

# CITATION

Outstanding Contribution to Research Award 2005

Communication and Information Technologies Section American Sociological Association

to PROFESSOR LUCY SUCHMAN

Professor Suchman's seminal contributions to the social study of communication and information technologies began with the publication of her pathbreaking book *Plans and Situated Actions: The Problem of Human-Machine Communication* in 1987. Combining a simple yet highly imaginative ethnographic research design, a remarkable eye for identifying critical trends in the data, and a powerful conceptual elaboration that brought ethnomethodological and interpretive traditions to the then new terrain of technology research, *Plans and Situated Actions* convincingly demonstrated the contextual dependency of human-machine interaction. *Plans and Situated Actions* forever shaped the scholarship on the new, computerized technologies by taking interactivity – one of their supposedly distinctive technical capabilities – out of the exclusive domain of being a material attribute into becoming an emergent property of relationships among people and things. This epistemic move had the larger consequence of broadening the space of sociological scholarship to include artifacts and the social discourses and practices about them as legitimate objects of inquiry.

Another remarkable contribution of Professor Suchman has been to create a program of inquiry that brought together social and computer scientists. While at the Palo Alto Research Center of the Xerox Corporation, she developed the now well-established methodology of "work-practice studies" and directed a series of studies of technology construction and use pursued jointly by people trained in social and engineering disciplines. These studies showed that sociological scholarship not only has value for those interested in understanding the social factors that shape how artifacts are built and used, but also for those whose main interest is the actual creation and subsequent deployment of these artifacts.

In light of her foundational contributions to the social studies of communication and information technologies, and of her remarkable achievements in bringing social and computer scientists closer to each other, it is our pleasure to present Professor Lucy Suchman with the 2005 Outstanding Contribution to Research Award.

Award committee: David Elesh, Eszter Hargittai, and David Stark (chair)