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BOOK REVIEWS

Arvind Singhal and James W. Dearing (eds), *Communication of Innovations: A Journey with Ev Rogers*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006, 260 pp. Rs 360.

Within the academic tradition, the relationship between a mentor and mentored is a very special one. Students learn from, respect, follow the steps of, and sometimes expand the work of their mentors. However, rarely do students pay tribute to their mentor by writing a book honouring their life and accomplishments. Professors Arvind Singhal and James W. Dearing along with half a dozen acclaimed communication scholars have done just that. *Communication of Innovations: A Journey with Ev Rogers* is a unique scholarly book written in memory of Everett M. Rogers, an illustrious and distinguished professor of communication. The book captivates the reader to want to learn more about Rogers' work, his life, and his influence on scholars and practitioners for almost five decades.

The book is unique for several reasons. First, it adequately captures the intellectual as well as the personal side of one of the greatest communication scholars of our time. Readers learn about the extensive contributions made by Professor Everett M. Rogers (popularly known as Ev) to the field of communication, and how he nurtured and mentored his students through the decades to become acclaimed scholars in their own standing. Second, much like Ev's influence on international communication scholarship and his interest in global cultures, this edited volume has chapters written by scholars and practitioners from six countries spanning five continents, representing the diversity of his influence on communication scholarship. Third, the 10 chapters are contributed by Ev's students from the 1970s through the 1990s, and by his contemporaries as a way to show their gratitude and respect for Ev's lifelong mentorship. Fourth, the book not only describes Ev's influence on the research and practice of diffusion of innovations (a field of study synonymous with Ev Rogers), but it also details his contribution in health communication, development communication, entertainment education and social cognitive theory. Finally, the book is unique because it documents scholarly thinking by using a biographical format that putting a human face to his scholarship. In essence, *Communication of Innovations* is a one of a kind book that captures the uniqueness of Ev Rogers—a prolific scholar, a nurturing mentor, an extensive networker, an inspiring colleague and an affable person.

The articulately written 260-page, 10-chapter book is edited by two well-known scholars who were Rogers' doctoral students in the mid-1980s and who continue to carry on their mentor's legacy. Arvind Singhal, an internationally renowned entertainment education expert, and James W. Dearing, a prolific diffusion of innovations scholar, could not have given a more fitting tribute to their mentor than writing this book. As the editors eloquently explain this in the preface, 'This book [is] in honour and celebration of our mentor's intellectual legacy.'

Singhal and Dearing were both ingenious and innovative in the conception of this book. In order to understand Ev's seminal contribution to the field of communication, they solicited chapters from scholars who excelled in fields that piqued Ev's intellectual curiosity. In addition, they sought contributions from scholars who were trained by Ev and have greatly expanded his contribution to the field of communication. In doing so, this neatly edited volume, written in a conversational style, is rich in history and invaluable in substance. It covers topics such as the future of diffusion of innovations research, role of social networks, intersection of diffusion with social cognitive theory, health communication and social marketing, strategic communication campaigns, development communication, entertainment education and social change. Each chapter provides an in-depth understanding of the centrality of communication across several disciplines such as marketing, health promotion, development studies and management science. By the end the reader is amply convinced of Ev's invaluable and lasting contributions to each of these areas of study.

The first chapter by Dearing and Singhal summarizes the influence of growing up in rural Iowa on Ev's professional life—charting how the values he inculcated as a child paved the path for his future achievements. Ev's 47-year acclaimed academic career surprisingly started out as mere curiosity when he was still a boy living and working on his father's farm. It is hard to imagine that the diffusion of innovations paradigm grew out of a simple question that puzzled a 5-year-old: why did it take his father (like many other farmers) almost eight years to adopt new hybrid corn when it yielded 25 per cent more corn than the normal variety? This question concerning why some people resist adoption of new products and how communication helps overcome resistance became the cornerstone of Ev's doctoral studies and eventually established him as a pioneer diffusion of innovations theorist. The authors also describe in detail how positivism shaped Ev as a scholar as a consequence throughout his career, Ev strongly held the belief that research can lead to positive change of society, and that practitioners and academics can together accomplish social change.

Beginning in the 1960s, specific applications of the diffusion of innovations framework were widespread in strategic extension campaigns, development communication and social marketing. Ev was influential in shaping the thinking of scholars and practitioners in these areas as is evidenced in the chapters by Ronny Adhikarya, Srinivas Melkote and Philip Kotler. Adhikarya describes how he has used his mentor's theory to design needs-based and demand-driven strategic communication campaigns involving end beneficiaries for several United

Nations and World Bank projects throughout the 1970s into the 1990s. Professor Melkote, on the other hand, began his career critiquing Rogers' diffusion paradigm for being positivistic and adopting a Western hegemonic approach to third world development. Yet Melkote rightly acknowledges Ev's contributions to the growth, rethinking and expansion of the field of development communication, and explains how the limitations of the diffusion paradigm paved the way for participatory and empowerment-based development. The eminent social marketing expert Philip Kotler describes how diffusion theory has greatly contributed towards understanding consumer buying behaviour and adoption processes of product and services. Readers learn that diffusion of innovations is a synthesis of multiple models, central to which are consumer behaviour, communication and networks of social influence.

Professor Dorothy Leonard, another of Rogers' illustrious protégées, lucidly explains how Ev's scholarship has contributed considerably to the study of innovation as a knowledge creation process. Leonard, a professor of business administration, points out how knowledge as innovation is shared and practised based on 'horizontal diffusion' among a network of professionals, thereby increasing efficiency and the purposive diffusion of the knowledge. According to Leonard, the diffusion paradigm with a focus on the innovation has made strides across diverse organizations such as technology industries, engineering and marketing firms, and even policy think-tanks. She explains how the creation of 'knowledge societies' by the World Bank or 'communities of practice' among engineers or state legislators are based on the premise of creating and diffusing information leading to shared knowledge appropriation. In sum, Leonard focuses on the 'innovations' part of the diffusion paradigm and showcases Ev's influence in this area.

Professor Thomas Valente, another of Ev's accomplished prodigies, explains in an engaging chapter how innovations diffuse through communication across social networks. Valente provides a simplified view of the multiple models that explain 'the adopter persuading the non-adopter' phenomenon, which forms the basis of network analysis. The chapter begins with a historical overview of mapping communication flow across people. Subsequently, Valente explains complex social network models that seek to understand structural issues as well as use of 'connectors' and 'bridges' to accelerate diffusion.

The legendary scholar Albert Bandura, one of Ev's contemporaries, illustrates the crossover between social diffusion and social cognitive theory to understand human behaviour and change. Bandura uses a triadic model grounded in psychological theories to explain how individuals acquire knowledge, adopt the innovation, and use social networks to further the adoption in society. Bandura illustrates how concepts such as social and observational learning, role modelling, and self and collective efficacy have been put into practice to promote the social diffusion of ideas and practices using televised dramas. Readers learn about Bandura's key influence on Miguel Sabido, a drama writer-producer for Televisia, Mexico, who is considered the father of entertainment education (EE). This chapter also sets the foundation for the essay on EE as a global health promotion strategy.

Ev also conducted extensive field studies of the use of EE to tackle global social problems ranging from HIV/AIDS to family planning and domestic violence. The chapter on EE written by Singhal and practitioner-scholars from four continents is a fitting tribute to Ev's contribution in this area of communication and social change. Multiple times in the book Ev has been referred as an avid storyteller—he believed strongly in getting students' attention while talking to them and he never lectured but instead conversed with students and colleagues. Given these traits, it is easy to understand why Ev got interested in the research and practice of EE. In the 1980s, Ev got some of his students enthusiastic about the power of storytelling to promote social change using the media. Arvind Singhal was one of the first to catch on to this idea and has since collaborated with numerous colleagues to study and institutionalize entertainment education as a strategy applied to a variety of social issues across cultures and continents. Insightfully written and dotted with rich personal narratives, readers will easily glean why and how Ev contributed to the growing scholarship on EE.

Given the personal style of the book, the final chapter by Shefner-Rogers, Ev's wife and collaborator, provides a very close insight into his life. This chapter gives us a glimpse of Ev the person, whose life and scholarship were both very much a product of his upbringing, values, passions and sharp intellect. She recounts how the values Ev learned from his father and teachers made him a generous and hard-working individual, and his innate curiosity made him pursue a career path that he never tired of. This chapter is truly a celebration of a man who loved what he did and made a mark on the lives he touched, while leaving behind a rich and expansive scholarly legacy.

In closing, *Communication of Innovations* captures current thinking in the theory and practice of communication and social change, and vivid personal vignettes brings this book to life. The book showcases the life and work of an eminent scholar, and in so doing illustrates the breadth and diversity of the field of communication. The essays remind the reader of Ev's belief that communication is central in fostering social change. This is a must read for those with an interest in communication science, and particularly for readers who seek to translate communication theory into practice.

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