

HELLO...

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Welcome to the first CRC Newsletter. Published intermittently in the interest of keeping our friends in the field of communications research informed about our program, Newsletter welcomes your comments and criticisms. As our mailing and circle of friends grow, we hope to be able to provide service for professionals in all the areas of mass communication, as well as to universities and private research centers concerned with the study of communication. (This attractive folder should help you in keeping future copies of Newsletter together in a convenient file.)

The technical side of our research projects will be reported in the form of Abstracts, or individually printed periodic summarizations of research findings. These will be announced in subsequent issues of Newsletter.

CRC was organized in the Summer of 1959 in answer to the outstanding need for systematic scientific study of the communication media. For years professional communicators have made use of the media at their disposal with relatively little understanding of the cause and effect relationships that influence audience behavior. No one questioned either the methodology or ability of these professionals - and they got results. Today, however, an increased emphasis has been put on the social sciences in analyzing the communications process. A shrinking world with expanding



markets has been responsible for the increasingly large part of man's day spent in the reception of mass communications. With the mounting of competition for TV & radio time, journal space, and audience attention, the sponsor has demanded a knowledge of the most effective use of media...as well as the audience response to it.

Enter the social scientists. Research methods were applied to the problems of journalists, PR and ad men, and other communicators....with gratifying results. And of course, as in any scientific discipline, pure research occupies the primal position; we are particularly interested in knowing much more about the communications process per se....no such knowledge is divorced from practical applications.

These are the reasons behind the current emphasis on communications research. It is no longer possible for the professional communicator to rely on the "gift of gab" for effective response from his audience. Nowadays the practitioner who lacks a research orientation and is not aware of the contributions of the social scientist is finding himself "out on a limb".



It is in the interest of interpreting and enlarging this body of knowledge concerning the communications process that the CRC has been established.

CRC

What is
CRC?
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The Communications Research Center is a part of the School of Public Relations and Communications of Boston University; it exists for the mutual benefit of the School and the professions represented within it. Founded on the tenet that the two main functions of a university are teaching and research, the Center is seen as an outlet for sustained growth of the faculty, a new training opportunity for graduate students, and an instrument for serving certain community needs.

Why is
CRC?
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CRC was organized to promote the growth of a unified body of knowledge in the communications professions... to provide means for pooling creative talents of faculty members for the improvement of research and the attainment of professional recognition ...to conduct research for the various communications industries ...to investigate economic, political, and social institutions as they relate to public relations, public opinion, and the communications media ...to assist in the training of graduate students in the form of classroom instruction and technical assistance on their thesis work ...to disseminate periodically the results of research being done in the Center and the University.

What are
CRC's
policies?
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Projects investigated by CRC must have academic merit, be consonant with the public interest, and further the educational objectives of SPRC. Wherever possible, projects should provide a practicum for graduate students. CRC reserves the right to publish the results of research. Names of organizations will be kept anonymous when necessary. CRC may delay publication dates as it sees expedient. CRC will avoid projects that compete with research facilities of the other divisions of the University. This avoidance of duplication is seen as one step in the direction of inter-school coordination of research activities.

How is
CRC
organized?
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CRC is headed by a Chairman, Dr. Edward J. Robinson, who is responsible to the Dean of SPRC. A committee consisting of six faculty members assists the Chairman, functioning as: (1) an approving body for project acceptance and policy modification and/or innovation, and (2) an advisory body on research contract sources, publicity, and administrative details.

COMIC RELIEF

This Fall the CRC embarked on a three-year research project entitled, "A Socio-Cultural Investigation of American Comic Strips from 1890 to the Present Day".

Better known as the comic strip study, the project will focus its attention on the syndicated features which appear in the daily, weekly, and particularly Sunday newspapers throughout the country; the study does not include comic books.

Dr. David Manning White, principal investigator of the project, defined three major areas of investigation:

1. An inventory and categorization of every strip since 1890.
2. An intensive content analysis of all current comic strips.
3. A survey of attitudes toward comics among leadership groups in education, social work, psychology, psychiatry, et al.

According to Dr. White, "The first area of investigation is in essence an historical approach to the study of comics, whereas the second is sociologically oriented and the third utilizes the skills of the public opinion researcher. I make this point only to illustrate the necessity of a cross-disciplinary approach, a characteristic of the analytical study of any great mass medium in contemporary American society. Among the personnel of CRC are staff members with particular interests and expertise in each of these areas; each member will contribute toward the successful pursuit of these projects."

Members of the research team are presently engaged in compiling an exhaustive file of all the comic strips that have appeared during the last 70 years. These files and the forthcoming analytic studies will be available to scholars whose field of study involves this significant mirror of American culture.

Operation comic strip is being sponsored by the Newspaper Comics Council, Inc., a trade organization representing publishers of syndicated comic strips with an aggregate circulation over seventy million. The Council is interested in an analytical rather than an evaluative study.

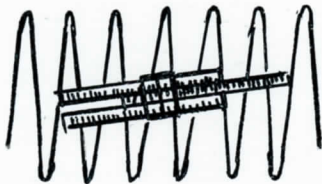
Nationwide publicity aroused public interest in the project, bringing dozens of letters daily to Dr. White and his colleagues in CRC. Their contents range from inquiries by communications researchers and publishers to sighs of relief from schoolteachers and veteran comic strip addicts who had been previously ashamed of reading the comics.

Armed with the basic hypothesis that American comic strips reflect much of the total American cultural pattern and as such are invaluable as a tool for mass media investigation, CRC humbly but confidently embarks on this project.



TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER...

Dr. Edward J. (not G.) Robinson, Chairman of CRC, is no stranger to the University. Arriving in September 1949 with an A.B. from the University of California tucked under arm, he chalked off the A.M. (June 1950) and Ph.D. (June 1953) in experimental and social psychology.



His teaching talents have been utilized by M.I.T., Tufts University, and Boston University, where he has taught Human Behavior, Communications Research Methods, Human Relations in Industry, Public Opinion and Attitude Change, and A Survey Course in Industrial Psychology and Sociology.



Articles by Dr. Robinson have been published in the American Journal of Psychology, the Public Relations Journal, the New England Journal of Optometry, the American Journal of Optometry, and Photogrammetric Engineering. At present he is preparing a chapter for a handbook on public relations for release by McGraw-Hill later this year.



The U.S. Army Signal Corps, the Physical Research Laboratory of Boston University (psychophysical and human engineering studies), and the Itek Corporation (Head of Psychology Section) have all granted research experience to Dr. Robinson.



Not content with a heavy teaching and research load, the soft-spoken Dr. Robinson has served as a consultant to the Atomic Energy Commission, the Esso Research & Engineering Co., the National Association of Purchasing Agents, and The Framingham National Bank. He is president of New England Consultants, Inc., a public opinion and attitude research firm.



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S T A F F

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