Thérèse Paquet-Sévigny

Achievements report
1994-1999

From 1994 to 1999, Thérèse Paquet-Sévigny, the first secretary general of Orbicom, worked on the creation of the network and on its consolidation and development. She led various activities to ensure its sustainability. She also oversaw the creation and development of the Bell UNESCO Chair in Communication.

Network development and consolidation

- From 1994 to 1999, Orbicom had grown into a network of 22 chairs from a mere nine in 1994. Were added: USA, Brazil, Mexico, France, Romania, Denmark, Great Britain, Morocco, Ivory Coast, South Africa, Japan, Philippines and South Korea. The number of its associate members expanded rapidly from zero to 240, making Orbicom a unique international network of scholars, members of the industry, practitioners and policymakers who work on information and communication issues.

Consultations, Seminars and Publications

- In view of the first GKP (Global Knowledge Partnership) Summit in Toronto, at the request of the Ministry of External Affairs of Canada, Thérèse Paquet-Sévigny presided in early 1997 a national consultation among media and policy leaders, video producers and software business people. About 55 participants from all provinces of Canada contributed to a platform to be of use at the Toronto Summit. Claude-Yves Charron, Professor of Communications at UQAM, edited the report together with Anne-Tamara Lorre, then a PhD student at UQAM.

- In 1996, with the support of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, Mrs. Paquet-Sévigny organized a two-day seminar concerning the interrelations between communications and international development, with the participation of 15 Canadian experts and professors from seven universities. Under her direction, the outcomes of the seminar were later presented in the book entitled *Communication and International Development*, published in French, English and Spanish and distributed in dozens of countries. Pierre Sormany, professor of journalism at University of Montreal, scientific

journalist, conceptor and editor of scientific programs at Radio Canada, accepted to act as the editor of the book as well as to contribute one article.

- In 1998, at the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, 35 international experts in communications and new technologies prepared a collective collection – *Freedom of Expression and New Communication Technologies*. Under the direction of Thérèse Paquet-Sévigny, the book was edited by Michèle Paré, journalist and past chief researcher at Radio Canada, and Pierre Desbarats, journalist and professor at the Graduate School of Journalism, University of Western Ontario. Its three versions in French, English and Spanish were made possible with the financial support of UNESCO, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, the Dutch Commission for UNESCO, the Columbian Commission for UNESCO and the Commission for UNESCO of Uruguay Government.

- In 1998, Orbicom started to plan for an international conference concerning employment in the communication field to take place in Montreal, Canada, in April 1999. The conference was related with Orbicom's one large international research project, carried in seven geographical regions under the supervision of Claude-Yves Charron and with 11 coordinators around the world. 27 researchers contributed to this project. The 518 pages research report entitled *Information Societies: Crisis in the Making? Diagnostic and Strategies for Intervention in Seven World Regions* was edited by Claude-Yves Charron and Metasebia Woldemariam, then a PhD student at UQAM. The report was available in three languages and distributed to all participants to the April 1999 Montreal Conference.

- From 14 to 17 April 1999, the Montreal conference, *Connection Knowledge in Communication: Bridging the Gap between Training and Employment*, brought together 155 communications specialists from 55 countries, among which, over 40 speakers. Proceedings of the conference were compiled in the 374 pages book, *New Partnerships in Communications for the 21st Century: Strategies for Governance, Technology, Employment and Lifelong Learning*, edited by Claude-Yves Charron, Maria Camila Chica and Sheryl Hamilton and published in three languages in 1999.

- In the context of the 1999 conference, another study was prepared on the topic of employment in communication, *Les paradoxes des technologies de l'information: productivité, emploi et formation.* It was published by Professor Hadj Benyahia (UQAM), at the request of ORBICOM.

- A quarterly Newsletter was launched as well as an annual Directory of Members.

- During the period, a few dozens of special regional activities were organized by UNESCO Chairs in communication. Academic teaching programs were also initiated in some countries.

Training Environment for students

- Over the years, more than 30 students in Master's and PhD programs in communications worked at the Orbicom Secretariat. The Secretariat was called to play a triple role. It had a "traditional" role of service to members including information exchange and distribution of material. Prior to that, it should conduct a constant process of recruitment of universities, chair holders and associate professional members, in consultation with UNESCO and the Board. Last but not least, students can participate in different projects initiated by Orbicom and perform tasks like researching, writing, translating, editing, publishing and coordinating. Such an environment was unique and stimulating for everyone.

Funding

- All these projects and the development of Orbicom Network would not have been possible without a full engagement from UNESCO and UQAM from the start. The protocol stipulated the annual financial support of UNESCO and the offering of space and services (professorial, legal, technical and accounting) from UQAM.

- For the sake of credibility and sustainability, Orbicom had creative capacity to design projects. New funding was needed. The Secretary General had to approach the UN system and many other international institutions and foundations as well as a few Canadian international development organizations like Montreal International, CIDA, IDRC and la Commission canadienne pour l'UNESCO.

- Some of these endorsed financially a few specific projects and the 1999 international conference on connecting knowledge (45 partners, private and public, contributed financially and professionally to the preparation of the conference and the meeting itself). Among these were l'Agence de la Francophonie, le PNUD, le Conseil des Arts et Sciences du Canada, Bell Canada, CGI, NORTEL, le Mouvement Desjardins, France Telecom, as well as les Ministères des Affaires internationales et de la Culture du Québec.

Accreditations

- During its first three years in operation, Orbicom received its first international recognition. It earned the United Nations accreditation Category A, the UNESCO accreditation, and was invited amongst the first members of the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP).