

The  
Pennsylvania  
Scholars Series

**Robert T. Oliver**

- Introduction  
.....Janie M. Harden Fritz & Jill Seibert Burk
- Robert T. Oliver: The Man of the Future  
.....James C. McCroskey
- Robert T. Oliver: A Zestful Devotion to the Speech Communication  
Discipline  
.....Nichola D. Gutgold
- Robert T. Oliver: Visionary in Intercultural Communication  
..... Robert Shuter
- Tao, Dialogue, and Cultural Tensions: The Oliver Invitation  
.....Rob Anderson
- Motivation, Conversation, and Interiority: Robert T. Oliver Points Toward  
Communication & Leisure  
..... Annette M. Holba
- Robert T. Oliver: Standard Bearer of the Field of Communication  
..... Janie M. Harden Fritz

**Standard Bearer of the Discipline**

*Published by  
The Pennsylvania Communication Association*

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**Standard Bearer of the Discipline**

**THE PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION**  
**FOUNDED 1939**

PA Scholars Se

PCA is dedicated to research in, ethical use of, and education for excellent oral communication in every human activity, especially those in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Specifically, its members seek to: (1) Encourage recognition of speech communication and its partner system, listening, as an inherent part of basic human skill; (2) Advocate education in competent speaking and listening through the adoption of at least one required course in oral communication in all Commonwealth school districts and institutions of higher learning; (3) Encourage competent oral communication and listening across the curriculum in all class activities; (4) Encourage people to participate in co-curricular activities that develop speaking and listening skills; (5) Recognize communication as an integral and on-going process in the business and organizational world; (6) Promote literacy in the performance in and critique of competent mass communication; (7) Further recognition of the artistic merits and human growth potential of various performance settings that utilize oral communication; (8) Train all citizens in critical thinking and effective communication of their ideas; (9) Encourage scholarship in and publication of results that investigate various aspects of human interaction; (10) Communicate emerging or on-going concerns regarding speaking and listening in its various settings to decision-makers in government, organizations, business, and the arts.

~Article II, By-Laws of the Pennsylvania Communication Association

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**Editor**

Janie M. Harden Fritz  
Duquesne University

**Managing Editor**

Ronald C. Arnett  
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**Associate Editor**

Jill Seibert Burk  
Duquesne University

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### Introduction

The fifth issue of the Pennsylvania Scholars Series honors the contributions of Robert T. Oliver, a scholar, teacher, and administrator whose professional contributions to the field of communication spanned seven decades. He served as president of the Pennsylvania Communication Association in 1941 and 1953, and the association's lifetime achievement award bears his name. His scholarly legacy, like that of Carroll Arnold, Henry Johnstone, Gerald Phillips, and Herman Cohen, extends beyond this association to the regional and national levels. The contributors to this issue focus on different facets of his work, each highlighting unique elements of his professional career that touch the field of communication to this day.

James C. McCroskey opens and introduces this edition of Pennsylvania Scholars Series by recalling memories of Oliver as a teacher, mentor, and colleague. McCroskey, the most published scholar today in the communication field, illuminates Oliver for us through his presentation of anecdotes, introducing us to the vast scope and continuing importance of Oliver's work.

Nichola D. Gutgold's essay, *Robert T. Oliver: A Zestful Devotion to the Speech Communication Discipline*, addresses Oliver's scholarly devotion to public speaking through a review of his scholarship on public speaking pedagogy, noting his recognition of the pertinent link between communication and democracy. Gutgold's essay provides personal tableaux from colleagues of Oliver's, which furthers our ability to understand Oliver's scholarship and desire for learning. Furthermore, Gutgold's essay addresses Oliver's understanding of speaking skills as a desired competency for employees, his positioning of public address as conversation oriented rather than performance oriented, and his recognition of speech as foundational for life in a democratic society.

In his essay, *Robert T. Oliver: Visionary in Intercultural Communication*, Robert Shuter examines Oliver as a forerunner in the field of intercultural communication. While Shuter acknowledges that Oliver himself did not use the term "intercultural communication," Shuter identifies Oliver's work as foundational to the academic study of intercultural communication. Shuter addresses four major facets of Oliver's scholarly contributions to intercultural

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communication. He examines Oliver's scholarship as initiating the critique of the Eurocentric bias of rhetoric/communication; as offering an Asiatic alternative to the study of rhetoric/communication; as utilizing an intracultural perspective to frame rhetoric/communication research; and as envisioning international diplomacy as a site for examining rhetoric/communication. Shuter notes that Oliver's contributions are as important in today's historical moment as they were during Oliver's lifetime.

In *Tao, Dialogue, and Cultural Tensions: The Oliver Invitation*, Rob Anderson explores Oliver's scholarship in the area of Asian communication. Anderson sees Oliver's scholarship in Asian communication as an invitation for scholars working in a discipline dominated by Western communication to welcome, encounter, and engage Eastern cultural communication traditions. Anderson utilizes his own work in the areas of Taoism and dialogue to buttress and respond to Oliver's invitation by showing the transparent borders that exist between the two areas and by expanding the discussion of tension as it relates to intercultural dialogue.

Annette M. Holba's essay, *Motivation, Conversation, and Interiority: Robert T. Oliver Points Toward Communication and Leisure*, illuminates Oliver's work as a historical gatekeeper whose scholarly contribution influences the relationship between communication and philosophical leisure in our lives. She presents Oliver as a central figure in helping communication scholars understand the history of their discipline, while simultaneously pointing toward the potential future of the discipline. Holba's essay provides a creative hermeneutic entrance into Oliver's scholarship by surfacing an implicit connection between communication and philosophical leisure found in his work in human motivation, human conversation, and human interiority.

In *Robert T. Oliver, Standard Bearer of the Field of Communication*, Janie M. Harden Fritz introduces Oliver as a visionary operating in the discipline whose work shaped the local, national, and international levels of the field. In her essay, Fritz presents Oliver as a "learning worker" whose quest for knowledge led to his engagement of the field as a specialist/generalist. Oliver's scholarly endeavors acknowledged concern for the Other and propelled his work into the realm of applied communication which affected both the scholarly community and the general public. Lastly, Fritz highlights areas of Oliver's work, specifically his work in conversation, which remain

untapped in current communication scholarship and offer new possibilities for scholarship.

**Janie M. Harden Fritz & Jill Seibert Burk**  
**Duquesne University**  
**September 2010**

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