

# Introduction to POROI 12.1

David J. Depew *University of Iowa*

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# Introduction to *POROI* 12.1

**David Depew**

*University of Iowa  
emeritus*



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*POROI* 12.1 contains essays on the scope and limits of rhetoric in science, the effect of advanced communication technology on the locus and nature of rhetorical agency, and misfires that can arise in the public dissemination of scientific argumentation.

Rhetorical agency, a topic first brought to prominence by Kenneth Burke, has been profoundly affected by contemporary communication technology. The Society for Rhetoric of Science, Technology, and Medicine (ARSTM) sponsored a symposium on the topic in 2015. The fruits of this symposium are available in “The Great Chain of Being: A Manifesto on the Problem of Agency in Science Communication.” Its authors are Carolyn R. Miller, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, *emerita*, who has published pioneering work on this subject; Lynda Walsh, University of Nevada, Reno; James Wynn, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh; Ashley Rose Kelly, University of Waterloo, Ontario; Kenneth Walker, University of Arizona, Tucson; William J. White, Pennsylvania State University, Altoona; and Emily Winderman, North Carolina State University, Raleigh. Twenty-six additional scholars contributed to the statement.

In “Between Control and Constraint: Charting Three Rhetorics of Patient Agency,” Ellen Defossez, University of Pittsburgh, offers a case study for reflecting on the problems of agency addressed by the Manifesto. She gives a heartfelt diagnosis of issues posed by the displacement of responsibility for one’s health from medical providers to patients, a displacement enabled by new technologies of communication. Her study highlights the paradoxes inherent in the conjunction of ‘patient’ and ‘agency’ in her title.

In “The Limits of the Rhetorical Analysis of Science,” Alan G. Gross, University of Minnesota, *emeritus*, follows up his seminal studies of the rhetorical nature of scientific argument by casting scientific statements that are no longer subject to dispute as post-rhetorical. His case studies range from Robert Hooke’s writings on the microscopy of insects to James Watson and Francis Crick’s discovery of the structure of DNA to recent debates about

anthropogenic global warming. Readers will also want to consult the special issue of *POROI*, Volume 10, Number 2, dedicated to Professor Gross's work.

“Paralogical Hyperbole: A ‘Missing Link’ Between Technical and Public Spheres,” by Miles C. Coleman, University of Seattle, diagnoses a fallacy that affects the popular dissemination of scientific reports by studying a putative “missing link” between *Homo sapiens* and its evolutionary ancestors.

*POROI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Rhetorical Analysis and Invention* solicits your submissions. The peer-reviewed on-line journal appears semi-annually. Its interests center on rhetorical aspects of knowledge production and the role of various media, old and new, in this process.