

## Sharing



**Philip Dine**

**W**e're all about communications here—"here" referring both to the magazine you're looking at right now and to the Department of Communications and Media Relations, which produces it.

So, what's with the title above? The word communication is derived from two Latin words: *communicare*, a verb meaning to share or to make something common; and from *communis*, an adjective meaning common or shared. So, clearly, the aim of communicating is to share information so it becomes commonly known.

Dig a little deeper into the origins of the word and its connections to related terms, and it becomes clear that the idea is that without communications there can be no community.

**A good part of what we do here involves sharing information**, through *The Postal Record* and other vehicles, so that what's important to letter carriers—whether work-related matters, contractual issues, legislation, or the value of the U.S. Postal Service and of letter carriers—becomes common knowledge.

Informing folks, however, isn't the end game. Ensuring that we all are armed with common knowledge, with the latest and best information, allows us to influence the pols, the public and the press—each key to our future.

Think of it as internal and external communications or, in basketball lingo, an inside game and an outside game. Think of it also as a dynamic, interactive process—letter carriers get the message out, it's consumed by elected officials and their constituents, and many of the latter folks then share their views on postal matters with their representatives in Washington. Meanwhile, by using the media to inform others, we also educate journalists about the postal issues they cover.

That journalistic model has served all of us well and remains critically important. At the same time, look again at the Latin roots and note the word "share." How better to do that than through the various social media tools that have become so integral to our everyday lives?

**As discussed in an article in this issue, social media channels are ideal for rapid communication**, for discussing information with others, for getting feedback, for online conversations. NALC's emphasis in this area has included the hiring of two staffers focused on digital communications. This month's article discusses the nuts and bolts, plus the importance of familiarizing yourself with the tremendous potential in this area.

Whether we're talking about NALC publications; newspapers, TV, radio or podcasts; or the growing array of social media options, the various communications tools at our disposal are just that: tools to inform, influence and share in ways that serve our mission.

On a personal level, in 30-plus years working in journalism and communications, I've experienced firsthand the rapid evolution, from taking notes by pen and paper, using a typewriter to write the story and walking it over to city desk; to typing on scannable paper so an editor could enter it into the system; to writing and sending stories via laptop from around the globe; to posting my own stories online; to being involved now in NALC's myriad communications efforts.

Sometimes, communications means are dictated by the situation. When I was covering the pending collapse of Soviet rule in East Germany in 1989, my options were limited, because I had, let's just say, casually entered the highly repressive country. I had to observe and memorize hours of events and dialogue in East Berlin's tense streets, not daring to write anything down with *Stasi* (state security forces) watching everywhere, before racing back to my hotel room, hastily jotting down notes and phoning in the stories to my editor in St. Louis. All the while, fervently hoping that he was the only one listening on the line.

Everyone has his or her own experiences, comfort levels and willingness to try new things; whatever your preference, NALC can help you get the message out. In that spirit, remember to check out the social media article and its valuable information.

**Remember this too: You are ultimately the folks who make NALC's communications efforts work.**

During years reporting on the military, from defense acquisitions to strategic planning in the global war on terrorism to combat operations in the Middle East and Afghanistan, I often heard that as impressive as the equipment is—aircraft carriers or fighter jets or armored patrol vehicles—what makes the U.S. military the world's best are the dedication and discipline, the smarts and sense of mission and courage of those who serve.

The same applies to your extraordinary accomplishments in changing the national conversation about the Postal Service. Choose your tools, let us know if we can help—and those accomplishments will get even more impressive.

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