I congratulate the *CommLaw Conspectus* on its fifteen years of service to the communications bar, and to The Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law and its students. By publishing interesting, informative and thought-provoking articles and materials, *CommLaw Conspectus* has played an important role in a major area of American law.

The publication is truly student-inspired and directed. The inspiration came from a student in the Columbus School of Law’s Institute for Communications Law Studies, Dorothy Erstling Cukier. Dorothy, a former editor at a prestigious book publisher, came to me in her first year of law school and said that it was “anomalous” (not her word; her word was much more deprecatory) that a communications program had no publication through which to communicate. I agreed with her, as I had with other Institute students who had made the same observation. The difference this time was that Dorothy intended to do something about it. She put together a detailed proposal and budget for an annual single issue publication, and rounded up a number of students to staff the new journal. I volunteered, if you’ll pardon the sports metaphor, to do the down-field blocking of the skeptics on the faculty and members of the administration who doubted the Law School had the resources for yet another journal, while Dorothy quarterbacked the journal’s initial development.

The question naturally arose as to what the publication should be called. Somehow “Communications Law Journal” sounded trite and too generic. Again, it was the students involved who provided the inspiration. The students want to call it “CommLaw Conspectus,” Dorothy told me during one of our conversations. In my typically salty way, I responded, “What the hell is a conspectus?” Dorothy informed me, in the measured tones of a teacher trying to enlighten a particularly dull student, that a conspectus is a compendium of disparate elements of human thought. Perhaps because of

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my incomprehension, the first few issues of the journal contained a definition of the word “conspectus” from Webster’s Third New International Dictionary. And, indeed, the CommLaw Conspectus is a compendium of scholarly articles, student writings, recent case summaries, Federal Communications Commission docket summaries, and bibliographies of books, monographs, and articles in communications law and allied fields.

For the first two years of the journal’s existence, it was a single-issue publication. Somehow, a single-issue journal does not seem much like a periodical. My one real contribution to the publication’s development was to point out this rather obvious fact. But nobody was sure that the Law School had the resources to double the budget and staff for a two-issue journal. As a test, one of the journal’s faculty advisors, Robert Corn-Revere, suggested a limited special issue devoted to the Clinton Administration’s initiative on the development of a National Information Infrastructure, also known as the “Information Superhighway.” In total, this special issue ran only forty-three pages, including a brief introduction by Vice President Al Gore. While thin by normal law journal standards, the successful publication of the special issue proved that a two-issue journal was feasible.

CommLaw Conspectus, true, to its name, publishes a great variety of human thought in the communications law realm and associated fields. In the first issue, Alexander C. Larson, an economist with Southwestern Bell Telephone Company (now “the new AT&T”) enlightened us about economics in the telecommunications field in An Economic Guide to Competitive Standards in Telecommunications Regulation, 1 COMMILAW CONSPectus 31 (1993). And who can forget Terry L. Etter’s discussion of violence in television and how to deal with it in The Knock-Down, Drag-Out Battle Over Government Regulation of Television, 3 COMMILAW CONSPectus 31 (1995), quoting the late, great Gilda Radner confusing violence on television with violins on television, which she supported, as against a perceived government ban. Perhaps the most unusual piece the journal has published so far is an interview with Larry Flynt by two First Amendment advocates in which Flynt expounded on the legacy of Hustler Magazine, Inc. v. Flynt, his personal understanding of the First Amendment, and his views on obscenity laws (Clay Calvert & Robert Richards, Larry Flynt Uncensored: A Dialogue with the Most Controversial Figure in First Amendment Jurisprudence, 9 COMMILAW CONSPectus 159 (2001)).

But past publication is merely prologue to the interesting articles and materials to come. The 15th anniversary issue includes: an article about à la carte and tiering of cable channels as possible antidotes to the consumer disadvantages of cable channel bundling; an article examining the Federal Communication Commission’s “duopoly rule” and how the Commission might fix it; and two articles offering unique perspectives on the question of spectrum allocation and licensing regimes. These are just some of the
important items presented here. Truly, the publication has been and continues to be a "conspectus," whatever the hell that means.