People Profile: John Long
The following is a guest review provided by Brian McGee and Deborah Socha McGee (Faculty, Department of Communication, College of Charleston, 66 George Street, Charleston, SC 2940; Phone: 843-953-7017; Fax: 843-953-7037) <mcgeed@cofc.edu>, <mcgeed@cofc.edu>. We thank you both for your contribution. — TG

The Encyclopedia of Communication Theory (2009, 978-1-4129-5937-7, $350) is a two-volume set, edited by Stephen W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss, two highly regarded communication scholars. This comprehensive work will be especially helpful for communication students, communication and other scholars looking for an introduction to unfamiliar theories, and lay readers.

Like some similar encyclopedia projects prepared in the past few decades, this work is the product of a large and diverse collection of individuals, with over 200 contributors from ten different countries. The editorial board also is international in scope. Many of the theorists represented in the present work are themselves authors for one or more entries. The entries are of between 1,000 and 3,000 words and include suggested readings for each entry.

This set is different from other communication encyclopedia projects in two important respects. First, the current project deliberately seeks to cover the range of communication theories produced by scholars working in multiple disciplinary traditions, from rhetoric and philosophy to anthropology, sociology, communication studies, psychology, political science, and journalism. In contrast, other encyclopedias have tended to feature only social scientific or mass communication theories, for example. While no two-volume effort will survey the field in a manner satisfying to all, the current project deliberately seeks a broader range of topics.

Second, while other encyclopedias represent an array of communication topics, including explanations of communication history, communication practice, and the various communication industries, the current project is expressly focused on communication theory. This narrower emphasis will be especially useful for students who are completing introductory and advanced courses in communication theory and can turn to an encyclopedia resource that will meet their needs for theoretical content. For this project, while appropriately respectful of the histories and cultures contributing to the development of various theories, the major tenets of the theories themselves always are privileged in the individual entries, whether those theories and theorists are drawn from antiquity (e.g., Aristotle) or twentieth- and twenty-first century work (e.g., Dale Brashers, Young Yun Kim, Sandra Petronio).

The set provides added value with a reader’s guide, which puts all the encyclopedia entries into 17 general topical categories. In addition, a theorist index is supplied, as is a short and helpful chronology of the development of communication theories from the classical period to 2008. Not surprisingly, the majority of the chronology is taken up with theory development after 1950. There also is a selected bibliography of major works by topic, which appears at the back of the second volume.

The articles in all cases are signed by the contributors. “See also” references are provided. In cases where different names exist for similar or overlapping theoretical concepts, cross-references are supplied, as when a list-continued on page 49