article – “And who is my neighbour?” – will lead us down a particular path, which, ultimately, will make all the difference in our journey.