

CANNING, MICHAEL J.

Board Member

Summary: As an officer with the US Information Agency (USIA), Mike Canning worked for 28 years as a press and cultural officer in eight countries on four continents and, in retirement, he retains his interest in promoting a vigorous public diplomacy (PD).

Foreign Service Career

Canning began his career in 1965 as a junior officer in Managua, Nicaragua, then was a cultural affairs officer in Lima, Peru. In mid-career, he served in Uganda, Kenya, Iran and was the Embassy's press officer in Rome. In 1989-90, Canning headed the USIS operation as Public Affairs Officer (PAO) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In his last assignment in Brasilia, he held the position of deputy PAO in Brazil, one of the Agency's largest overseas posts. He was a Congressional Fellow of the American Political Science Association in the early 1970's and is a graduate of the Senior Seminar, once the State Department's premier training program.

After his retirement in 1993, Canning continued to act as a consultant to USIA and, later, the Department. In that capacity, he analyzed book programs in Latin America, worked on the 1994 Summit of the Americas, inspected overseas posts, and participated in Department training programs. He also acted as an interim PAO at American embassies in San José, Costa Rica, and Managua. He was contracted to do two major studies for USIA and the Department of State, one on Foreign Service personnel, "Public Diplomats: Maintaining their Presence in a Post-USIA World" (March 1999) and one called "Contact Management: A Post Perspective" (July 2004).

Life After the Service

Canning's (personally very rewarding) second career has been as a movie reviewer since 1993 for the Hill Rag newspaper on Capitol Hill. He is a member of the Washington Area Film Critics' Association and has his own website of film writings at www.mikesflix.com. He combines reviewing with freelance writing on film, politics, and public affairs. He currently combines his interest in film and overseas PD operations by lecturing at the Foreign Service Institute on the use of American film as a program tool.

Mike became an ex-officio member of the Public Diplomacy Council's board in 1999 when he was named president of the USIA Alumni Association. He became a regular PDC board member in 2004. His principal activity on the Council has been organizing and coordinating the organization's periodic forums on major PD subjects. As part of his involvement in one of those forums, he wrote the Council monograph on "The Overseas Post: The Forgotten Element of Our Public Diplomacy" in December 2008.

Michael Canning is willing to make presentations on:

- How public diplomacy functions in overseas posts
- The work of an information or cultural officer in an American Embassy
- What a press attaché does
- Depicting America through the use of the film medium
- Foreign films on American screens