**Credo for Net Neutrality, Free and Responsible Use of Electronic Networks,
and the Digital Divide**
(approved 1994; amended 2013; amended 2018)

The principles of free and responsible communication have long been a hallmark of communication study. Since 1963, the National Communication Association (then the Speech Communication Association) has included among its core documents a Credo for Free and Responsible Communication in a Democratic Society. Recognizing the advent and emergent role of electronic means of global communication accessible to the general public, we members of the National Communication Association endorse the following statement of principles relating to free and responsible use of electronic communication:

We support Net Neutrality.

We recognize that there is limited ability for one to engage in the freedom of expression if access to communication technology is limited by financial ability. We therefore urge the continued development of free and low-cost means of accessing the means for processing and distributing information in electronic forms. These includes comprehensive access to cost-effective computing technology and software as well as reliable distribution infrastructures.

We realize that access is limited if specialized expertise is required to take advantage of the necessary technology. We therefore urge the development of hardware and software that requires minimal training but that still allows wide use of worldwide electronic resources.

We support freedom of expression and condemn attempts to constrain information processing or electronic communication, especially expressions that are offensive to some or even most of the populace. Such constrictions include restricting access to electronic networks as well as the information on those networks. While supporting free expression, we nevertheless consider the maintenance of intellectual property rights to be crucial to the encouragement of creativity and originality. We, therefore, urge the designers and regulators of electronic forms of communication to use special vigilance to insure that the works of individuals or groups are protected from unfair use by others.

We support a right to privacy, both in the ability to maintain the integrity of individual message exchanges and in the ability to shield oneself from unwanted messages. We thus encourage the development of technologies that grant users individual control and ownership over their information.

We accept the need to educate students and the general public how to use electronic forms of communication effectively and responsibly by providing the technical and theoretical knowledge of communication technology and by helping students recognize their role as 'netizens,' or citizens in the shared space of the Internet.

We call upon users of information processing and distribution networks to do so with respect for myriad demographic and psychographic dimensions they may encounter in others. There must be a recognition that communication technologies allow for communication among and between truly

global audiences.

We reaffirm our commitment to urge the development of free and low-cost ways of accessing the means for processing and distributing information in electronic forms. Moreover, we continue to urge the development of communication technologies that require minimal training but that still allow wide use of worldwide electronic resources. Additionally, as electronic resources continue to become increasingly demanding in terms of bandwidth, we ask that service providers ensure connection speeds necessary to competently utilize said resources. Moreover, while many argue that economic barriers to technology have been greatly reduced, technology and information literacy barriers must be addressed with equal attention so that those with access to technology are able to use it effectively. Given these commitments, we resolve to take a leadership role in closing the Digital Divide through scholarship highlighting access, usability, and empowerment issues.

NCA officers and staff will support legislation aimed at providing universal access to electronic means of communication. We will work with other organizations to ensure that communities in the U.S. and elsewhere have adequate electronic communication resources available to all. Our members have a responsibility to increase awareness of the Digital Divide as a comprehensive social issue that considers socio-economic as well as literacy and empowerment dimensions. We urge our members to take an active role in increasing awareness of the Digital Divide through research, education, incorporating material on this problem into courses, through community consultation and education, and by advocating for appropriate policies at all levels of government, as well as supporting the production and distribution of open source software, as well as continued education on using said software. [Formerly the Resolution on the Digital Divide (approved 1999; modified in 2013)]

Finally, we encourage communication researchers to continue to produce findings that will guide policy decisions concerning the social impact of electronic communication and to make those findings available widely. Likewise, we encourage the designers and regulators of electronic forms of communication to take credible findings about the social impact of their work into account as they implement new products and services.