Reflecting Upon The Rogers Communications Centre Turning 10

"Education is not the piling on of learning, information, data, facts, skills, or abilities--that's training or instruction--but is rather a making visible what is hidden as a seed."
Thomas Moore, "The Education of the Heart"

In reflecting on the Rogers Communications Centre as it celebrates its tenth anniversary, it is necessary to focus on how admirably its seeds grew during these important first ten years. In a decade that defied prediction in the field of communications, rapid shifts in society, business and technology resulted in a constantly changing playing field in which Ryerson's Communication and Design schools had to rapidly adapt. The decade started with the widespread deployment of computer networking. It saw the CDROM become a mainstream consumer item. It gave birth to the rise of Internet as a major communications medium. The digitization of media caused major shifts in business practices. The decade closed with a dot.com crash, leaving those in the financial community wondering what business in digital communications is all about. Despite these many challenges, the Rogers Communications Centre developed and harnessed the advanced knowledge required to be successful during in its inaugural decade.

Much of the Rogers Communications Centre's building design, construction, technical design and installation were seeded by the efforts of many of Ryerson's faculty and staff. When the opportunity first arose for a new building with the Ontario Government, then Ryerson President Brian Segal called together Greer Lavery (Computer Science), Ron Keast (RTA) and John Miller (Journalism) to formalize the concept of the communications centre. At the time, the technology supporting these schools had become antiquated and the new Centre would be built to support and equip the schools with the tools required due to the rapid technological changes occurring in their respective fields.

Once approved, George Hume and Brian Barron, then of Ryerson's Campus Planning, took over the role of coordinating the space requirements and the unique physical spaces required for a modern communications building. Once the three-year construction phase of the building started, Darryl Williams, formerly of Image Arts, was appointed to oversee the technological equipping of the building from an academic perspective. The technical team that designed the technical infrastructure and facilities now found in the building included Ken Woo of CCS, who specified the initial networked infrastructure in the Centre. Brad Fortner –then with Applied Arts—was seconded to lead the planning of all of the video and audio facilities for the building. Finally, CCS employees Don Smith, Wayne Detcher, Greg Martin and Bruce McCleod joined the Technical Installation Planning Group that designed the customized wiring required by many of the broadcast facilities initially found in the Centre.

Although the labs had yet to be completed, the general-purpose classrooms located on the second floor of the Rogers Communications Centre were first used in January of 1992.   Most of the Rogers Communications Centre's facilities were obtained during 1991 and throughout the spring of 1992. With limited capital to purchase facilities, industry partnerships were key to meeting the technical requirements of the Centre's schools. ADCOM, AVID Technologies, City-TV, Digital Equipment of Canada, IBM Canada, Image North Technologies (now Inscriber), Imagineering, Panasonic Canada, Roland Corporation, Sony of Canada, Soundmaster Group and Tascam of Canada were among the initial technological partners in the building.

During the summer of 1992 the move into, and the technical build, of the Rogers Centre started. Five additional people including Bruno Boccia, Ken Goodings, Reg Michie, Ian Miller, and John Pugh, all of CCS, were added to the technical installation team. Two students and one cart moved the existing departmental technology into the Centre. Administrative departments, namely Purchasing and Physical Plant, went out of their way to ensure deadlines were met for the Ryerson installation team that had delayed their summer vacation. Manny Ravinsky of Campus Planning, troubleshot the building as it came on-line assisting with hundreds of details in the complex building. With the exception of TV Studio C -which came on-line by the third week in September- all of the labs opened on time with operational technology. All this was accomplished without a single hour of overtime by Ryerson staff. The biggest departmental change occurred in the School of Journalism. The school had gone from six curricular Macintosh computers when they closed in April to well over three hundred in the new Centre when it opened in September.

Milestones Of The Rogers Communications Centre's First Decade

1992
- RCC staff develops "Editly" a PC based video edit control system

1993
- RCC demonstrates networked multimedia with PARIS project.
- Darryl Williams recognized as Ryersonian of the Year

1994
- RTA television studios completed with significant RCC technological support
- RCC is a founding partner in SMART Toronto Organization

1995
- APG development starts with seven multimedia systems and support base in RCC

1996
- Digital Media Projects Office established
- Dr. Michael Murphy appointed as RCC Academic Director

1997
- Panasonic Canada partnership extension brings DVC-PRO to Ryerson
- Digital Canada Ltd. partnership establishes Visual Computing Lab (VCL)
- SPIRIT (Interactive Radio) launched in Centre
- RCC joins formation of New Media Trainers Alliance

1998
- Digital Processing Systems partnership established real-time non-linear editing in RCC
- RCC hosts Canadian launch of WebTV in Centre and CAB forum on Interactive Television
- RCC completes all digital plant by connecting integrating digital EFP, digital non-linear editing, digital compositing and digital animation into a seamless network
- Datacasting Lab established

1999
- Mbone production and meeting facility established
- RCC opens Canada's first educational Dolby 5.1 surround sound production lab
- RCC joins Canadian Digital Television Inc. (CDTV)
- CITO Ontario - Baden-Württemberg Research Project funded
- Brad Fortner recognized with Ryersonian Of The Year Award
- Interactive Broadcast Development Group formed to advance study in Interactive Television
- Interactive Broadcast Ontario research project funded
- Ryerson's first DVD authoring and production station established.

2000
- TV studio C becomes Canada's first educational 16x9 aspect ratio television studio
- Perfecte, Canada's first student produced HDTV was completed in the RCC

2001
- RCC becomes founding sponsor of Liberty Village New Media Centre
- RCC builds and houses the Master Control for CDTV's Toronto Digital Test Transmitter. From it Toronto's first HDTV programs, data content and DVB terrestrial video is transmitted, received and tested.
- TV studio C becomes Canada's first all digital educational 16x9 aspect ratio television studio

2002
- Panasonic partnership extension places seven HDTV camera's in schools and provides VTR support for HDTV editing
- SummitFX Inc./Pinnacle Systems partnership establishes permanent HDTV editing technology in RCC
- RCC hosts EMMA Award Judging on behalf of New Media Trainers Alliance
- RCC hosts CDTV-ATSC seminar on Innovations in Digital Television on behalf of CDTV
- DVD authoring environment harmonized to support classroom.
- Cyradis partnership adds Broadcast Master Control facility to RCC
- Access Grid research leads to the establishment of Digital Threads

A Complete Milestone List Is Available @ www.rcc.ryerson.ca/history.htm