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An Innovation for JPD and a Transition: The Profession and a Confession of an Editor

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Abstract

Abstract The following article is a short description of a new direction taken by this Volume VI, that is, a Symposium on Teaching Deliberative Democracy in many different fields of Academe. It is also an explanation of the past, present and future of JPD, all of which are bright.

An Innovation for *JPD* and a Transition: Profession and Confession of an Editor

By Ted Becker

Welcome to Volume VI 2010 of *The Journal of Public Deliberation*. If you are one of our many readers and/or downloaders, you're in for some pleasant surprises.

As you probably know, this publication has been exclusively devoted to a wide variety of research approaches to deliberative democracy: its philosophy, its practices, its experiments and its projects. This volume (VI) marks a positive departure from this exclusivity by recognizing that most of those who read and use these articles are—academics. Thus, most of them do what academics are paid to do mostly: teach.

In addition, the mission of *JPD*, from its inception, has been to be the academic journal of choice for what might generously be called “The Deliberative Democracy Movement” and enhancing the role of Academe in that political transformation.

Thus, it has almost been remiss of us to ignore teaching about this movement in college and university courses.

Volume VI thus becomes *JPD*'s first venture into the teaching of deliberative democracy or public deliberation in a vast spectrum of fields in higher education. Thus, this article is an Introduction to this innovation, which is presented as a special issue of *JPD* dedicated to teaching this subject matter in college and university disciplines. You are already on the home page of Issue 1 of Volume VI and, as you can see from its Table of Contents, the Symposium follows.

This symposium was not my idea nor did I do any editing of it. It is the brainchild and handiwork of two members of our Board of Editors: Dr. Nancy Thomas and Dr. Martin Carcasson, in collaboration with the Director of the *Deliberative Democracy Consortium*, Matt Leighninger. Dr. Thomas runs “*The Democracy Imperative*” at the University of New Hampshire which hosted a conference recently in which these papers were incubated. Dr. Carcasson is the Director of *The Center for Public Deliberation* at Colorado State University.

It should also be noted that Dr. John Gastil, of the University of Washington, the second longest serving editor on the *JPD* Board was kind enough to help Drs. Thomas and Carcasson with the task of editing these articles. So, we are all confident that the quality of these papers is up to *JPD* standards and we hope that this symposium will excite, provoke, and inspire many more courses around the world in our field and increase the growing momentum of this movement.

So, that's the “innovation” aspect of this volume. Now for the transitional part.

The New Research Articles Are In Volume VI, Issue 2.

Issue 2, which will be online in September of 2010--if you click upon it at the right, includes the first phase of this volume's research articles. It is only about half its usual size because of the fact that *JPD* itself is in a transition period. In other words, I am leaving the post of "Coordinating Editor" and the journal (not I) will be leaving Auburn University as well. The new editors, who will become the new guiding hands and minds of this publication are Drs. Tim Steffensmeier and David Procter of Kansas State University. They are both professors, administrators and authors in the Communications Studies Department at KSU and they will serve as the new Coordinating Editors.

Kansas State University, the new home of *JPD*, is a very unusual state university in the United States. It took upon itself the role of starting up a multi-disciplinary center devoted to the development of deliberative democracy in the United States and throughout the world. It is called **The Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy (ICDD)** and can be located online at <http://www.k-state.edu/icdd/> While most of their work so far has been devoted to projects in their area, the university is eager to host a global, peer-reviewed online journal and this field seems to suit them as well.

The **ICDD** was originally given a large grant of money, which supported a full-time program director, graduate assistants, and the like. Times are tough throughout Academe these days, and although the initial grant has run out, the two new editors believe they have sufficient resources to allow *JPD* to become a semi-annual publication. Thus, under their guidance, the deliberative democracy research community may soon have even greater access to publishing more than we have been able to provide while it has been housed at Auburn.

I know from my own personal record keeping that this worldwide research enterprise has grown tremendously in the 6 years *JPD* has been a major recipient of a lot of its efforts. As proof, here are the data to show the steady increase in interest in this Journal's research. BePress allows us to monitor their data base. These numbers represent the number of **article downloads** measured by academic years:

2004-2005	=	234
2005-2006	=	2,783
2006-2007	=	3,637
2007-2008	=	5,939
2008-2009	=	6,548
2009-2010	=	6,728

The slower growth of downloads in 2009-2010 is largely a function of the fact that we have not posted any new research articles until this Issue 2 went online in September 2010. Thus, with the Symposium, we expect a substantial uptick in the academic year of 2010-11..

Frankly, these numbers have astounded me...as well as the facts that our Board of Editors has doubled since we began, and the number of outside submissions has nearly tripled. Considering we have had no professional organizational affiliation and that all this was done on a start up fund of about \$18,000, we think that we can safely say, when George W. Bush could not, “**Mission Accomplished.**”

None of this would be possible without my being graced by a truly extraordinary Board of Editors. I never would have believed it possible to have so many truly talented and extremely busy Ph.Ds, many holding titled professorships and executive positions, be so incredibly collaborative. I'd say that the “I'm sorry, I'm too busy” response occurred no more than 2% of the time.

Moreover, the peer reviews themselves were routinely quick, lengthy, detailed, insightful, and helpful to the authors. Our rejection rate (slightly above 50%) is largely due to how determined *JPD*'s Board of Editors has been to assist younger colleagues in making their submissions publishable. In fact, other than the Essays and book reviews, not a single article published in *JPD* got two “accepted, but with minor revisions.” All had at least one “major revisions required.” All. Yes every one was closely edited and managed by one of our editors in order to help our colleagues get the piece into publishable shape. Our goal is publication to help the field mature, not rejection to increase the “academic reputation” of *JPD*.

I would also like to thank *Berkeley Electronic Press*, whom I consider to be among the premier academic online journal presses in the world, for their tremendous support during these times, particularly since I've had to play webmaster for the past 4 years as well as assigning and monitoring all articles submitted. *JPD* is one of only two publications in their entire stable of journals that is not **owned** by *BePress*. We are their prize “pro bono” charity case They have called *JPD* “impressive” and “remarkable” We are grateful to them for all that.

So, now the torch is being passed. I truly hope that you find the Symposium to be extremely useful (Issue 1) and that the few articles I've managed to process for the academic year 2010-11 are as good and interesting as ever.

The new editors have just learned they are inheriting about 15 others waiting to be processed as I write this. I will play the role as “Founding Editor”—which means I get to assist in the birth of the new and better *JPD* in the future, one shining an even brighter light to help illuminate the path of a political decision making process that is essential to global sustainability for humanity on this planet.