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A Word on Our Departing Editor

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Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Joseph Cappella thwarts meaningful dialogue and hampers civil conversation. It contributes to increased political polarization that precludes cooperation. Political commentators dubbed the 2012 presidential election the nastiest and ugliest they have ever seen, as attacks by and against the candidates were flamed by a new media system that rewards negativity with publicity. That new media allow people to lodge attacks under the cover of anonymity does not help matters.

These developments present opportunities for educators seeking to institute the principles of *eloquentia perfecta* into the curriculum as the need to teach students proper rhetorical practices is great. Loyola University of Maryland specifies undergraduate learning aims related to *eloquentia perfecta* that are well-suited to the digital age. These are: “the ability to use speech and writing effectively, logically, gracefully, persuasively, and responsibly” and “critical understanding of and competence in a broad range of communications media.”

The first of these goals acknowledges the need to counter the unfortunate norms of digital age discourse that devalue the quest for truth and accuracy in reporting information, undermine accountability, foster incivility, and fail to promote the public good. The second aim seeks to generate awareness of the constantly shifting platforms and changing modes of conversation that are the reality of today’s media environment. It implies the need to broaden the curriculum to encompass nonconventional formats, such as 140 character limits, audio and video presentations, and mashups.

Young people are at the forefront of innovation with novel platforms and applications. They are attuned to the characteristics of new media and proficient in their use. They have been instrumental in building the information architecture that underpins the new media system and elevating its use. With proper guidance, our students can inevitably play an active role in the adaptation of *eloquentia perfecta* for the new media age curriculum. ■

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Photo by Kerry Weber.

Fr. Ray Schroth, S.J., concludes his ten-year run as editor of *Conversations* with this issue. Characteristically, he is not gearing down or taking it easy. Just the opposite. His added responsibilities at *America* as literary editor will keep him busier than ever.

Because of his talent as a journalist and his breadth of knowledge about Jesuit universities, Fr. Schroth brought great suggestions, skilled editing, and creative layouts to *Conversations*.

Conversations began shortly after the Georgetown Conference on Jesuit higher education in 1989 at which Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach gave a major address. Afterwards, an urgent need was felt to have greater communication among the Jesuit universities, to share insights and best practices, and especially for lay colleagues to delve into, understand, embrace, and take responsibility for the Jesuit mission.

No one has been more central, more committed, and

more skilled for advancing this mission on our National Seminar for Jesuit Higher Education than Ray Schroth. Our seminar members hold him in great affection, and we are consoled by knowing that he is just a phone call away for recommendations about articles, writers, or “hot” topics. He himself embodies the *Eloquentia Perfecta*, which we explore in this issue. ■

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