A Central Bank's "Communications Strategy": The Interplay of Activity, Discourse Genres, and Technology in a Time of Organizational Change[1]

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Abstract

This chapter reports on an ethnographic study of the technology-mediated discourse practices of a professional organization in a period of major transition. Employing theories of genre and activity along with other theoretical constructs, the study examined how the Bank of Canada, the country's central bank, employs a "Communications Strategy" to orchestrate the organization's communicative interactions with other social groups in the Canadian public-policy sphere. After identifying a set of written and spoken genres associated with the Communications Strategy, the chapter suggests that the genre set and various mediating technologies can be usefully viewed as parts of a local sphere of organizational activity. The chapter then describes two features of the genre set: the genre knowledge within the community-of-practice associated with it and the relationship of the genre set to processes of organizational change. Next, the chapter discusses the role that the genre set plays in the activity of the Communications Strategy, focusing on three primary functions: co-coordinating the intellectual and discursive work of a large number of individuals performing a variety of professional roles; generating, shaping, and communicating the "public information" that constitutes the Bank's official public position on its monetary policy; and acting as a site for organizational learning. The chapter concludes with five theoretical claims regarding the way in which the genre set, mediated by technology, operates within the Bank, suggesting that these theoretical claims might serve as a heuristic for other researchers.

"Our thinking about our external communications these days is much more strategic than it used to be: we're concerned with how to use our communications strategically—to have an approach that supports our monetary policy objectives, and to be effective with this." (The Communications Czar)

"With this kind of access [to the Bank's Intranet], everyone is wired." (A Deputy Governor)

 "I think the change here in the Bank has happened through a combination of new institutional procedures and culturally assimilated values. Yes, there have been formal efforts to provide media training, to teach people the tricks of the trade. **. . .** But there's still another kind of change required. And I think it's something that people have to pick up, through their work, more by osmosis

> than through a training course." (The Chief of the Communications
> Department)

Introduction

The winds of organizational change and technological innovation are at play in the world ... and in the literature. Recent strands of research and theory focusing on collaborative knowledge-intensive work in the professions, on the social and rhetorical dimensions of information manufacture and use, on transformations in the social structures and work practices of organizations, and on the fusing of texts[2] and new digital information/communication technologies all converge at a point that opens up a conceptual space for examining the interplay of discourse and technology in times of organizational change. In this chapter, I report on a study that draws on various aspects of this scholarship as well as, in a more specific way, on theories of activity and genre to provide the theoretical underpinning for an ethnographic investigation of the shifting, technology-mediated discourse practices of one particular organization during a period of major transition.

In earlier work (e.g., Smart 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2000), I employed an activity-based theory of genre[3] and an ethnographic methodology to produce accounts of how economists at the Bank of Canada, that country's central bank and monetary-policy authority (and counterpart of the U.S. Federal Reserve Board), use an internal set of written and spoken genres in combination with the technology of computer-run mathematical models to accomplish the collaborative activity of generating, negotiating, shaping, and distributing specialized knowledge about the present and expected future state of the Canadian economy—knowledge that is used by the Governor of the Bank (the counterpart of the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board) and his senior colleagues in directing the nation's monetary policy. In this chapter, I will be talking about something related, but different: I will look at another kind of activity, another set of written and spoken genres, and another cluster of technologies—all used by the Bank of Canada to orchestrate its external communications with other social groups in Canada's public-policy sphere, groups that include the media, the general public, government, the financial markets, the business sector, organized labor, and academia (see Diagram 1). Within the Bank, the activity of orchestrating the institution's communicative interactions with these outside groups is commonly referred to as the "Communications Strategy." Using the Communications Strategy as a point of focus, this chapter will examine the role of an evolving set of technology-mediated discourse genres during a period of significant organizational change for the Bank.

Before going further, though, I will provide an overview of the chapter. I begin with the design of the study—first describing the research site, the Bank of Canada's head office in Ottawa, and then moving on to discuss the study's methodology and theoretical orientation. I next present an account of the technology-mediated set of discourse genres that animates, coordinates, and applies the intellectual and discursive work underlying the Bank's communicative interactions with other players in the arena of Canadian public policy. After identifying the various written and spoken genres associated with the Communications Strategy, I suggest that the genre set and a number of mediating technologies can be usefully conceptualized as integral parts of a local

sphere of organizational activity; and then, within this context, I go on to discuss two significant features of the genre set: the genre knowledge displayed within the community-of-practice engaged in the activity of the Communications Strategy; and the relationship of the genre set to
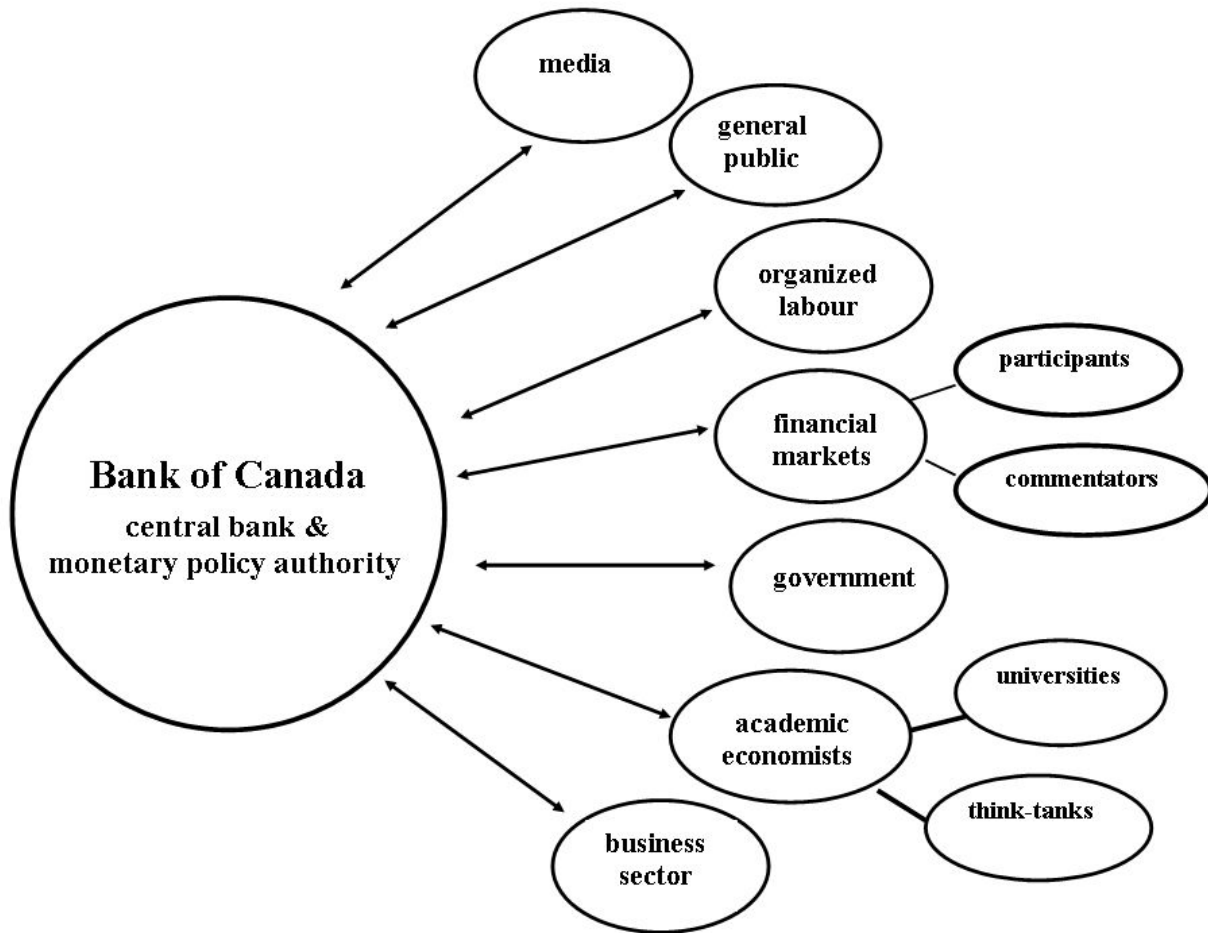

Diagram 1

processes of organizational change. Next, I discuss the role that the genre set plays in the activity of the Communications Strategy, focusing on three of its primary functions: co-coordinating the intellectual and discursive work of a number of individuals performing a variety of professional roles; generating, shaping, and communicating the "public information" that constitutes the Bank's official public position on its monetary policy; and acting as a site for organizational learning. To conclude the chapter, I propose a set of theoretical claims regarding the way in which this set of discourse genres, in conjunction with technology, operates within the Bank to accomplish intellectual and discursive work, and I suggest that these claims might serve as a heuristic for other researchers engaged in examining the role of technology-mediated discourse in the activity of professional organizations. As well, running through the chapter is a thread of commentary on the use of existing theory and building of new theory in ethnographic research, with regard both to the present study and to ethnographic inquiry more generally.

The Study

In this section I describe the research site for the study and then outline its methodology and theoretical framework. As we shall see, both the original aim and the research questions that I initially brought to the study were quickly modified once I entered the site and began to gather data.

Research Site

I will start by describing the setting for the study, the head office of the Bank of Canada in Ottawa (see Figure 1). As a central bank, the Bank of Canada's primary role is to direct the country's monetary policy, a function that involves managing the national money supply by influencing interest rates, with the larger goal of improving the performance of the economy over time. Over the last decade the Bank has made the pursuit of price stability, or low inflation, its primary policy goal (as have central banks in other industrialized countries). Accordingly, the Bank has committed itself to guiding the Canadian economy towards a series of "inflation-control targets" running out into future years, staged in five-year periods.

Figure 1: Bank of Canada Head Office, Ottawa

Decisions on monetary policy are made by an executive group called the Governing Council that includes the Governor, the Senior Deputy Governor, and four Deputy Governors. Supporting this group of decision-makers with economic analysis are six Senior Advisors and some 170 staff economists, situated in four departments—Research; Monetary and Financial Analysis; International; and Financial Markets (known collectively as the "economics departments")— with each department headed by a Chief. In addition, five other departments, including the Communications Department, house employees who provide technical expertise in a range of areas such as corporate communications, editorial services, information technology, and library services. (See Figure 2 for a stylized organization chart of the Bank of Canada.) In addition to this staff in the Ottawa head office, the Bank has regional representatives in five cities—Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver—who provide financial and economic information and analysis from their respective parts of the country, as well as a senior person in Montreal and

another in Toronto whose role is to maintain ongoing communication with key players in the financial markets. Within the Bank, the broad collaborative activity of data gathering, economic analysis, and policy-making is known as the "Monetary Policy Framework."
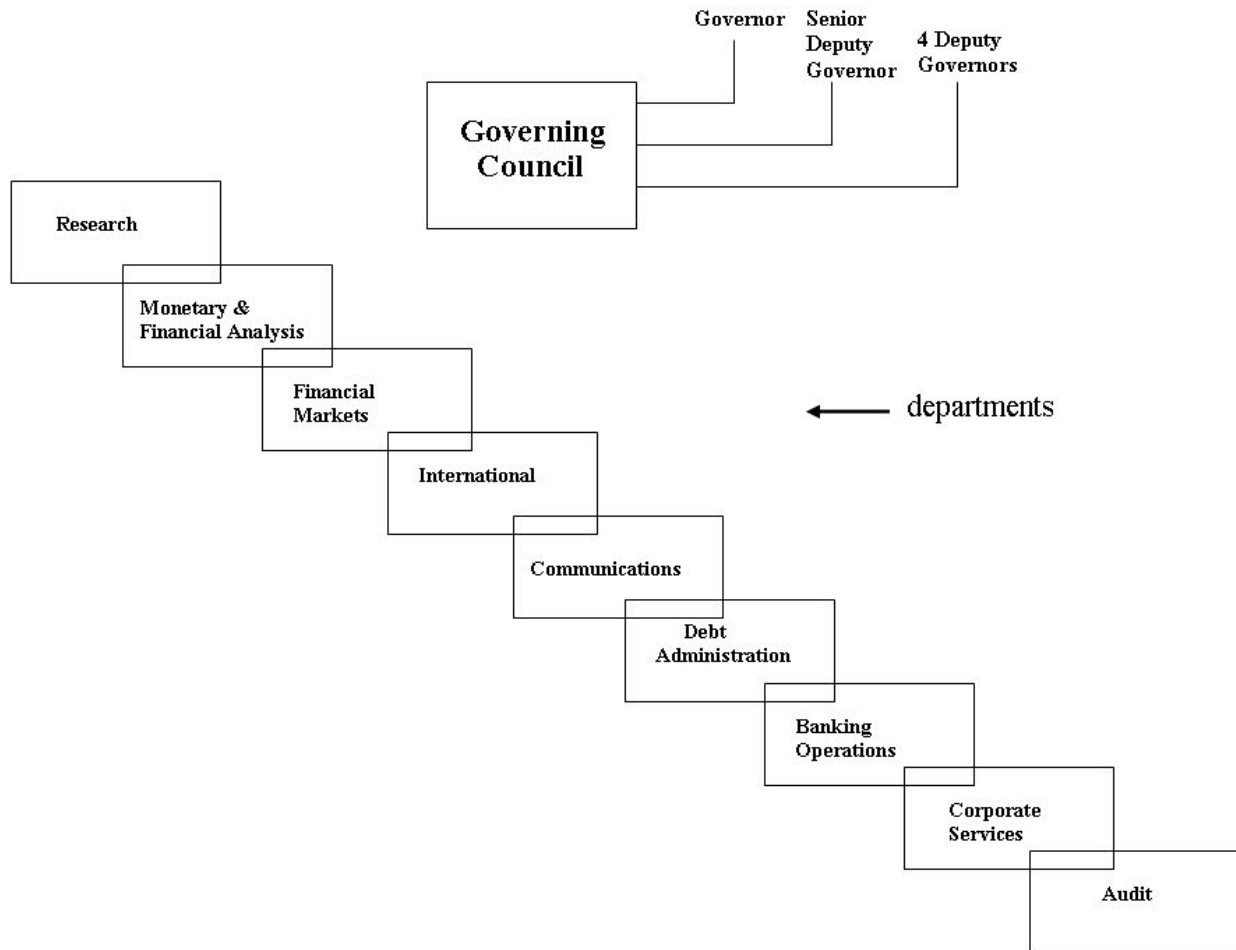

Figure 2: Bank of Canada Organization Chart

Overlapping with the Monetary Policy Framework is the activity that members of the Bank's staff refer to as the "Communications Strategy." The Communications Strategy is a complex, technology-mediated collaborative activity through which the Bank orchestrates its discursive interactions with the outside groups mentioned earlier—the media, the general public, government, the financial markets, the business sector, organized labor, and academia.

An important point to note here is that the Bank's approach to communicating with outside groups has shifted dramatically over the last seven or eight years. The Bank of Canada, like other central banks around the world, has moved from being an institution that veiled its decision-making processes in secrecy and maintained a reactive (some might say defensive) posture of monitoring and cautiously (some might say elliptically) responding to outside commentaries about its monetary policy, to being an institution that is committed to the principle of "transparency" (of which more later) regarding its views on the Canadian economy and its own

monetary-policy goals and actions. And this fundamental shift in approach has been accompanied by significant changes in the uses of discourse and technology within the activity of the Bank's work. While the discursive, intellectual work-world of any professional organization evolves continuously, dramatic change such as that experienced by the Bank of Canada during this period makes the dynamic interplay of activity, discourse, and technology more visible to a researcher, and at one remove, to the reader of a research report.

Methodology and Theoretical Orientation

I will move on now to the research methodology and theoretical constructs employed in the study. The methodology I have used is interpretive ethnography, an approach which allows a researcher to explore a social group's repertoire of shared symbolic resources, or discourse, in order to learn something of how its members view and function within their particular, self-constructed corner of the world. As I will demonstrate below, interpretive ethnography can also enable a researcher to investigate how the members of a social group construct, characterize, and interact with outside groups, and so has offered an effective way of looking at how the Bank of Canada uses written and spoken discourse genres, in combination with a range of technologies, to enact its communicative exchanges with other groups in Canada's public-policy sphere.

Interpretive ethnography, in striving to explore and represent the shared meanings that constitute the discursive and conceptual world of a particular social group, relies heavily on the research practice of eliciting and presenting "displays of members' thoughts, theories, and world views" (Van Maanen, 1988). Thus the accounts produced by interpretive ethnographers typically have a multi-vocal, polyphonic quality, with informants' voices and perspectives given pride of place—all with the intention of achieving the "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of a group's "interworked systems of construable signs [and] structures of meaning" (pp. 6, 14, 182) that is the larger goal of interpretive ethnography. Accordingly, this chapter includes numerous insider perspectives, as conveyed in excerpts from interviews with Bank of Canada staff members, in the findings of the study presented later in the chapter. Cumulatively, this insider discourse provides a unique window onto the indigenous work-world constructed and co-inhabited by the study's informants.

In developing my account of the activity and discourse employed by the Bank of Canada in enacting its Communications Strategy, I have drawn both on an extensive amount of qualitative data that I collected in the Bank's head office in Ottawa during the fifteen years or so that I worked there as a full-time in-house writing consultant and trainer prior to my departure in 1996, and on a more focused set of data gathered from informants at the Bank over a two-day period in June 2000 and supplemented by e-mail exchanges and document gathering in the time since my visit. The data gathered in June 2000 include taped interviews, averaging an hour and a quarter in length, with nine informants: the then Governor of the Bank, three deputy Governors, a Senior Advisor, the Chief of the Bank's Communications Department, the Governor's Senior Assistant (who acts as a speech-writing facilitator, among other functions), and two members of the

Bank's editorial staff. The data also include a variety of Bank documents, including both internal and published print texts, as well as material from the Bank's Web site.

As a side-note here, I want to mention that when I visited the Bank of Canada in Ottawa in June 2000 to observe in the work environment, gather documents, and interview members of the Bank's staff, the research took a significantly different turn from what I had foreseen. I was expecting to explore the organization's traditional reactive posture of monitoring and cautiously responding to outside commentaries about its monetary policy (a posture shared by central banks around the world). And indeed this assumption was instantiated in the lists of questions I had sent to the interviewees ahead of time.[4] However, the morning I began the interviews I quickly realized that since I had left the Bank as an employee in 1996, a dramatic change had taken place in the organization's approach to communicating with outside groups, and I immediately decided to reorient my inquiry to focus on the new Communications Strategy. As the two days I spent at the Bank observing, conducting interviews, and gathering documents progressed, and I began to get a sense of the nature and degree of the change that had occurred, I proceeded to explore different facets of this activity.

To orient my inquiry at the Bank of Canada and to help me interpret the data I gathered there, I have drawn on a number of theoretical constructs from the literature. The first construct to mention is a social theory of genre, and the second, a theory of activity. As we know, contemporary theorizing, building on Carolyn Miller's (1984) ground-breaking work, has recast genre as a form of socio-rhetorical action that, in many professional organizations, plays a central role in the genesis, shaping, distribution, and use of the specialized types of knowledge an organization needs to accomplish its work (Bazerman, 1988; Beaufort, 1999; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Freedman & Smart, 1997; Schryer, 1993; Smart, 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2000; Winsor, 2001).

For professional organizations, it is the discursive recurrence and stability associated with genres—their capacity for regularizing rhetorical acts and writer/reader transactions in ways that allow for the creation and use of particular types of knowledge—that make them essential sites for rendering the intellectual and discursive efforts of various individuals mutually visible and comprehensible and, on a collective level, for connecting, co-coordinating, and harnessing this work (Paré & Smart, 1994). While this characterization accentuates the communal and conventionalized aspects of genre, theorists have also drawn on Anthony Giddens's (1984) concept of the "duality of structure" to show that organizational genres are not only sites of discursive recurrence and stability, but also sites of individual agency and collective innovation (Bazerman, 1994a; Miller, 1994; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). This dual character allows genres to function, simultaneously, as both vehicles of continuity and instruments for change. In a similar vein, Bakhtin (1981) points to a tension between "centripetal" and "centrifugal" tendencies in discourse—"official" discursive energies that would impose uniformity and order on the world versus "unofficial" energies tending towards heterogeneity and disorder—that we might expect to see reflected in organizational genres.

Researchers working with a social theory of genre have also come to recognize that genres used within organizations typically function together in sets, with each genre set operating as an integrated rhetorical/epistemic site (Bazerman, 1994b; Berkenkotter, 2001; Devitt, 1991; Yates & Orlikowski, 2002). Reflecting the structural duality of individual genres, genre sets provide an organization with discursive continuity and stability, while at the same time displaying a marked plasticity and potential for self-reinvention. Moving beyond the scope of a single organization, Charles Bazerman (1994b) conceptualizes an inter-organizational level of discourse—a "genre system" encompassing the full range of discourse genres used by two or more social groups to interact with one another in pursuing a joint endeavor of some kind.

The concept of a genre system encompassing a variety of genres produced by a number of organizations suggests a further aspect of genre theory that will prove relevant later in the chapter: Anne Freadman's (1994) notion of "uptake," a tennis metaphor, where a text in one genre—a shot served over the net, as it were—will frequently elicit, in the natural course of social events, a response in the form of another text. In the context of a genre system, we might think of a pair of genres, each originating in a different social group, that exist "in some sort of dialogical relation" (p. 48), to quote Freadman—so that the appearance of a text in one genre invites a responding text in the second genre.

A final aspect of genre theory pertinent to my study at the Bank of Canada concerns the concept of "genre knowledge"—that is, participants' rhetorical awareness of the ways in which a genre set functions (Beaufort, 1999; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Giltrow, 2002; Giltrow & Valiquette, 1994; Orlikowsky & Yates, 1994; Paré, 2000). In my study, the knowledge displayed by members of the Bank staff who are users of an internal genre set regarding who is responsible for doing what, and when, in the collective accomplishment of the rhetorical work of the genre set turns out to be particularly significant.

In addition to social conceptions of genre, a number of researchers examining discourse in professional organizations have been drawing on North American, British, and Scandinavian extensions of Soviet cultural-historical theory known, collectively, as activity theory. From this theoretical perspective, a set of workplace genres can be viewed as one part of an "activity system" (Cole & Engeström, 1993): a local, historically and culturally situated sphere of collaborative endeavor, in which thinking, knowing, and learning are distributed across a number of people and their work practices and, at the same time, mediated by an array of culturally constructed tools—all with the larger aim of accomplishing a set of communally defined goals. Or to put it more simply, an organizational activity system is (and here I draw on the language of Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger [1991] and James Wertsch [1991]: *people collaborating—over time—within an organizational community-of-practice—in goal-directed activity—using culturally constructed tools to think and act with.* While Lave and Wenger's concept of the "community-of-practice" originated as part of their theory of "situated learning," it has been adapted more broadly to refer to the group of collaborating individuals who participate in an activity system (see, for example, Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999).

As well as defining the concept of the activity system, I want to note three key characteristics of organizational activity systems that are relevant to the study reported in this chapter:[5]

- Within an organizational activity system, cognition—that is, thinking/knowing/learning—is diffused, or distributed, across a community-of-practice and its culturally constructed tools, with the pattern of cognitive distribution reflecting the division of labor among the participants.

- The various culturally constructed tools in use within an organizational activity system, with their respective affordances, or functional capacities, exert a significant mediating influence on participants' cognition, discourse, and work practices, and are frequently, if not always, infused with particular values and interests.[6] Such tools can include, for example, digital technologies, built environments, analytical methods, systems of classification and standards, the regularized social interactions associated with written and spoken genres, and texts in various symbol systems.[7]

- An organizational activity system, while having a strong cultural-historical dimension, is constituted through the moment-to-moment agency and social negotiations of the people who participate in it. The system changes constantly, continuously recreated in response to internal tensions or initiatives, to the possibilities afforded by newly available tools, or to external pressures and influences.

Together, theories of genre and activity offer a powerful conceptual schema for exploring and representing the ways in which professional organizations employ technology-mediated genre sets to prompt, display, coordinate, and deploy the goal-directed intellectual and discursive work of their members.

In addition to these two bodies of theory, the study described in this chapter also draws on theoretical perspectives on the nature of change in professional organizations, as it involves social structures, work practices, and technology, on the social and rhetorical aspects of the manufacture and use of information, and on the fusing of texts and new digital technologies. Wanda Orlikowski (2001) identifies three models of organizational change that have been prevalent in the literature: *planned change*, in which managers, responding to perceived shifts in the internal or external environments, rationally plan and implement changes they believe will improve the organization's performance; *technological imperative*, where a newly introduced technology drives change in and of itself; and *punctuated equilibrium*, where change occurs sporadically and dramatically, triggered by internal or external forces. Orlikowsky, finding these models only partial in their explanatory power, would see them subsumed in another, more comprehensive model that she refers to as *situated change*. From a *situated change* perspective—and this view is consonant with the practice orientation of activity theory, as described above[8]—change occurs as individuals perceive and, in ad hoc ways, respond to unfolding events in their work-world: "[O]rganizational transformation is grounded in the ongoing practices of organizational actors and emerges out of their (tacit and not so tacit) accommodations to and experiments with the everyday contingencies, breakdowns, exceptions, opportunities, and unintended consequences that they encounter" (p. 226). Bonnie Nardi and Vicki O'Day (1999) offer a complementary theoretical perspective on organizational change in

their concept of the "information ecology"—a variation on the "activity system"—in which individual and collective agency, technology-in-use, and continuous change are foregrounded.

Scholarship theorizing the social and rhetorical dimensions of information manufacture and use has also contributed conceptually to my study. Charles Bazerman (2001) writes, "Information is a human creation for human purposes [and thus] is neither disembodied nor neutral. Information is rhetorical. It is created and deployed in particular historical circumstances for the use of particular individuals and groups." In describing the construction by anti-nuclear activists of "public information" on the consequences of nuclear testing during the 1950s, Bazerman points to the "the intentional design of particular forms of information in particular historical circumstances [for the purpose of] influence[ing] individual and group action," highlighting the "recontextualization of knowledge and utterance from one site to another" (p. 261) as a frequent key aspect of this process. John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid (2000) point to the collaborative professional practices that typically underlie the production and deployment of such information.

And finally, I have also drawn on scholarship examining the ways in which texts are merged with new digital technologies (Engeström & Middleton, 1998; Geisler, 2001; Geisler et al., 2001; Haas, 1995; Henderson, 1999; Luff, Hindmarsh, & Heath, 2000). Geisler et al. (2001) coin the term "IText" to refer to the fusing and reciprocal mediation of texts and technology seen in "information technologies with texts at their core" (p. 270) and introduce the IText into theorizing of organizational genres and knowledge-making activity (pp. 291, 293-294). Barbara Carlson (2001) discusses the growing impact of a specific type of IText technology, the Intranet, a web-based system for sharing information internally within an organization that has become the "fastest growing" digital technology in the professional world. Carlson cites the claim that "Intranets leverage a company's intelligence by allowing users easily to create, access, and distribute company knowledge" (p. 84).

To borrow from Lucille McCarthy and Stephen Fishman (2001), I have used the theoretical constructs outlined above to "help [me] name, explore, and explain what [I was] seeing" in the data I gathered at the Bank of Canada. Taken together, these constructs constitute a conceptual framework that has helped me to recognize and describe how written and spoken genres, in combination with technology, are used to engender, render visible, coordinate, and apply a complex configuration of intellectual and discursive work within the activity of the Bank's Communications Strategy. In turn, I hope to complete the theory-data-theory cycle by making a contribution to theory in this chapter, in three ways. First, my analysis of the data will provide further empirical instances to strengthen existing theory. Second, the analysis also aims to add texture and elaboration to existing theory. And finally, I hope to build some new theory. In any event, this is my intention as we move now into an account of the findings from the study—we shall see how it turns out.

The Communications Strategy and Its Genre Set

This section first identifies the set of 33 discourse genres associated with the Bank's Communications Strategy as well as the various digital technologies and built environments

mediating the use of the genre set.[9] I go on to suggest that this internal genre set can be viewed as part of a larger inter-organizational genre system that also includes a constellation of external genres monitored by members of the Bank's staff for the purpose of gleaning information and perspectives from outside groups relevant to the Bank. Next, the genre set and the built environments and digital technologies associated with it are conceptualized as integral parts of a local sphere of organizational activity. I then discuss four significant features of the genre set.

I will begin by identifying the various written and spoken genres that come into play within the activity of the Communications Strategy. (The symbol ******* following a genre indicates either that the genre is new, having emerged with the Communications Strategy over the last seven or eight years, or that it preceded the Communications Strategy but has changed significantly in form and function in recent years. The letters "www.T" beside a written genre indicate that texts in the genre are currently available on the Bank's Web site, http://www.bank-banque-canada.ca/en/index.htm; and for spoken genres, "www.A" indicates the availability on the Web site of an audio file of the communication event, and "www.T" indicates the availability on the Web site of the written text on which the spoken performance was based.) First we will look at a group of 13 published written genres (with the symbol ▲ indicating the 11 genres that Bank insiders refer to as the main "communication vehicles" for the Communications Strategy, that is, the genres regularly used to convey the Bank's "key messages"), as well as at ten spoken genres that also play a part in the activity of the "Communications Strategy"—spoken genres that involve outsiders and so are visible to public view. I view the written genres as similar Bakhtin's (1986) "secondary speech genres" and the spoken genres as analogous to his "primary speech genres."

Written genres — published:

- *Monetary Policy Report*, with 4-page summary (▲,*******, www.T)
- *Update to Monetary Policy Report* (▲,*******, www.T)
- *Bank of Canada Annual Report* (▲,*******, www.T)
- *The Bank of Canada Review* (▲,*******, www.T)
- Governor's presentations to Parliament (two each year to House of Commons, one to Senate) (▲, *******, www.T, www.A)
- minutes from meetings of Board of Directors, featuring summary of Governor's presentation to Board (▲, *******, www.T)
- lectures by Governor, to university audiences[10] (▲, www.T , www.A)
- speeches by Governor, usually to industry, business, and labor groups (▲, www.T , www.A); and similar speeches by other senior members of Bank staff (www.T)
- formal presentations (usually) by Deputy Governors at major economics and public-policy conferences (▲, www.T)
- press releases announcing changes in interest rates and other significant events (▲, www.T , www.A)

- letters from Governor in response to letters, phone calls, and e-mail messages sent to Bank by members of public
- *Technical Reports* describing finished research by Bank staff economists (www.T)
- *Working Papers* describing research-in-progress by Bank staff economists (www.T)

Spoken genres — involving participants outside Bank:

- press conferences by Governor following adjustments to interest rates and following official release of *Monetary Policy Report*, *Update to Monetary Policy Report*, and *The Bank of Canada Review* (***, www.T , www.A)

- briefings by Deputy Governor to journalists in "lock-up" facility immediately preceding official release of *Monetary Policy Report*, *Update to Monetary Policy Report*, and *The Bank of Canada Review* ***

- briefings by Deputy Governors to journalists and financial analysts following release of *Monetary Policy Report* and *Update to Monetary Policy Report* ***

- lunch meetings at Bank of Canada between senior Bank officials and people in government, business, financial markets, organized labor, media, and academia ***

- meetings between Governor and other senior Bank policy-makers with editorial boards of newspapers and news magazines

- meetings of Governor, other senior Bank policy-makers, and staff economists with officials in various levels of federal and provincial governments

- informal presentations by senior Bank policy-makers, staff economists, and regional representatives to university audiences and to various industry and business groups ***

- meetings during visits by regional representatives to industries and businesses ***

- interactions between Bank economists and outside economists at conferences hosted by Bank on monetary policy and related economic issues ***

- regular telephone conversations between (a) Bank economists and market analysts, traders, and portfolio managers in Canadian financial institutions, and (b) senior Bank staff and journalists

All together, we see 23 written and spoken genres here. Now we will look at 11 other internal written and spoken genres that also play an integral role in the activity of the Bank's Communications Strategy—these are behind-the-scenes genres that, while an essential part of the

activity of the Communications Strategy, are not visible to outsiders. (The word "Intranet" after a genre indicates that texts in the genre are accessible to senior Bank staff on the organization's internal Intranet.)

Written and spoken genres – behind-the-scenes (not visible to outside world):

Written

- *Q & A's* (prepared questions-and-answers material) (***, Intranet)

- analyses of commentaries appearing in print and broadcast media following *Monetary Policy Report*, *Updates to MPR*, *The Bank of Canada Review*, *Bank of Canada Annual Report*, and lectures and speeches by Governor (***, Intranet)

- yearly report from Communications Department analyzing effectiveness of Communications Strategy (***, Intranet)

- yearly report from Financial Markets Department analyzing reactions of financial markets to Bank's monetary policy actions (***, Intranet)

- weekly analyses of information provided to Research Department by regional representatives regarding actions and views of business people and politicians ***

- reports on surveys of audiences for different types of Bank communications ***

- on-going analyses of financial markets' reactions to Bank's monetary policy actions

- daily "clippings" package – compendium of articles from print media mentioning the Bank of Canada or dealing with topics relevant to monetary policy

Spoken

- meetings involving writers and editors during production processes for genres such as *Monetary Policy Report*, *Bank of Canada Annual Report*, *The Bank of Canada Review,* and Governor's speeches ***

- meetings between members of Communications Department and senior Bank staff to discuss aims and effectiveness of Communications Strategy ***

- weekly conference calls involving regional representatives and staff economists in Research Department ***

These 34 genres can be seen to function together as a single genre set, in complex chains of communicative events and rhetorical/epistemic acts (as will be discussed in some detail later in the chapter).[11] At the same time, the use of this genre set is mediated by a variety of built environments and digital technologies such as those noted below (an *** beside a built environment or digital technology indicates that it is relatively new to the Bank):

- "lock-up" facility for journalists, with its various digital information/communication technologies ***

- press conference facility, where Governor and senior officials meet with journalists ***

- Bank's Intranet ***

- Bank's Web site ******* (http://www.bank-banque-canada.ca/en)

- digital management information systems *******

- telecommunication system linking Ottawa head office with regional offices *******

- e-mail links via Internet to contacts outside Bank *******

- Governing Council's dining room, site for lunches with visitors

- networked computers used in document production that are linked to computer-run economic models and to electronic document archives and data bases

- digital links to wire services, press agencies, etc.

- digital connections to financial markets in Canada, U.S., and abroad

- telephone, conference-call technology, fax

When we look at the Communications Strategy's genre set, one of its striking characteristics is the interactivity of written and spoken discourse. One aspect of the relationship between these two modes of discourse involves chains of genres closely linked in their use—such as the Bank's *Monetary Policy Report*, the *Q & A's* material produced for use by the Governor in preparing for the press conference that immediately follows the official release of the *MPR*, and the press conference itself. Here we also see the way in which discourse and digital technologies merge into ITexts (Geisler et al., 2001): electronic copies of both the *MPR* and the *Q & A's* are placed on the Bank's Intranet for viewing by Bank staff several days before the official release of the *MPR*; and then following the release of the *MPR*, the Governor's press conference—held in a specially equipped built environment—is digitally recorded, with the spoken performance placed on the Bank's Web site as an audio file along with an electronic copy of the *MPR* .

If we examine the 34 genres and the various digital technologies and built environments listed earlier, we will see other similar chains of genres combining written and spoken discourse, often with specially constructed environments in play, and with ITexts as the frequent outcome. As soon becomes clear in looking at the genre set of the Communications Strategy, it comprises a discursive fabric of temporally and functionally linked written texts and spoken performances—all mediated by a complex network of digital technologies and built environments.

A related issue here is the blurred distinction between written and oral discourse within certain individual genres. How are we to categorize, for example, the Governor's speeches? In these spoken performances, the Governor reads, verbatim and in front of a live audience, a written text that has been carefully crafted through collaboration and document cycling involving a number of people over a significant period of time. Following the speech, the written text and an audio file of its spoken performance by the Governor will appear as complementary ITexts on the Bank's Web site. Should we classify the speech as a spoken genre, or as a written genre? If one applies Bakhtin's (1986) distinction between "primary speech genres," which are informal and conversational, and "secondary speech genres," which are more formal, rhetorically complex instances of written discourse, the speech would appear to be one of the latter.

In addition to the internal genre set associated with the Bank's Communications Strategy, one could also identify genres outside the Bank that members of its staff pay close attention to in order to glean relevant information and perspectives from outside groups—for example, commentaries in the print or broadcast media on the Bank's monetary policy, published reports by economists working in the financial markets, articles in academic journals and other publications on economic and public-policy topics, published exchanges occurring in the House of Commons' daily question period (reported in Hansard, the daily record of debate in the Canadian Parliament), and the texts of federal and provincial budgets. In a sense, the internal genre set associated with the Communications Strategy and the constellation of external genres monitored by Bank staff can be seen to function together in a single, complex interactive network of discourse. Together, the internal genre set and the assortment of related external genres resemble what Charles Bazerman (1994b) refers to as a "genre system"—a network of genres that extends beyond a single organization to encompass the discourse used by two or more social groups to interact with one another in accomplishing mutually significant work (although I should note here the discussion in this chapter does not cover, in any specific detail, the internal genres employed by the various external groups with which the Bank interacts communicatively).

To move ahead with my line of argument, I want to suggest that members of the Bank's staff who participate in the activity of the Communications Strategy can be viewed as what theorists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) refer to as a "community-of-practice," with some of these same individuals also participating in another community-of-practice associated with the activity of the Monetary Policy Framework—so that, conceptually, we have two overlapping activity systems with their respective and overlapping communities-of-practice. Diagram 2 provides a sense of what these relationships look like when mapped out in this way. Characterizing the Bank and its Communications Strategy in this way is useful analytically in that it suggests insights about the part that genres, mediated in their use by digital technologies and built environments, play in the Bank's discourse and intellectual work.
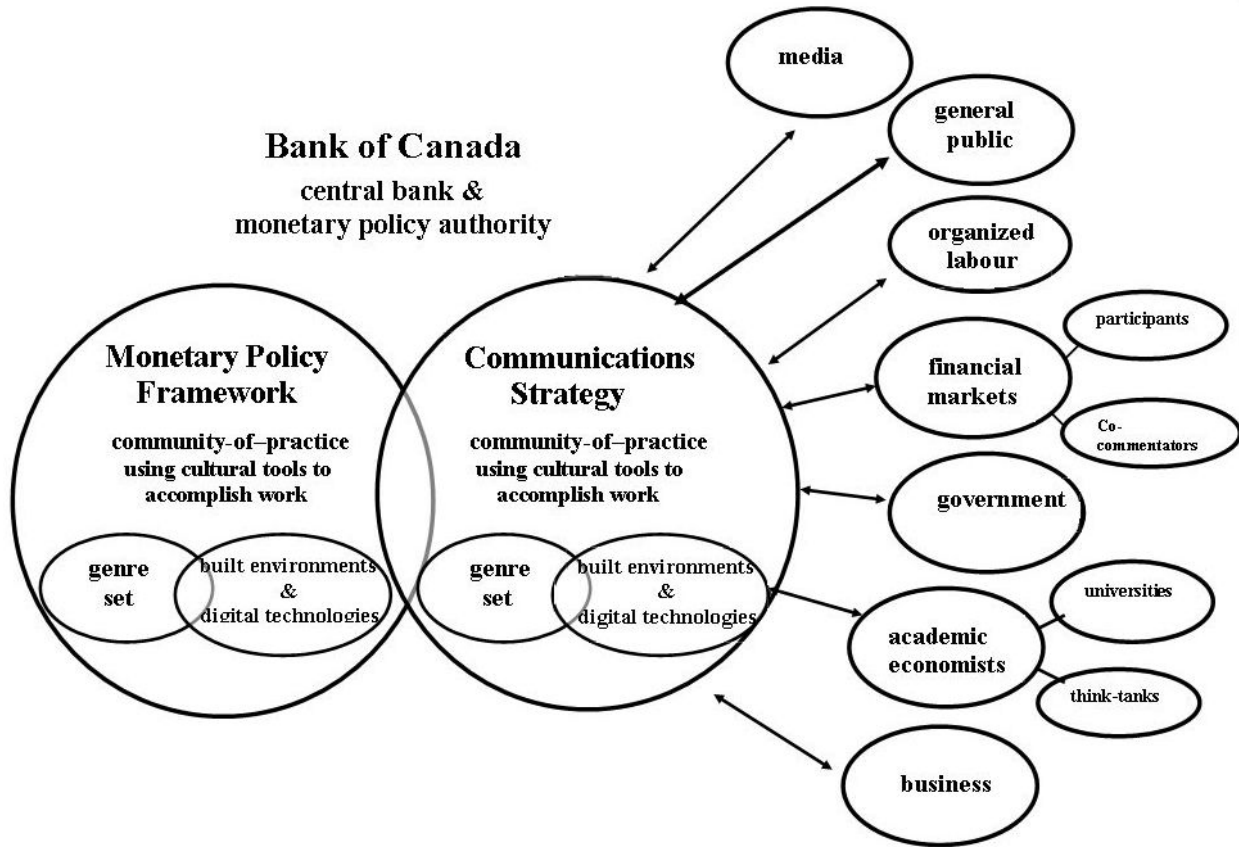
Diagram 2

So then, what does this depiction of the Communications Strategy as an organizational activity system with an affiliated community-of-practice allow us to see that we might not see otherwise? I would argue that the characterization can help us recognize some of the various ways in which discourse genres function, mediated by digital technologies and built environments, to prompt, shape, coordinate, and apply the processes of collective thinking, rhetorical action, and ongoing learning that enable an organization to perform complex intellectual and discursive work. At the same time, looking at the activity of the Communications Strategy in this manner provides a window onto the way in which a professional organization uses genres of discourse in communicating with the array of outside groups with which it interacts in carrying out its mandate.

As a prelude to the next major section of the chapter, where I examine the role of the genre set in the activity of the Communications Strategy, I want to look now at two particular features of the genre set: the genre knowledge displayed within the community-of-practice associated with the Communications Strategy; and the genre set's relationship to processes of organizational change. In describing the role of the genre set, I will enlist the voices of a number of the people that I interviewed at the Bank. As suggested earlier, the discourse of insiders can offer a unique window onto the indigenous work-world that they communally construct and co-inhabit.

Practitioners' Genre Knowledge

The distributed cognition that is, to use Jean Lave's (1988) phrase, "stretched over" the members of the Bank staff who comprise the community-of-practice engaged in the activity of the Communications Strategy includes a complex network of "intersubjectivities," domains of shared focus, perception, and understanding that cognitively connect individuals within the community-of-practice, with particular intersubjectivities populated according to individuals' respective professional roles. A central area of intersubjectivity is that of genre knowledge—a rhetorical awareness of the ways in which the Communication Strategy's genre set functions. Below I examine four types of genre knowledge observed in my research.

The senior members of the Bank staff involved in making monetary-policy decisions share a common understanding of the two broad, closely linked goals of the activity of the Communications Strategy and its genre set: first, to establish public understanding of and support for the Bank's monetary policy, and second, to contribute to the effectiveness of the policy by reducing public uncertainly about the Bank's thinking, goals, and intentions. According to the Governor:

> At times central banks have to do difficult things, and it's much better if people outside the Bank of Canada understand monetary policy. It's particularly important that the financial markets be aware, but in the long run it's also important that governments and the public understand monetary policy as well. But it's not only a question of support for monetary policy, it's also a question of the effectiveness of policy, on an ongoing basis.

One of the Deputy Governors echoes this view of the dual goals of the Communications Strategy:

> With monetary policy, there's the issue of persuasion, in that part of our communication is to try to get people to understand, and hopefully not just understand, but support our policy. In a democracy, your ability to pursue a policy is related to the public support it generates; otherwise, when things get tough, it's much harder to carry on with the policy. And for that support to be there, public understanding of the policy is essential. But the other thing, of course, is that monetary policy works better when people understand it and align their expectations and decisions accordingly. For example, if the public is convinced that we *really are* committed to keeping inflation under control, if they really do believe that inflation is going to be at 2%, then when it comes to wage negotiations across the country, people won't be asking for 10% increases on the assumption that there's going to be 8% inflation, and employers aren't going to give 10%. So it's a question of the efficacy of policy as well as political support.

Another of the Deputy Governors, jokingly referred to by a colleague as the Bank's "Communications Czar" because of his key role in co-coordinating the Communications Strategy, elaborates on this shared perspective:

> The place I start thinking about the Communications Strategy conceptually, is—what do communications do for us? And you can cut into that several different ways. As a public-policy institution, there's one angle that says you need to be accountable, particularly in our case because, as a central bank, we've got a fair degree of independence from government. And then how do you achieve accountability? Well, you achieve it in part through transparency. And how do you become transparent?— through effective communications. The other angle in this is one of policy outcomes. And that gets into the whole issue of trying to minimize public uncertainty, in terms of what the Bank is up to with monetary policy and why—trying to influence public expectations of where we intend to go with monetary policy, whether it be [the expectations of] households, business, or financial markets, so that these expectations are in line with our goals for monetary policy. And again, you achieve that kind of policy outcome through transparency and effective communications. So communications is important to the Bank both in terms of generating support and in terms of the efficacy of monetary policy itself.

The particular aspect of genre knowledge that we see reflected in these instances of insider discourse—a shared cognizance of the goals of the Communications Strategy—can be viewed, in the context of activity theory, as distributed cognition in the form of a conscious awareness of the larger aims of the activity system. One might speculate here that in any organizational activity system, at least some of the participants will have this kind of explicit "discursive consciousness" (Giddens, 1984, cited in Giltrow & Valiquette, 1994) of its aims, an important communal resource that complements the presumably much larger measure of "practical consciousness" (Giddens, 1984) or "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi, 1966) within the community-of-practice.

A second type of genre knowledge displayed within the community-of-practice engaged in the activity of the Bank's Communications Strategy is an understanding of the division of intellectual and discursive labor involved. Practitioners' knowledge includes an awareness of who is responsible for doing what, and when, in the collective accomplishment of two key tasks: first, monitoring texts in written and spoken genres, produced by groups outside the Bank, that either comment directly on the Bank and its monetary policy or address other topics relevant to the Bank's work, such as economic research and theory, financial analyses, and broader public-policy issues; and second, composing written texts in different internal genres in order to respond to commentaries on Bank policy by outside groups. This genre knowledge is generally tacit, rather than inscribed in and communicated through formal written procedures. As a Deputy Governor responded, when asked about this: "The Communications Strategy, the approach, isn't documented anywhere, so I'm not really sure how it gets communicated to Bank staff, though it certainly gets communicated somehow."[12] (A discussion later in the chapter of how the Communications Strategy's genre set functions as a site for organizational learning will take up this theme.)

Below, a Deputy Governor conveys his sense of how various members of the Bank staff, operating in a variety of professional roles, monitor texts in written and spoken genres produced by certain of the outside groups with which the Bank interacts—a collective, but differentiated-

according-to-role, work effort that allows the organization to remain attuned to external discourses pertinent to its mandate for directing monetary policy:

> For watching the media, we have people in the Library who read the newspapers and wire services—and they're very good at picking up items that specifically mention monetary policy or are related to the economy more generally. And they send us a daily clippings package with the items they've selected. **. . .** As for what the [financial] markets are saying, our staff in [the] Financial Markets [Department] keep up with that, in a systematic way—they talk to people in the markets on a regular basis, getting their views, and also monitor the financial and business press. **. . .** And for things of interest in the academic literature, the Library circulates a daily list of relevant items that have appeared recently, and the staff in the economics departments [i.e., Research; Monetary and Financial Analysis; Financial Markets; and International] get these pieces through the Library and read them. And then sometimes there's a news report in the press about a recent academic study or report, and we'll make sure we get a copy of it through the Library. Or one of our economists comes back from a conference and says, "So and so gave a paper on such and such," and they circulate the paper. So all in all, we're very much aware of what's being said in different venues outside the Bank. Our staff are continually picking up on these things and filtering it and sending it along to us [i.e., the Bank's senior decision-makers].

Another Deputy Governor offers a similar perspective on the division of intellectual and discursive labor involved in this aspect of the Communications Strategy:

> There are people out there, outside the Bank, who issue daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual commentaries on the economy—for example, the staff economists at major banks produce these, and private-sector firms as well. And then there are the [economic] forecasts produced by other people, such as the C.D. Howe Institute. **. . .** And the Bank looks at all of this, with different people here having different responsibilities, different areas to watch. But we need to be aware of *all this*.

He goes on to display his understanding of the multiplicity of regular one-to-one interactions between members of the Bank staff and individuals in outside groups:

> And there's also the informal contacts between people in the Bank and people outside. There's a lot of this in the economics departments. For example on the academic side—in terms of research and theory—our people talk to academics doing similar kinds of research or who are doing forecasting, and they'll often exchange drafts of work-in progress as well. And there's also the continuous contact with people on the financial side [i.e., with analysts and participants in the financial markets].

Another facet of the practitioners' genre knowledge regarding the division of intellectual and discursive labor inherent in the activity of the Communications Strategy concerns situations in which the Bank decides to respond to outside commentaries on its monetary policy decisions and actions using one of several genres in the genre set. In cases of what are perceived to be significant errors of fact in the news media, the Chief of the Communications Department will,

within a day or two, make a phone call to the particular journalist or reporter in question. According to a Deputy Governor, the phone call will go something like this, "Well, you know, you got the facts somewhat wrong in that recent piece of yours. This is actually how we're operating now . . . ." He continues, pointing to another motive for this particular type of interaction, "it's also a question of educating the media, which is an ongoing effort, given the turnover of people in the media."

When it comes to interpretive critiques of the Bank's monetary policy by outside groups (as opposed to perceived errors of fact in outside commentary), the Bank may decide to respond through written discourse in one of a range of genres. The same Deputy Governor quoted above explains:

> It depends on the nature of the criticism—sometimes the media people are critical and it's not unreasonable, because reasonable people can differ on things. But at other times, we may think it's not quite as reasonable. And then, depending on whether we think it's important to get our message out and in what venue, we'll decide on a way to respond. **. . .** On the other hand, if it's something significant that appears in an academic forum, we'll respond in an academic forum. For example, I just got an invitation to do a piece in a book that's coming out on what's happened with the economy over the 90's, a piece on monetary policy. And at first I was thinking I'm pretty over-committed with this kind of writing at the moment. But when I saw that the book will also have a piece by [a university economist who is a well-known and professionally respected critic of the Bank's monetary policy] discussing our inflation-control targets, I thought, "Well, I don't know if I will do it myself, but *it will get done* by someone around the place—because I don't think having this kind of message out there, that we think is misleading, is helpful. [The critic's] view is very far from our view, so we need to respond.

The speaker goes on to reveal more of his understanding of the Bank's nuanced approach to, and motives for, responding to external critiques of its monetary policy:

> When the criticism out there is about our position on things, they can take that or not as they like—it's their interpretation. But we may choose to debate their interpretation if we think it's wrong or misleading. **. . .** We want people to have a clear understanding of what we're thinking about and how we're approaching a particular situation. And if we feel that they're completely misinterpreting what we're trying to do, then that may call for a speech or some other way of communicating our views.

He elaborates on the thinking underlying the decision of whether the Bank will choose to respond, and if so, in what particular genre:

> We take different opportunities to deal with particular kinds of issues. For example, I'll be giving a 45-minute presentation at the Western Economics Association Meetings next month, quite a long paper. I thought it would be a good opportunity to get some of our messages out, our views on certain issues that have come up recently; and it's also about rejoining the debate with [the critic of the Bank mentioned above] on the range of the inflation-

> control targets. Another example: the issue of whether the foreign exchange
> rate should be fixed or flexible—something that's been showing up in the
> press lately. The Governor chose to give a speech on that the other day,
> putting out the Bank's views. In fact, each time he gives a speech, he
> ponders whether it should be the regular type of speech dealing with current
> conditions in the economy, or whether there's some particular issue he wants
> to focus on. **. . .** So we're always very much aware of what's being said out
> there, but whether we feel the need to respond, and when and how, depends
> on the nature of the comment, who said it, how directly it relates to the
> Bank's business, where it was said, whether it's likely to be taken seriously,
> how important it is to get our side of the issue out, and so on.

This particular aspect of practitioners' genre knowledge—the sense of what constitutes an appropriate discursive response to a particular instance of external commentary on the Bank's monetary policy—reminds one of Anne Freadman's (1994) notion of "uptake," where a text in a particular genre, produced by one player, will tend, in the natural course of events, to elicit a response through a text produced in a second genre by another player. In this case, we see a text produced by another organization, in a genre within the larger genre system (Bazerman, 1994b), evoking a discursive response from the Bank through one of the genres of the Communications Strategy.

When the Bank does decide to respond to an interpretive critique of its policy from an outside group—as picked up by the Bank's communicative "radar" in an external text in the genre system—employing a particular internal genre, the composing of the text can be highly collaborative and iterative, an instance of distributed cognition that serves several functions: It elicits ideas from various individuals, enabling a collective and heuristic mode of thinking, and it contributes to organizational learning (a topic that will be taken up in some detail later in the chapter). A Deputy Governor provides his perspective on this form of collaboration:

> When you give a presentation, or a speech, there's always a paper to give out
> to the press. **. . .** And when I'm preparing a presentation that has policy
> implications of any kind, I'll always run the paper by the Governor, the other
> Deputy Governors, the Advisors, and sometimes certain other people as well.
> And I look very carefully at all their comments and I use them. So it's quite
> collegial in that sense. The *MPR*, the *Update to the MPR*, the *Annual Report*,
> the Governor's speeches—we all look at drafts of these, all the Governing
> Council, and other people too. It's always a collective effort, and you learn
> from doing it.

This quotation reflects another type of genre knowledge that is important for writers within a professional organization: who should be included in the document cycling process (Paradis, Dobrin, & Miller, 1985; Paré & Smart, 1994; Smart, 1993) for texts in any given genre within a genre set. (We will see an extended description of the collaborative drafting-reviewing-revising cycle later in the chapter in an account of the preparation of the Bank's *Monetary Policy Report*.)

A third type of the genre knowledge linked to the Bank's Communications Strategy is the vernacular of shared terms employed by staff members in talking about its activity and genre set. Clifford Geertz (1983) points to the importance—for the ethnographic researcher attempting to

illuminate the local, self-constructed reality of a particular social group—of looking carefully at "key terms that seem, when their meaning is unpacked, to light up a whole way of going at the world" (p. 157). In my interviews with informants at the Bank, a number of such terms came up repeatedly, including, for example, the dichotomy of "Old Bank" versus "New Bank" and the terms "transparency," "primary communication vehicles," "key messages." This form of genre knowledge—the common use of conceptually rich terms—appears to be essential for the inter-personal communication required of genre users within a community-of-practice.

A closer look at the terms mentioned above will provide readers with a sense of their communicative function in relation to the genre set we are looking at here. The "Old Bank," according to a Deputy Governor, was one where the organization believed that,

> to be effective, monetary policy had to involve a lot of secrecy, to be surrounded by mystique, and that central bankers had to be very careful in their communications. As an observer, you could take the Bank's words in different ways, and you had to look at the entrails, as it were. The view was that monetary policy was effective only if it surprised the markets, and so you couldn't give out any clues about what you were going to do.

In contrast, as the "New Bank" with its Communications Strategy, the organization takes a very different view:

> But now, we've really moved in the other direction, as have most of the world's other central banks, and we've moved towards much greater openness. Having inflation-control targets has helped a lot in this, because once the objective is clearly defined, and there's no quibble about the objective, then central bankers feel a lot freer about explaining what they're doing and why they're doing it. A large part of the fear in the past was always a fear of having a monetary policy that's too expansionary. . . . So central bankers have become a lot more open, more transparent.

This brings us to another term in the vernacular of the Communications Strategy that is frequently used by members of the community-of-practice using the genre set—"transparency." The use of this term in contemporary political and corporate discourse has made it somewhat suspect. But what exactly does the term "transparency" appear to mean within the Bank? According the Deputy Governor quoted above,

> Transparency means something particular . . . it's not just about giving out all the information you have; just giving out more information is not necessarily being transparent. There's a distinction between giving out everything you have versus giving out only the information that's relevant. The second approach is informative, and helps people understand what you're trying to do, while the other isn't necessarily informative at all, since what's important can easily get lost in a maze of detail.

The Chief of the Communications Department offers a qualification to this description of transparency:

> There's a difference between appropriate openness and inappropriate
> openness on the part of the Bank. It's the difference between, on the one
> hand, trying to help people to understand how we look at world, what we
> think inflation is going to do, and what our longer-term goals for the economy
> are, and on the other hand, revealing what the Bank is going to do in the
> short term with interest rates, which way we're leaning—the Bank can do the
> former, but not latter.[13]

The Bank's senior officials share the view that an important factor in achieving the goals of the
Communications Strategy is allowing outside groups to understand something of how the
organization looks at the world, or more specifically, at how it analyzes information about the
economy. Providing an example of this particular facet of transparency, the Chief of the
Communications Department talks about the Bank's communicative interactions with the "Bank-
watchers," a group comprising analysts in the financial markets who make a living by closely
following the central bank and its monetary policy and advising clients on their investments
accordingly, and financial journalists who write about the Bank's monetary policy in their news
stories and columns:

> The approach the Bank takes in its Communications Strategy—through the
> *Monetary Policy Report*, through the Governor's speeches, and so forth—is to
> help the people who watch us closely understand *how we think*. For example,
> with the "Bank-watchers," it's a case of, "Look, you too can evaluate the
> same range of information, economic indicators, that we evaluate—the
> [Consumer Price Index] just went up, or didn't go up, whatever—and you can
> learn how we look at it." And the good commentators, who are paid to say,
> "Well, the Bank is going to move [i.e., adjust Canadian interest rates] or not
> going to move," they—if they're doing it right—they're learning *how the Bank
> sees the world*. We're constantly trying to help people to understand *how the
> Bank looks at the numbers*, to understand all this, through our
> communications. It's almost like an ongoing do-it-yourself central banking
> course for people who are really interested.

Parenthetically, in this quotation we also gain a sense of how people who work at the Bank, in
viewing it as a sentient and thinking entity, appear to possess an intuitive sense of the distributed
cognition operating within the organization. In interviews, the informants repeatedly expressed
similar perceptions. For example, a Deputy Governor referred to the regional representatives
across the county as the Bank's "ears and mouth in the regions" and to the senior Bank officials
in Toronto and Montreal as "the Bank's eyes and ears in the [financial] markets." I would
suggest that such metaphorically expressed intuitions reflect the practitioners' tacit awareness of
the phenomena of distributed cognition, and so add empirical support to the theory-influenced
observations and theory-inspired interpretations of a researcher.

Two further terms to mention here in connection to the genre knowledge associated with the
activity of the Communications Strategy are "primary communication vehicles" and "key
messages." When members of the Bank staff use the first term, they are referring to a number of
high-profile genres in the genre set, including the *Monetary Policy Report*, the *Update to
Monetary Policy Report*, speeches and lectures by the Governor, the *Annual Report of the Bank*

of Canada, *The Bank of Canada Review*, and the Governor's presentations in the Canadian Parliament (two presentations each year in the House of Commons and one in the Senate). The term "key messages" refers to the most salient points included in any particular text, such as the *Monetary Policy Report*, as when a Deputy Governor mentions the primary questions asked by the Communications Department in analyzing commentaries in the media following the release of the *MPR*: "Were the key messages in the report picked up? Were we effective in conveying our key messages?" (Later in the chapter we will see how the key messages in the *Monetary Policy Report* are highlighted in a summary text attached to the *MPR*).

Shared terms such as those discussed above constitute a linguistic and conceptual shorthand, saturated with historically accrued shared meanings, that functions as an essential tool for genre users within a community-of-practice. And for researchers, focusing on such terms is an important way of gaining insight into the world-view of a community-of-practice, for as Clifford Geertz (1983) suggests, "the vocabularies in which [a group of practitioners converses offer] a way of gaining access to the sorts of mentalities at work in [it]" (p. 157).

A final type of genre knowledge within the community-of-practice associated with the Communications Strategy that I will discuss here, and one that is essential to the rhetorical effectiveness of the genre set, involves the discursive construction of the public-policy world outside the Bank through the differentiation and characterization of a constellation of outside groups. Consistently, the people interviewed in my study spoke about the seven social groups I have mentioned—the media, the general public, government, the financial markets, the business sector, organized labor, and academia, the latter taken to include both university economists and those working in private-sector "think-tanks." Further, the people I interviewed shared very specific notions about the nature of each of these external groups as a distinctive audience for the Bank's communications. And frequently, this characterization of particular audiences was accompanied by tactical notions on how best to communicate with them.

Here, for example, a Deputy Governor talks about the Bank's "strategic" approach to communications:

> We've been trying to focus our communication vehicles to ensure that we know how we're using them—Who are the different audiences we want to get at? How frequently should we try to get at them? What arguments are relevant to them? And what kind of language do we want to use for each audience—the general public versus elite business groups, organized labor versus people in the financial markets? And then we have different ways of communicating with politicians as one audience, the analysts in the [financial] markets as another, and so on. **. . .** We now have a Communications Department that helps with all this. So what we're doing these days is trying to be much more strategic: how to use communications, how to be effective.

Another Deputy Governor echoes this rhetorical concern, again pointing to the role of the Communications Department: "If you want to communicate with someone, you have to know where they're coming from, what they're looking for, what's important for them? What are our common interests and how can we maximize the value of the relationship for both sides? And

our Communications Department helps us with this." According to the Chief of the Communications Department, with the advent of the Communications Strategy,

> There's now generally a better sense [in the Bank] of relating to the specific audience, recognizing that there is one, indeed that there are many of them. And a sense of recognizing that to be accountable, you have to be able to explain what you're doing in a way that makes sense to a lot of different groups, and so you need different kinds of arguments and language, **. . .** to approach different audiences in different ways.

This type of genre knowledge also extends to a shared sense of specific rhetorical tactics for communicating with a given audience. The Governor's Senior Assistant, who works with the Governor to develop speeches and other texts, provides an illustration of this rhetorical approach:

> We're trying to tailor our messages better to our different audiences. For instance, one audience may lend itself to more technical issues than another audience. For example, the Governor recently gave a talk at the Fraser Institute [a conservative economic think-tank] in Vancouver, and we thought it would be a good time to talk about productivity issues in the economy. Or with a speech in one of the regions, say: depending on the location, we always try to have something on the regional economy, and try to mention what most matters to them at present.

She adds an interesting side-note on the difficulties that the use of new communication technologies can entail in this effort to produce audience-specific discourse:

Of course, it's tricky with these speeches, though. Regardless of the audience, we try to use simple language, because you can't get away from the fact that you're preparing the speech not only for that particular audience—speeches get broader distribution and coverage than they used to, now that we put them on our Web site as well. So you have to have a product that most people can understand.

Another such specific rhetorical tactic involves monitoring media sources that a particular audience can be expected to follow, in order to anticipate views about monetary policy that this audience might pick up through the media. For example, as the Chief of the Communications Department explains, "We follow the news on the Report on Business cable channel, which has more extensive coverage of the Bank. One part of trying to learn what particular audiences think of the state of economy, and monetary policy, and so on, is to monitor sources of information they're exposed to." The Governor describes a similar tactic:

> My colleagues on the Governing Council and I feel the need to read everything we can find that's written about the Bank in the press, because that's where the public picks up a lot of its ideas. For example, whenever I go out to give speech, there's always a press conference afterwards, and I know that the questions I'm going to get often come up because of what people have been reading in the newspapers about the Bank. So to be prepared, I need to know what's being said in newspapers.

The four types of genre knowledge described above are clearly essential to the functioning of the Communication Strategy's genre. This is not to say, however, that *all* the members of the community-of-practice possess *all* this genre knowledge; rather, it is distributed in a differentiated pattern within the community-of-practice according to the particular professional roles of individual members. And as well, while a certain amount of the genre knowledge is explicit, it would appear that much more of it operates on a tacit level.

The Genre Set and Processes of Organizational Change

As theorists from the Buddha on have repeatedly told us, the world—both the material and socially constructed versions—is constantly changing. This truth—and this does seem to be the appropriate word in this instance—points to another significant feature of the genre set associated with the activity of the Communications Strategy: its relationship with processes of organizational change. As we can see in the shift in the Bank of Canada's external communication practices over the seven or eight years since the initial implementation of the Communications Strategy, changes in work activity, discourse genres, and technologies appear to occur dialectically, in complex patterns of causality. One way of thinking about this causality is to call on Wanda Orlikowski's (2001) schema, mentioned earlier, as a frame of reference. For Orlikowski, while the concepts of *planned change* and *technological determinism* both appear to provide partial explanations for the changes that occur in organizations, the notion of *situated change*, according to which change occurs continuously as individuals improvise effective practices for responding to unfolding events in their work-world, is more comprehensive and carries a broader explanatory force.

Indeed, in the evolution of the genre set genre set associated with the Communications Strategy, we can see evidence for the causal influences of planned change and technological determinism. For example, in the vein of planned change, the Governor in office at the time of my interviews in June 2000, Gordon Thiessen, appears to have been the prime mover in a major, rationally conceived and implemented change in the way the Bank communicates with other social groups in Canada's public-policy sphere. According to one of the Deputy Governors,

> Gordon Thiessen has really been the driving force behind all of this—from his very first speech as Governor in 1994, when he emphasized communication and accountability. And there were other speeches as well, and two of the Governor's lectures—for example the Gibson Lecture that the Governor gave in 1998 has a long section on transparency and accountability, and how this improves the efficacy of monetary policy. He's been really determined about it over his time as Governor. Indeed, during Gordon's tenure innovations have been taken every year practically, in one way or another, to try to strength and improve our effectiveness on the communications side.

But this gives rise to the question of why the Governor, immediately upon taking office, decided on this dramatically innovative line of action. The Deputy Governor quoted above provides one answer: "If we put things in an historical context, you've had a growing trend within society for more information and for wanting public institutions to be accountable." And consequently, as

another deputy Governor says, "There's been a convergence among central banks around the world towards greater clarity, transparency, openness." However, having been an employee at the Bank during the transition in 1993-1994 from the tenure of the former Governor to that of Gordon Thiessen, I would add another detail to this historical perspective. The preceding Governor had received a great deal of public criticism for the Bank's high-interest rate policy of the early 1990's, a situation not at all mitigated by the perception of the media and many members of the Canadian Parliament that he could sometimes be condescending and dismissive in his interactions with journalists and Parliamentarians. Further, this criticism of the Bank's policies and the former Governor's demeanor was at times accompanied by calls to radically restructure the Bank in a way that would better represent the different regions of the county and break down the Central-Canada, Ottawa-centric world-view seen by many as insulating the Bank from the local economic concerns of the different regions of the county. In any event, while we appear to have reasonably good evidence for the existence of planned change on the part of the Governor, Gordon Thiessen, his agency in regard to the activity and genres of the Communications Strategy was clearly a response to a number of historical trends and events, both national and global, in the political and economic environment in which the Bank operates.

At the same time, though, other vectors of change also appear to have been at play over the period since the initial implementation of the Communications Strategy. On one level, it would appear that the emergence of new information/communication technologies such as the Internet and the Intranet has prompted important changes in the Bank's discourse genres. And while it is difficult to gauge the degree to which these changes are indeed a manifestation of technological determinism, in the sense of technology superseding human agency, it remains that there has been a clear correlation between the availability of new technologies and the evolution of the Bank's genres. (Though, parenthetically, we must remember that the correlation of events and causality between them are not the same thing. As a former Senior Deputy Governor once put it in an interview a number of years ago: "You know, if you think about it, you always see fireman at fires. And generally, the bigger the fire is, the more firemen you'll see there. So there's a definite correlation between fires and fireman. But does that mean you can say that the fireman themselves are setting the fires, that they are the cause of the fires?" Point well taken, sir.) One of the Bank's English-language editors tells an interesting counter-story, however, about technological determinism:

> As you know, the senior management and others throughout the Bank rely on the daily clippings package prepared in the Library. Well, last year the Library tried to eliminate the service. They said, "Well with the Internet, people can go on it themselves and find the material." And there was a huge reaction; in fact, all hell broke loose. You had everyone from senior management down saying, "Yes, you *could* find the stories yourself, *if* you had eight hours to do it." Nobody has time to go on the Internet looking for that stuff. And so that proposal died very quickly.

Another counter-example of technological determinism concerns the continued wide circulation in the Bank of hardcopy drafts of work-in-progress, annotated with reviewers' handwritten notes and comments, and the hardcopy versions of internal and external reports that Bank staff expect

to receive and continue to read. Why is the multiple drafting and document cycling that goes on in the Bank not done electronically rather than on paper? And why do Bank staff not employ laptop computers or electronic readers for reading reports, rather than continuing to rely on hard copies. One could cite tradition and inertia as a reason, but a much more important factor, I think, is ease of portability—people in the Bank carry their work with them, on the bus, on the train, on the plane, everywhere they go, and in such locations a paper text is more practical to work with than an electronic text on a laptop computer or an electronic reader, particularly if the reader wishes to annotate the text. (Brown & Duguid, 2000, and Sellen & Harper, 2002, both provide compelling arguments to account for the continued, and indeed expanding, use of paper documents in a digital world.)

Finally, the concept of *situated change* appears to account for a great deal in the evolution of the activity of the Communications Strategy and its genre set. The Chief of the Communications Department provides an example of this causal factor:

> With the development of the Bank's Web site, there wasn't any bureaucratic control structure to get it going. If that had been the case, we'd probably still be debating what should be on the site. It just kind of happened. Some people who were interested in it looked around and saw what other people out there in other organizations were doing, talked to people in the Bank who had material that could go up on the Web, and it's evolved from there.

This quotation reflects a subtle but important variation on Orlikowski's (2001) notion that change occurs as individuals respond, in ad hoc ways, to new developments in their work-world. While she sees organizational change as "grounded in the ongoing practices of [individual] organizational actors," the data I gathered in the Bank suggest a more communal version of situated change, one in which the community-of-practitioners acts collectively to improve the rhetorical effectiveness of the genre set associated with the Communications Strategy. A Deputy Governor provides a sense of this collective effort:

> We try to keep abreast of outside commentaries on monetary policy—from the media, from other economists, and so on. It's a question of gauging whether our messages are getting through. Are we explaining things properly? It's about getting feedback—we're trying to communicate, and communication is always a two-way street. And when you send out a message, was it understood the way you meant it to be, or was it understood differently? And if it's not understood the way you intended, then you have to gauge why this was. Is it because people have different opinions about the state of the economy? **. . .** Or is it because we missed something in our communication—that our message simply didn't register with people or that we were too opaque? You want to get a sense of this and adjust accordingly. The Communications Department has a group that tries to help us see whether we've been effective in conveying our messages and how we can improve.

As he suggests, the Bank's Communications Department is responsible for guiding the ongoing communal effort to increase the effectiveness of the genre set in the organization's

communicative interactions with outside groups. The Senior Assistant to the Governor, who is a member of the Communications Department, explains:

> One of the things that the Department does is try to think about how the Bank can better orchestrate its external communications in order to accomplish what it wants to do with all its messages on monetary policy. **. . .** We look at strategies for how we can get better at conveying our messages more clearly in the future. We're always asking, "For the various means of communications, and our different audiences, what are the most appropriate ways of delivering those messages?" **. . .** And then this also involves passing on suggestions to the Governing Council about the Bank's communications, including how to best match the messages to their audiences.

The discussion here touches on the concept of organizational learning, a theme that will be developed further later in the chapter.

With these two features of the genre set as context, in the next section of the chapter I turn to the role that the genre set plays in the activity of the Communications Strategy. In this account I again include numerous quotations from the Bank's staff in order to produce a "thick description" that conveys a sense of how the participants themselves experience and construct theories about the activity of the Communications Strategy.

The Role of the Genre Set in the Activity of the Communications Strategy

Functioning as a culturally constructed tool in a local sphere of goal-directed professional activity, the genre set associated with the Bank of Canada's Communications Strategy is a multi-faceted, socio-rhetorical site for accomplishing complex intellectual and discursive work within an organizational community-of-practice. To understand how the genre set is used in accomplishing the work of orchestrating the Bank's communicative interactions with other groups in Canada's public-policy sphere, we need first to consider more closely what it is that constitutes an individual genre. An organizational genre can be viewed as a distinctive profile of regularities across four dimensions: a set of texts, the composing processes involved in creating these texts, the reading practices used to interpret them, and the social interactions of writers and readers performing a variety of professional roles (Paré & Smart, 1994). By extension, an organizational genre set can be viewed as a complex meta-profile of texts, composing processes, reading practices, and reader/writer roles and interactions.

With this notion of genres and genre sets in place, I want to look now at the role that the genre set examined in this study plays in the activity of the Communications Strategy, a role that can be seen to include three primary functions. First, operating through an organizationally defined division of cognitive labor, the genre set serves as a site for co-coordinating the intellectual and discursive efforts of a large number of individuals within a community-of-practice. Second, the genre set generates, shapes, and communicates a particular institutional brand of "public information" (Bazerman, 2001)—the "official" discourse, written and spoken, that constitutes

the Bank of Canada's public position on its monetary policy. And finally, the genre set acts as a site for organizational learning—specifically, two kinds of learning: first, the learning the occurs through attending to the views of outside groups regarding issues essential to the Bank's mandate of directing monetary policy—most notably the issues of how the Canadian economy functions and how monetary policy interacts with the economy[14]; and second, the development of rhetorical knowledge about the effective use of the genre set.

Coordinating intellectual and discursive work within a community-of-practice

Functioning through the organizationally defined division of labor inherent in the activity of the Communication Strategy, the genre set serves as a site for co-coordinating the intellectual and discursive efforts of various individuals performing a range of professional roles. Senior executives, staff economists, regional representatives, corporate communications specialists, editors, a speech-facilitator, library personnel, and others collaborate as members of a community-of-practice and as genre users to accomplish the work of orchestrating the Bank's communicative interactions with other players in Canada's public-policy arena.

To gain a sense of how the genre set associated with the Communications Strategy performs this function, we will look at the chain of discursive events involved in the production, public release, and promotion of the Bank's *Monetary Policy Report*, its "highest-profile communications vehicle" (to quote a Bank official). A graphic representation of this temporally sequenced, but also cyclical and often recursive, chain of events is provided in Diagram 3. I will describe the chain of discursive events associated with the *MPR* in a degree of detail that will foreshadow and provide a context for the accounts of two other primary functions of the genre set that follow in this section of the chapter. In this description, we will see a complex pattern of collaborative cognitive and rhetorical work, configured according to the participants' professional roles, with all of this effort oriented towards accomplishing the two larger organizational goals of the Communications Strategy discussed earlier: establishing public understanding of and support for the Bank's monetary policy and contributing to the effectiveness of the policy by reducing public uncertainly about the Bank's thinking, goals, and intentions. We will also see how spoken and written genres are used interactively and, at the same time, how these genres are mediated by a range of digital technologies and built environments. Although temporally sequenced, the chain of discursive events linked to the *MPR* is also cyclical and frequently recursive, and in order to represent it in narrative form, as I wish to do here, we need to cut into the cycle at some specific point, and so we will begin with the preparation of the *MPR*, a twice-yearly occurrence.

Chain of discourse associated with *Monetary Policy Report*

preparation & distribution of *MPR*, summary, Q & A's → pre-release of *MPR* to journalists in "lock-up" facility → official release of *MPR*, press conference with Governor → Governor's presentation to Finance Committee in House of Commons → briefings by Deputy Governors, Senior Advisors, & regional representatives to audiences across Canada → preparation of media-analysis report on media coverage of *MPR*

Digital technologies & built environments in use:
networked computers, intranet, "lock-up" facility
press conference facility, telecommunication equipment

preparation of annual analysis of media commentary & other texts in genre set
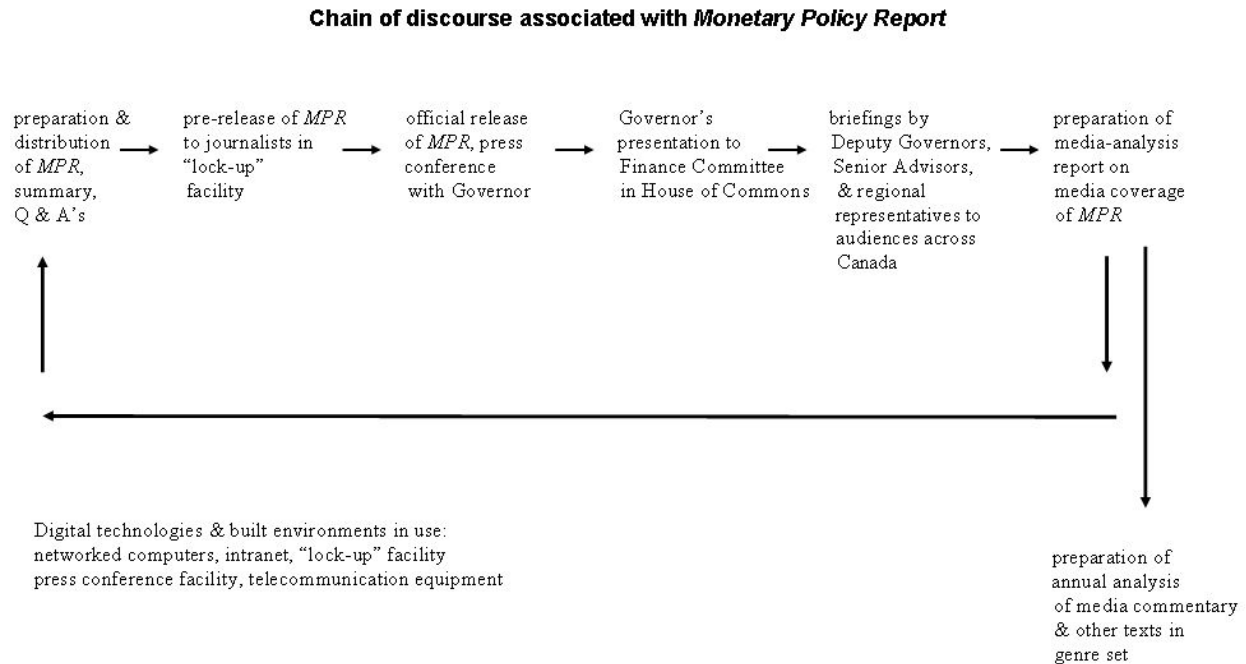
Diagram 3

Within the Bank, the *Monetary Policy Report* is considered the Communications Strategy's most important genre—the institution's foremost discursive medium for communication, transparency, and accountability. Texts in the *MPR* genre convey the Bank's current view of conditions in the Canadian economy, describe the organization's recent monetary policy actions and their impact, and look ahead to what the Bank believes the future holds for the economy (see a PDF version of the April 2002 *MPR*). One of the Bank's Deputy Governors describes the organization of these texts:

> The *MPR* has three parts to it. One part looks back over what the economy has done over the last six months. Then there's a second part on financial markets, where we also talk about why we've adjusted interest rates, if we indeed have adjusted them. Those two parts are what I think of as our statement of accountability—what's happened to inflation relative to our inflation-control targets, and what we've done to achieve those targets. Then there's a third part which is the outlook—where we see things going, looking ahead over the next six to twelve months or so.

For the Bank, the *MPR* functions as a stable rhetorical medium for enacting the organization's commitment to transparency and accountability, a commitment it views as central to the Communications Strategy.

The production of texts in the genre of the *Monetary Policy Report* occurs at the intersection of two activity systems: the Monetary Policy Framework and the Communications Strategy. The Bank staff involved in preparing the *MPR* draw on locally constructed knowledge derived from the activity of data-gathering, economic analysis, and policy-making that comprises the

Monetary Policy Framework and transform this knowledge into a unified, consistent discourse of "public information" (Bazerman, 2001) intended for outside audiences within the different social groups mentioned earlier. (The movement from active disciplinary knowledge to public information will be described in some detail later in this section.) The preparation of the *MPR* is highly collaborative, involving more than a score of Bank personnel: staff economists in three different departments, Senior Advisors, the members of the Governing Council, English- and French-language editors, translators (who translate English text into French), and graphics and production specialists. As the collaborative production of the *MPR* unfolds, it exhibits a highly regularized and structured pattern of work practices, professional roles, and social interactions. Through the lens of activity theory, the *MPR*, as part of the Communication Strategy's genre set, can be seen as one facet of a culturally constructed tool used to distribute cognition and organize intellectual and discursive work according to an organizationally defined division of labor. I will describe the collaborative process underlying the production of the *MPR* in some detail below in order to provide a sense of its intricate complexity.

Here is how one of the Bank's Deputy Governors describes the production of the *Monetary Policy Report*, as he experiences it:

> The Research Department and [the Department of] Monetary and Financial Analysis take the lead in preparing the first draft, with input from [the] International [Department]—with all this work being coordinated by the Chief of [the] Research [Department]. Before the drafting even starts, though, we [i.e., the speaker and two other Deputy Governors] sit down with the writers from the departments to identify broad themes. Then they do a first draft and send it on to me and [the two other Deputy Governors]. We then meet with the authors to talk about our response at a very high level—we give them our take on the broad messages and the way things fit together. And then they generally go back and produce a revised draft. From there, we have a week-by-week schedule that lasts about four weeks, with each new draft going to the full Governing Council. Each time, the Governing Council will have a discussion of the draft, and people's comments [annotated by hand on individual copies] are collected and sent back to the authors. So it's all very much an iterative process. **. . .** And then it gets to the point where someone in the Governing Council—it's been me in the past—takes it over and works on the sensitive parts towards the end of the report where we talk about conclusions and how to characterize the policy thinking behind the analysis. And then the [English-language] editors in [the] Communications [Department] get drawn into the process, at a stage about three weeks from publication, and we work together on drafts that we cycle through the Governing Council for comments. **. . .** At the same time as we're working together on this, the editors are also working with the people in production and layout, getting it all ready for the printers. And then of course there's also the translation process [to produce a French version of the text] and the editing in French.[15]

As the Deputy Governor explains, towards the end of the production process for the *Monetary Policy Report*, a separate summary of the report is also prepared through its own document-

cycling process (the text of the April 2002 summary can be viewed on the Bank's Web site at: http://www.bankofcanada.ca/en/mpr/pdf/mprsum_apr02.pdf):

> At the same time as the report itself is being written, the editors are also working with people in the Communications Department along with me and [a Senior Advisor] on creating a separate summary of the *MPR*, four pages or so. And there will usually be several iterations between us before the summary goes to the Governing Council for review. This summary is a relatively new initiative for us.

One of the two English-language editors picks up the narrative from her perspective at the point when the editors typically get involved in the production process, which she describes as "a team effort, to say the least!":

> Well it's angst, heavy-duty angst. Once the report comes to us, it's [the Deputy Governor] and us and the Governing Council. We set up a very stringent schedule, a three-week schedule: we get the draft from him [i.e., the deputy Governor acting for the Governing Council], we have a day to edit; we return it to him, it gets revised, goes to the Governing Council; they have two days to look at it, it comes back to him; he does those revisions, gets it back to us; we have a day, they have three days—it goes like this, over a three-week cycle. **. . .** We have a three-week cycle of practically editing in the bathtub, and it is heavy, heavy, heavy.

The editor goes on to describe the nature of the editors' particular professional role in working on the various iterations of the report:

> Our main job is to try to make the report approachable, understandable, readable, as much as is humanly possible. **. . .** We do a lot of rewriting. The first couple of drafts, I'd say we virtually rewrite it 75%. **. . .** Sometimes it's restructuring, sometimes it's rewording. The whole idea is to make it understandable to people outside the Bank: Why are we doing what we're doing?—What's happened in the economy? What did that tell us? Why are we doing what we've done? And what's the outlook from here? **. . .** The average business person out there, certainly, has to be able to understand it.

As this account reveals, the composing process associated with the *Monetary Policy Report* is highly regularized and structured, with the benefit to the organization of predictability and efficiency. As one of the English-language editors comments, "The whole thing has become a pretty structured, cohesive process, twice a year. Now they know what to expect, and we know what to expect, and it works very well." However, this was not always the case. According to the editor, when the *MPR* was first produced in 1995, the composing process was much more *ad hoc*, and it took several years for the current structured process to emerge and stabilize.

At the same time as the *Monetary Policy Report* and its summary are being prepared, a matching set of questions-and-answers material (*Q & A's*, in the Bank vernacular) is also being produced. These *Q & A's* are intended for the use of Bank staff who will be responding to questions from members of the media and other audiences about the *MPR*, including, typically, the Governor,

the Deputy Governors, one or two Senior Advisors, and the regional representatives. The Chief of the Communications Department describes the collaborative process of constructing the *Q & A's*, an account that once again, if viewed through the lens of activity theory, provides a sense of the distributed cognition and complex division of labor involved:

> The Communications Department coordinates the preparation of the *Q & A's* package. Typically in coming up with the questions, we have a number of sources. One involves monitoring the media for recent commentaries on monetary policy, because we know this commentary is likely to show up in the questions the journalists ask. As well, we pick up on questions in letters sent to the Governor or in e-mail messages sent to the Bank through our Web site. And we also usually get some questions from the staff economists. But we [i.e., staff in the Communications Department] also put on our pretend media hats and try to think of slightly off-center questions that journalists could pose, questions that the economists might not think of. And then when we have the list of questions defined, there will be some questions where we wouldn't worry about developing an answer; it's more by way of, "You could get this question coming at you from this angle." But then there are other questions where we do develop answers. Most of these questions would have the answers prepared by the staff economists, though some [of the answers] could come directly from a Deputy Governor—you know, the members of the Governing Council have talked about them; or the Governor himself may decide there are a couple of questions in particular where he wants to develop his own answers and share them with his colleagues and get some feedback on them, and then send them to us.

As the Chief explains, the *Q & A's* are used to a varying degree, and in different ways, by the Bank staff responsible for responding to questions from journalists and others about the Bank's monetary policy as represented in the *MPR*, following its official release: "People draw on them as they will, or not, depending on how experienced and comfortable they are in dealing with the media and other audiences."

While individual *Q & A's* packages are created for specific events, such as the release of the *Monetary Policy Report*, *The Bank of Canada Review,* or a speech by the Governor, they are cumulatively integrated over time into a meta-set of *Q & A's*. This meta-text, organized by topic and constantly updated and revised, is available on the Bank's Intranet as an IText for shared use within the organization by those preparing for communicative interactions with external audiences. As collaboratively produced texts serving as an important rhetorical resource for a variety of different people in the Bank, the *Q & A's*—both the individual packages and the meta-set—are an excellent example of distributed cognition in action (or in activity, perhaps I should say).

When the final versions of the *Monetary Policy Report*, the summary, and the *Q & A's* have been completed—usually several days prior to the official release of the *MPR*—they are all posted to the Bank's Intranet so that the senior staff in the Ottawa head office as well as the regional representatives across the county will have easy access to them. The material on the Intranet is also accessible to senior Bank staff traveling on business outside the county, as the Chief of the

Communications Department explains: "Say a Deputy Governor is off in the U.S. on business, and is going to face questions from the media about the *MPR*—they can dial in and remind themselves of the questions we're anticipating, and the answers to them." As a Deputy Governor puts it, regarding the Intranet, "With this kind of access, everyone is wired."

The next event in the discursive chain is the pre-release of the *Monetary Policy Report* to the media in what is known as "the lock-up." Several hours prior to its official public release, copies of the document, with an attached summary that opens with a one-page statement of the "highlights," is given to journalists from the wire-service agencies and newspapers who are assembled in a specially equipped room at the Bank. One of the Bank's Deputy Governors describes the event:

> With the *MPR*, we now do a lock-up. We have a facility where the journalists come in a couple of hours before the release of the report, and it's all equipped for them to prepare their stories. Then they're given the report. And they also have the attached summary, which begins with the highlights page—boom, boom, boom, boom, boom—these are the five key messages. And part way through, one of the Deputy Governors comes into the lock-up and makes a 5- or 10-minute presentation on the key messages, and is then available for not-for-attribution discussion. And it's usually a pretty good exchange. And then finally, at the official release time, we pull a switch and all the stories go out at the same time, so it's a level playing field for the different news people.

A particularly interesting aspect of the "lock-up" as an innovation for the Bank is the senior staff's perception of the event as a temporal and architectural solution to a serious rhetorical problem. Previously, journalists would not see the *MPR* until its official release, at a press conference with the Governor. From the Bank's perspective, this situation imposed a pattern of hasty and distorted reading and subsequent flawed writing by the journalists—a pattern the Bank felt did not serve its purposes for the *MPR*. The Deputy Governor describes what this scene used to look like: "Literally, in the past, when the *MPR* was released, you'd see [the journalists] reading the report and writing their stories at the same time, because the competition is so intense that the timeliness of getting those headlines out there quickly was crucial to them." The Governor of the Bank explains how this affected the journalists' reading of the *MPR* and their subsequent production of news stories about it: "We found ourselves in a situation where the fierce competition among the wire-services and newspapers to get their headlines out first meant that we often had somewhat garbled and sometimes even wrong messages coming out because they didn't have enough time to really read the report."

According to the Governor, the implementation of the lock-up, an innovation for the Bank proposed by the Chief of the Communications Department, "has improved things dramatically; [the journalists] have got all the time in the world to read the report, absorb the information, and write their stories."[16] The Deputy Governor adds: "You don't want the journalists' stories to misrepresent what it is we're trying to get across in the *MPR*. With the lock-up, the journalists are given time to digest the information and understand what's there before they write their stories on it. The summary, with the key-messages page, is very important here as well, in that it

focuses people on the essential points." And on a more general note, he comments, "You're always trying to manage the communications process effectively, trying to minimize misinterpretation by the media. And there's a lot of infrastructure that goes with that." Here we see an illustration of the mediating influence of a built environment and its digital technologies on the users of genres, in this case a mediating influence that has been intentionally designed to have a preconceived effect on readers. The Bank has used the lock-up facility as well as a particular genre feature, the summary and "key-messages" page attached to the *MPR*, in an attempt—and a successful attempt from its perspective—to influence how a key audience approaches and reads the document, builds an understanding of its contents, and produces a subsequent written commentary. In a sense, borrowing (and stretching) a term from Bakhtin (1981), one might say that in the lock-up facility/event, with its temporal and spatial "infrastructure," the Bank has created a chronotope intended to shape the journalists' behavior as readers and writers, forcing a moment (or in this case, two hours) of kairos upon them.

Immediately after the lock-up comes the official release of the *Monetary Policy Report* at a press conference in another area of the Bank where the Governor meets with journalists, with the event being recorded for television and radio (see http://wwwtor.activate.net/bankcanada/Apr24-02/1pm/en/index.htm for an audio file of the Governor's April 2002 press conference). At the same time, the *MPR*, along with the summary, is posted to the Bank's official Web site. Later that same day, the Governor visits the House of Commons in the Canadian Parliament to make a presentation before the Finance Committee on the *MPR* (see http://wwwtor.activate.net/bankcanada/Apr24-02/3pm/en/index.htm for an audio file of the Governor's April 2002 presentation). According to a Deputy Governor, "When the Governor goes to the House [of Commons], he's trying to get across the key messages we're trying to communicate, so as to avoid misinterpretation." Similarly, in the days that follow the release of the *MPR*, other senior staff—usually three of the Deputy Governors—go to Toronto and Montreal to brief different "Bank-watchers," as Bank staff refer to members of two professional groups: analysts in the financial markets who are paid to follow the central bank and its monetary policy closely and advise their clients accordingly and financial journalists who write about monetary policy. In addition, several of the Senior Advisors travel to meetings of economists' associations in major centers across Canada to give presentations on the *MPR*, while the regional representatives meet with journalists and others in their respective parts of the country. (For all these communicative interactions with outside audiences, the *Q & A's* material is available, as an IText on the Bank's Intranet, as a communal rhetorical resource.) As a Deputy Governor comments, with all this follow-up activity to the *MPR*, "there's a rather concerted effort to be pro-active and get out to meet with people to try to give them a clear sense of what our current thinking is and the analysis behind the *MPR*."

In the weeks following the release of the *Monetary Policy Report*, the Bank's Communications Department produces a document known as the "media-analysis report" on the coverage that the *MPR* receives in the Canadian media.[17] According to the Governor, "In monitoring the media after an *MPR*, to see how well monetary policy is being understood, there are three things we're interested in—are the messages being picked up out there, in the various commentaries? Is

what's being picked up understood? And what's the reaction?" This is how the Chief of the Communications Department describes the process of preparing the media-analysis report: Within about two weeks of an important communications event, we produce a report of four or five pages. It includes a summary of the media coverage on the *MPR*, and some analysis of it— how much coverage there was, in which news-services and newspapers, how much prominence they gave it, whether or not our key messages were adequately represented, what the criticisms were, and any other kinds of significant comments journalists might have brought to it. That's for the print media and stories pulled off the Internet from news sites. And then we also have a firm [Bowdens Media Monitoring] that monitors the broadcast media for us, TV and radio, following the release of the *MPR*. They monitor the hundreds of news items that appear on radio stations and TV stations, and prepare short summaries for us; and then, for any particularly interesting items, we can also order the full transcripts from them. And we include a summary and analysis of this material in our own final report as well. . . . When it's done, the final report is shared with quite a large number of senior people through our internal Web site [i.e., Intranet].

As we can see, the collaborative intellectual and discursive effort that occurs during the production, release, and promotion of the *Monetary Policy Report* is extremely complex, and the cluster of genres involved provides an important measure of achieved stability to the work. Similar chains of discursive events can be viewed in the production, release, and promotion of other "primary communication vehicles" in the genre set associated with the Communications Strategy, such as speeches by the Governor, the *Update to the Monetary Policy Report*, the *Bank of Canada Annual Report*, and *The Bank of Canada Review*, each with its own complex pattern of distributed cognitive and rhetorical action, configured according to the participants' organizationally defined professional roles.

Producing Public Information and Establishing a Unified Rhetorical Position

A second primary function of the genre set is to generate, shape, and communicate a distinctive organizational brand of "public information"—the "official" discourse, in both written and spoken forms, that represents the Bank of Canada's public position on the economy and monetary policy. This discourse conveys the Bank's views on the present and probable future state of the Canadian economy and the consequent appropriate monetary policy for the country, while at the same time reflecting the organization's awareness of outside commentaries on its monetary-policy actions and mounting responses to these commentaries.

 When we look at the Monetary Policy Framework and the Communication Strategy as overlapping activity systems, we see that their respective activities and genre sets are motivated by very different aims. The Monetary Policy Framework, the activity of data-gathering, knowledge construction, and policy-making, is intended, through its genre set, to foster and manage disparate views and debate—something akin, in its heterogeneity, to Bakhtin's (1981) centrifugal discourse. (For detailed accounts of the activity of the Monetary Policy Framework, see Smart 1998a, 1998b, 1999; Freedman & Smart, 1997.) Here, active disciplinary knowledge

in the form of economic analysis is generated, negotiated, debated, provisionally stabilized, and then used as a communal epistemic resource for policy-making and as a heuristic for further knowledge construction. A former Deputy Governor referred to the Bank as a "highly disputatious place, . . . a very tough shop, intellectually. People like to probe and critique ideas before they accept them." (It must be said, however, that a professional organization such as the Bank cannot encourage a fresh debate each and every day about its foundational goals or concepts or practices—such as the central policy goal of inflation-control or the use of computer-run economic models. Some things have to be accepted as the truth-for-now or best practices, or the organization would never be able to accomplish its work of directing monetary policy.) The larger aim of this activity is to produce provisionally stabilized knowledge—created through robust processes of sound analysis, rigorous debate, and negotiated consensus—to inform monetary-policy decisions and actions.

 The activity and genre set of the Communications Strategy, on the other hand, are designed for some something quite different. In contrast to the way in which the Monetary Policy Framework promotes diverse perspectives and lively debate, from which emerges active disciplinary knowledge, the Communications Strategy is intended to build a consistent, unified public position on the state of the economy and the appropriate monetary policy for the country—a technocratically produced and ideologically inflected commodity for external distribution. In its production of this public information, the Communications Strategy's genre set is intended to provide for the consistent presentation of the key messages that the Bank wishes to get across in its communicative interactions with external groups in Canada's public-policy sphere. (It stands to reason that the Bank could not have the Governor making a statement about monetary policy in Montreal in the morning and a Deputy Governor saying something contradictory about policy in Vancouver in the afternoon—the financial markets would react frenetically and the Bank's credibility and effectiveness would be seriously impaired.) In its monovocality, the public information created and communicated by the Bank appears very much akin to Bakhtin's centripetal or "official" discourse.

What we see here, then, is active disciplinary knowledge from the activity system and genre set associated with the Monetary Policy Framework being transformed into another type of discourse through a different activity system and genre set, those linked to the Communications Strategy. In contrast to the production of disciplinary knowledge through the analysis of data and the thrust-and-parry of discursive exchanges among professional colleagues, we see a movement in another direction—the commodification, as it were, of active disciplinary knowledge into the circumscribed, homogenized, and monovocal discourse of public information.

A case in point is the *Q & A's* package—pre-prepared questions/answers material—that is created along with the *Monetary Policy Report* for the use of Bank staff in responding to queries from journalists and other audiences about the Bank's monetary policy as articulated in the *MPR*. As a Senior Advisor puts it, "The *Q & A's* are intended to provide the appropriate answers to certain lines of questioning." The intention is to ensure that the public messages communicated by members of the Bank staff are consistent on a range of different concerns related to monetary policy. The distinction here, according to the Senior Advisor, is "between issues that are still

being explored and debated in the research," where diverse perspectives are still in play within the activity of the Monetary Policy Framework, and "the Bank's formal views on things, where you have to have a consistency of message"—the "official" discourse and unified public position produced through the activity and genres of the Communications Strategy.

While disciplinary knowledge created within the activity of the Monetary Policy Framework is regularly transformed into public information through the Communications Strategy, at times information also moves in the opposite direction—from the activity of the Communications Strategy to that of the Monetary Policy Framework, where it is absorbed into processes of knowledge construction and policy-making. An example of this can be seen when information about the views of outside groups such as business associations, the financial markets, governments, and organized labor is fed back to the Bank's head office in Ottawa by regional representatives in different parts of the country, as part of the quarterly Projection Exercise (Smart, 1999, provides a detailed account of this activity). In this highly collaborative operation, a team of staff economists uses a complex computer-run mathematical model of the Canadian economy to consolidate and interpret information about different economic indicators and then inscribes the resulting analysis and policy advice in a document known as the *White Book*, addressed to the Bank's senior decision-makers. Below, a Deputy Governor describes how information on the views of outside groups is integrated into the knowledge-making of the Projection Exercise, referring to a document known in the Bank as the *Green Book*, a member of the genre set linked to the Monetary Policy Framework:

> The regional representatives do a lot of work meeting with various businesses, associations, government, universities—to interact and exchange views. The reps gather the views of people in the regions about their predictions of economic growth, inflation, and so on. And then they feed back this information to us in a formal way [as opposed to the more informal, ongoing flow of information communicated to the Bank's Research Department through weekly conference calls], four times a year, during the Projection Exercise. So that in addition to the staff's work in putting together the *White Book*, there's also a process where we bring in the reps from the regions to tell us what people out there appear to be thinking about, and the reps work with the Research Department to quantify this information—they quantify what they call "the balance of opinion" on different issues—for example, on what people think sales volumes are going to be over the next twelve months, or the trend in inflation, say. **. . .** The reps will give us [i.e., the Governor and his senior colleagues] a presentation on this, and they'll also produce a document we call the *Green Book*. The reps' job in all of this is to tell us what they think business people and others out there across the county are thinking, **. . .** and it's very useful information.

Acting as a site for organizational learning

A third primary function of the genre set in the activity of the Communications Strategy is to act as a site for organizational learning. In the pages that follow I examine two kinds of organizational learning: first, the acquisition of economic knowledge relevant to the Bank's mandate for directing monetary policy—most notably, knowledge of how the Canadian economy

functions and how monetary policy interacts with the economy; and second, the development of genre knowledge—specifically, rhetorical knowledge about the nature of the different audiences for the Communications Strategy's genre set and about audience-specific tactics for using the genre set effectively. We will be looking at what these two types of learning entail and, in the case of genre knowledge, at how the learning occurs within the Bank. In this analysis, I will be drawing on what Gavriel Salomon (1993, p. xiv) refers to as the "weak" version of distributed cognition theory, where although the collective thinking-in-activity of a social group may be privileged, individual cognition is also recognized as significant and seen to interact with collective cognition (as opposed to the "strong" version of the theory in which the existence of "solo" cognition is denied or ignored).[18]

In its ongoing attempts to learn more about the nature of the Canadian economy and about the ways in which monetary policy acts upon the economy, the Bank is constantly monitoring published research produced by university economists and economists in private-sector "think-tanks" for relevant empirical findings, theories, economic models, and forecasting methods. A Deputy Governor talks of this relationship: "With the academic literature, it's not just a question of arguing with it; it's important to us in that it provides a window onto the world, an economic window. We have our own research, of course, and research from other central banks, but the academic window is very important too. It's a shared enterprise, learning more about the economy." He goes on to discuss the specific example of "inflation targeting," that is, central banks' use of specific inflation-control targets as the basis for directing monetary policy:

> When the Bank started [using inflation-control targets as the centerpiece of monetary policy] in the early '90s we had nothing to go on except the New Zealand experience. It was only when the academic literature came out three or four years later that we understood much better—it gave us a perspective—that what we did intuitively was absolutely the right thing to do. Now there's been an explosion of literature on this, and it's been very helpful to us in understanding why what we did in 1991 was absolutely the right thing to do.

The Deputy Governor elaborates on the relationship with academic economists, first describing a conference the Bank had recently hosted and then mentioning a strategy for encouraging academic research on topics of particular concern to the central bank:

> We just had another conference, leading up to the next decision-point [on setting out, in collaboration with the Canadian Federal Government, a five-year sequence of inflation-control targets]. . . . Two issues on our minds as we try to reach a decision are downward nominal wage rigidity and the zero interest-rate bounds. And we had a number of papers on both these issues, some by our own people and others were invited papers from academics. . . . One of the advantages of commissioning outside research by academics, two advantages really, is that it gets some interesting work done for us, and more broadly, it may also encourage Canadian academics to do research in areas we're interested in, areas relevant to monetary policy.

Similarly, the Bank is continuously engaged in trying to learn from its exchanges with people working in the financial markets about what is known as the "transmission mechanism" for monetary policy—the process through which monetary policy acts upon the economy through the financial markets (see the Bank of Canada Web site—http://www.bank-banque-canada.ca/en/monetary/index.htm—for a description of the Monetary Policy Transmission Mechanism). As the Chief of the Communications Departments explains,

> On the transmission side [i.e., the implementation of monetary policy], the Bank is always willing to be persuaded that some of our operational assumptions could perhaps be improved by more information from the markets—in terms of the "real-world" risks that accompany one course of action versus another. For the Bank, monetary policy acts through the markets, and so anticipating how the markets will respond to a given monetary policy action, or lack of action, is very much at the heart of day-to-day policy management. The Bank is always trying to learn more about how the financial markets react, and there are people working in the markets who are knowledgeable about this.

A Deputy Governor elaborates on the Bank's organizational commitment to this particular object of learning:

> And a good deal of our monetary-policy work is about learning more about how the [Canadian] economy works and how monetary policy is transmitted to the economy. **. . .** Each of the links in the chain of the transmission mechanism—short-term interest rates, long-term rates, spending, consumption, wage increases, and so on—is very uncertain. Now we certainly do have a view here in the Bank, based on our own research and experience and also the research of others, but we can't really say that there's a lot of strong empirical evidence for each element in the chain. **. . .** And so we're always looking to the views of people in the [financial] markets to see what we can learn.

He goes on, summing up, "If you see that others have views on the economy that you don't, then you want to learn about that too—they just might be right about things. You definitely can't risk ignoring them." What we see articulated here is the commitment on the part of an organizational community-of-practice to learn from its communicative interactions with outside groups.

With regard to the second type of organizational learning related to the Communications Strategy's genre set—developing rhetorical knowledge about the functioning of the genre set itself—the community-of-practice is continually attempting to learn more about the audiences for various genres and to devise effective rhetorical tactics for communicating effectively with these different audiences. For example, the frequent lunch meetings at which senior Bank staff host guests from different outside groups are viewed as an opportunity for this kind of learning. Below, the Chief of the Communications Department provides us with a sense of this:

> There's quite a lunch program for journalists, business people, and other groups—labor, government officials, and so on—who are invited in. It's usually with the Governor, the members of the Governing Council. **. . .**

> They're very informal lunches; basically they're just chats—a chance for the
> Bank to get across some general perspectives on the economy, but especially
> to listen to what their guests have on their minds. It's quite a good
> opportunity to hear what people are saying directly. Basically, it's trying to
> get to know the whole constituency out there a little better.

Another example of the ongoing effort by the community-of-practice to develop genre
knowledge related to the Communications Strategy is the attempt to learn, rhetorically, from the
experience of communicating with the media and the financial markets. The Chief of the
Communications Department provides an illustration of this, describing the production of two
yearly reports:

> At the end of the year we [i.e., the staff in the Communications Department]
> produce a roll-up report that evaluates our success in actually getting our
> messages through to the media over the year, identifying the main occasions
> when we were trying to communicate key messages—and did they actually
> show up in the media coverage? And there's a parallel effort in [the] Financial
> Markets [Department] to evaluate the same events from the point of view of
> the reactions in the markets, a lot of which doesn't appear in the media, but
> rather in the behavior of the markets, or things that market participants
> might tell our analysts. The Bank has systematized all this now, and we're
> doing it on an annual basis as a means of gauging our success in
> communicating. We put a lot of effort into our communications and we need
> to know how we're doing with it and learn to do it better.

A Deputy Governor describes the larger organizational role of the Communications Department
in facilitating this kind of learning, in this particular case with regard to the genre knowledge
needed to communicate effectively with the media specifically:

> The Communications Department keeps a watch on the media—do our
> messages get through clearly. What kind of feedback did we get? And they
> also advise us on *how* to send our messages; they advise us on this, and they
> help with the relationship with the media—help us manage the relationship
> with the media. If you want to communicate with someone, you have to know
> where they're coming from, what they're looking for, what's important for
> them, what our common interests are and how can we maximize the value of
> the relationship for both sides? And certainly, our Communications
> Department helps with this—they advise us on this, with the media.

For individual staff economists who wish eventually to advance to senior levels in the
organization, learning to participate competently in the community-of-practice associated with
the Communications Strategy is particularly important. As a Deputy Governor puts it, "If
economists want to get ahead in the Bank, they better be prepared to communicate with the
outside world as well as inside." Developing this ability means acquiring the genre knowledge
needed to operate in a new activity system and genre set. Typically, economists who are at the
point in their careers where they are ready to advance in this way have already developed
considerable expertise in using the genres embedded in the activity of the Monetary Policy
Framework, but now need to learn to function effectively in the activity of the Communications
Strategy, with its very different genres. The Chief of the Communications Department describes

this transition as a process of moving beyond expertise in the "vacuum-packed research and analysis" of the Monetary Policy framework to competence with a more communicatively and politically nuanced discourse. He offers an illustration of what this transition might involve:

> Let's say a staff economist is out giving a public presentation and gets a question about the Bank's view on the current level of unemployment. The economist *could* give a technically correct answer and say that unemployment isn't explicitly represented in the Bank's models of the economy at all, and so they can't address that question. *Or* they *could* say—and this would be a more intuitive, a more communicative approach—"Well, yes, of course unemployment is extremely important, but as you know, employment is a natural outgrowth of a successful economy, and price stability [i.e., inflation-control] is essential for that." It's the instinct to provide an answer that's small "p" more politically acceptable rather than a technically correct one, which could almost be like throwing a grenade into a crowded room because it's not the right approach for that particular audience. **. . .** It's that transition from the world of vacuum-packed research and analysis to the real world of dialogue and winning respect for the institution, showing competency, increasing credibility.

This brings us to the question of how this type of genre knowledge is attained. To what degree do individuals acquire the knowledge needed to operate in a new genre set explicitly, through formal instruction or coaching, and to what degree do they acquire it implicitly, through day-to-day participation in professional practice? In addressing a similar question, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) point to the significance of the "situated learning" that occurs continuously, though for the most part tacitly, in communities-of-practice—and that engages all members, veterans as well as newcomers, through their ongoing involvement in organizational activity. Lave and Wenger view this kind of learning as an integral part of the "situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning" (p. 51) associated with ordinary everyday social interaction, and as a natural accompaniment of other forms of social cognition, for "learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people engaged in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally structured world" (p. 51). According to Lave and Wenger, a second factor prompting situated learning in organizations relates to their dynamic character—organizations are constantly reinventing themselves in response to changes in "activity and the participation of individuals involved in it, their knowledge, and their perspectives" (p. 117).

With Lave and Wenger's claim for the prevalence and force of situated learning as a backdrop, I would now like to look at some homegrown theory posited by the Chief of the Communications Department, with regard to the question of whether staff economists being trained for an external communications role acquire their genre knowledge through formal, explicit training or through more tacit forms of experience. First, he explains the imperative for the Bank's staff economists to develop the genre knowledge required to participate competently in the activity of the Communications Strategy:

> We're expecting everyone to become better at communicating. Among other things, it's a willingness to listen, to put a human face on what before might have been, in the "Old Bank," a more centralized, big-brother-knows-best

> approach. And this is built right into the performance appraisal system. **. . .** If
> people want to rise in the ranks, beyond the point of being a good technician,
> then they need to see how communications works, and what it is that allows
> someone to move up the ladder.

One the one hand, the Chief explains, the Bank has taken a formal approach to promoting this kind of genre knowledge:

> The Bank has had a leadership development program now for a number of
> years. It's an attempt to become a little more systematic at developing the
> qualities that will provide the Bank with a good supply of future leaders, and
> communication is a key part of this. **. . .** The Communications Department
> helps in communications training, media training—arranging courses for
> people in the Bank who are going to be called on to give speeches,
> presentations.

A sense of what this type of formal training might involve is provided by the Senior Assistant to the Governor, as she describes a course she is planning to take outside the Bank:

> It's a three-day course. Apparently they'll be talking about media relations,
> how to deal with Parliamentarians, promoting greater understanding in the
> public, Internet technology, and how to manage change. And they also have a
> "special" at the end: "transparency versus creative ambiguity" (laughs)—I'm
> very intrigued by that; I think we're getting into philosophical questions here.

At the same time, though, the Chief of the Communications Department has his doubts about the sufficiency of such formal training, as he explains: "It's impossible to send every new person who might go out and meet the public outside for training. Maybe training can help somewhat, but **. . .** I think it's really more of an internal communication issue." In elaborating on the last point, the Chief goes on to convey a personal theory of his that is similar to the conceptualization of situated learning discussed earlier:

> I think the change here in the Bank has happened through a combination of
> new institutional procedures and culturally assimilated values. Yes, there have
> been formal efforts to provide media training, to teach the tricks of the trade**.
> . . .** But there's still another kind of change required. **. . .** And I think it's
> something that people have to pick up, through their work, more by osmosis
> than through a training course that will suddenly turn a person into someone
> who can go out and communicate effectively to the public. You're not going to
> do a miracle transformation with someone a year before they get to be a
> Deputy Governor. It's got to be building all along. To see that there's your
> professional inside work and that this is different from what you do when
> you're communicating outside—I think it's a cultural thing, something that
> has to be learned implicitly around the Bank, in people's work experiences.

And as the Chief points out, however, regardless of how the development of genre knowledge related to the Communications Strategy occurs, the organization holds definite expectations regarding people's success in achieving this particular kind of learning, with career rewards and other consequences at stake: "We're expecting everyone to become better at communicating, in

the sense of listening and responding. It's about a willingness to listen to people, putting a human face on what before might have been, in the Old Bank, a more centralized, big-brother-knows-best approach. And all of this is now built right into the performance appraisal system."

In a final observation, the Chief touches on another aspect of situated learning within a community-of-practice, what Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) refer to as the growth of a "knowledgeably skilled identity": "Where it's really hit home is with people who want to move up in the organization, become a Chief, an Advisor, a Deputy Governor—they're seeing what's necessary to do that, through watching others and gradually getting involved themselves and taking on the role." From this perspective, learning to be effective in using the genres of the Communications Strategy demands that a new aspect of the one's social and professional identity be developed, so that *learning to do or act* and *learning to be* are inseparable. (See Smart, 2000, for a discussion of this dimension of situated learning as a factor in developing the ability to operate in a new genre.)

And how would the Chief evaluate the Bank's overall success in fostering the kind of genre knowledge that members of the community-of-practice need in order to participate effectively in the activity of the Communications Strategy? "I think that now, among the staff generally, there's a better sense of relating to the audience, recognizing that there is one, indeed that there are many of them. And a sense of recognizing that for a public-policy institution to be accountable, you have to be able to explain what you're doing in a way that makes sense to a lot of different groups of people."

Conclusion

This chapter has reported on an ethnographic study of the activity and discourse used by the Bank Canada in carrying out its communicative interactions with other players in the Canadian public-policy sphere. We have seen how a technology-mediated set of discourse genres serves to orchestrate the organizational thinking and rhetorical action that underlie the Bank's Communications Strategy. On the basis of this account, one derived from my own observations and from my informants' reports of their locally constructed work-world, I wish to propose five theoretical claims.[19] These theoretical claims are of the kind that, to borrow from Clifford Geertz (1973), "hover over" the findings from my study. In this respect, the claims are analogous to Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser's "grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998)—the schema of concepts, themes and motifs that can emerge from the careful analysis of qualitative data. Here, then, are the five claims:

- A genre set, functioning as an intrinsic part of an organizational activity system, may comprise a number of spoken and written genres that, mediated by a range of technologies and built environments, function together, often interactively, to prompt, shape, coordinate, and apply the collaborative intellectual and discursive work that allows the organization to accomplish its mandate or mission.

- Within an organizational activity system, a genre set is linked to various intersubjectivities—domains of shared focus, perception, and understanding that cognitively connect the

members of a community-of-practice. A central area of intersubjectivity is genre knowledge—the rhetorical awareness of the ways in which the genre set functions. Four keys aspects of genre knowledge relate to the goals of the activity system, the division of intellectual and discursive labor, a vernacular of shared terms, and the discursive construction of outside groups as audiences.

- Within organizational activity, genre sets may function either to build active disciplinary knowledge by encouraging a diversity of views and internal debate or to produce public information and a unified rhetorical position to be communicated to the world outside the organization.

- In its evolution, a genre set reflects—and contributes to—processes of continuous change within the activity of an organization, with changes in activity, discourse, and technology occurring dialectically in complex patterns of causality.

- Given the emergent, dynamic nature of an organizational activity system, all the members of its community-of-practice are continuously engaged in learning as an inevitable consequence of performing their everyday rounds of work. Two central areas of learning are the acquisition of knowledge about the external world needed by the organization in order to accomplish its mandate and the development of genre knowledge.

Clearly, however, a qualitative researcher cannot with any degree of legitimacy move from presenting the findings of one study of a single organization and the grounded theory derived from these findings to asserting the authority of this theory in other organizational sites. Rather, I would hope that the theoretical claims presented above might serve as a heuristic resource for researchers wishing to examine genre sets employed in other professional organizations to accomplish intellectual and discursive work. Elliot Eisner (2001) argues eloquently for the heuristic use of theory that has been derived from qualitative inquiry in particular local settings:

> [Theory] distills particulars in ways that foster generalizability. Although theory loses some local color when particulars are left behind, theory makes distinctions and packages thematic relationships so that they will travel well; when we distill, we come away from a research site with ideas that can sensitize us to situations and events like the ones from which the theory was derived. . . . The generalizations derived from qualitative case studies are essentially heuristic devices intended to sharpen perception so that our patterns of seeking and seeing are more acute. We don't use the generalizations drawn from the specific case to draw conclusions about other situations, but rather we use them to search those situations more efficiently. (p. 141)

If additional qualitative studies of genre sets in other professional organizations were contributed to the literature, the next step in the process of disciplinary theory-building, as I see it, would be to compare findings across these studies, with a view to identifying recurrent patterns that could allow us to make new and broader theoretical claims about the functioning of genre sets in organizational activity and discourse. Such empirical/theoretical work would, I believe, contribute significantly to strengthening our field.

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Notes

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[2] Here, following the practice in Applied Linguistics, I am using the term "text" to refer to both written and spoken utterances.

³ I borrow the phrase "activity-based genre theory" from Mark Zachry (2001, p. 62).

⁴ Given my goals for the research, the sets of questions I sent to the people to be interviewed were not standardized, but rather differed somewhat from one person to another, depending on the individual's role in the Bank. In all the interviews, I used the set of questions sent in advance to the informant as a starting point and a heuristic, and I freely took up new lines of inquiry that seemed relevant to themes I saw emerging during the two days I spent at the Bank.

⁵ This set of characteristics is derived from the work of theorists such as Yrjö Engeström (1992), David Russell (1997), Charles Bazerman (1994a), Edwin Hutchins (1995), Lucy Suchman (1987), James Wertsch (1997), Charles Goodwin (1997), Jeoffrey Bowker & Susan Leigh Star (1999), Donald Norman (1993), Dorothy Winsor (2001), and Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger (1991) as well as from earlier work of my own, including a piece co-authored with Aviva Freedman (Smart, 1998, 1999, 2000; Freedman & Smart, 1997).

⁶ This observation on the embedding of values and interests in technological tools is inspired by the work of theorists such as Andrew Feenberg (1999) and Johndan Johnson-Eilola (1997).

⁷ Donald Norman (1993) describes the need for and role of such tools in human activity: "The power of the unaided mind is highly overrated. Without external aids, thought, memory, and reasoning are all constrained. But human intelligence is highly flexible and adaptive, superb at inventing procedures and objects that overcome its own limits. The real powers come from devising external aids that enhance cognitive abilities. How have we increased memory, thought, and reasoning? . . . [T]hrough the development of tools of thought—cognitive artifacts—that complement abilities and strengthen mental powers" (p. 43).

⁸ See also Schatzki, Knorr Cetina, & Von Savigny (Eds.), 2001, on the relevance of practice theory for the study of human cognition, discourse, and action.

⁹ To this juncture in the chapter, I have been using the term "technology" to include a broad range of constructed human artifacts such as computer-based information systems and designed physical environments; from this point on I will be more specific, distinguishing between "digital technologies" and "built environments."

¹⁰ The lectures, speeches, and presentations in this list of written genres are events in which the speaker delivers a prepared text more or less verbatim in front of a live audience.

¹¹ I certainly would not claim to have identified all the genres actually in play within the activity of the Bank's Communication Strategy—it is just the most accurate representation I have been able to infer from a particular body of data. If I have misrepresented the genre set, I suspect it has been on the side of under-counting the genres. And of course, given the plasticity of genres and the ever-changing character of a genre set, what exists now, in April 2002, may be somewhat different from what existed in June 2000.

¹² The quotations from Bank of Canada staff included in this chapter have been edited for false starts, hesitations, fillers, and redundancy. As well, a space with three periods (. . .) indicates that verbal material from an utterance has been omitted in the quotation.

¹³ The concern here—and one that is of vital importance for the Canadian economy—is to avoid widespread currency speculation and consequent turmoil in the financial markets.

[14] In referring to the Canadian economy here as if it were a material reality, I am choosing, for the sake of brevity in this discussion, to sidestep the view that the "economy" is actually a discursive construct established through the practices of professional economists working in particular organizational sites. As I have argued elsewhere, the economists in any given organizational site employ the distinctive construct created through their discourse—and referred to as "the economy"—as an analytical tool, using its structure of categories (such as commodity prices, exports, and government expenditures) and inter-relationships to interpret empirical data (see Smart, 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2000; Freedman & Smart, 1997).

[15] As an institution covered by federal bilingualism legislation, the Bank of Canada issues all its major publications in both English and French.

[16] While the lock-up was an innovation introduced to the Bank of Canada as part of the Communications Strategy, the event was not invented by the Bank. Other organizations in Canada and elsewhere had previously used lock-ups, including, for example, the Canadian Department of Finance prior to the official release of its annual budget.

[17] As with a number of the genres that have emerged in the Bank with the development of the Communications Strategy, the media-analysis report was imported from outside the organization. As the Chief of the Communications Department explains, "Some government departments have this kind of media analysis done every day for the Minister and his staff."

[18] The weak version of distributed cognition theory, with its allowance for individual thought and agency, is more compatible with the perspectives presented in this chapter such as, for example, the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens (1984) and its invocation in the work of Charles Bazerman (1994a, 1994b) and Carolyn Miller (1994).

[19] While the primary data underlying these theoretical claims come from my research at the Bank of Canada, I have also worked as a free-lance writing consultant with a number of other organizations, including Nortel, the Atomic Energy Control Board of Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories, and TFN (an Inuit training organization), and in all these sites I have observed work activities, recorded field-notes, conducted interviews, and collected documents (all of this occurring, of course, in the relatively free-wheeling days for researchers before IRB's and formalized "human subjects" concerns). And I have seen many instances in these organizations where the use of sets of discourse genres was consonant with the theoretical claims I am advancing here.