Meet Our Faculty:
Dr. David M. Boje, Management

Interviewer: Mr. Wenkai Zhou, NMSU

(Adapted from Wikipedia) Dr. David M. Boje is Professor of Management, Wells Fargo Bank Professor, Bill Daniels Ethics Fellow, and past Bank of America Professor at NMSU. He has published nineteen books and more than 130 journal articles. His newest book was released by Routledge a few days ago: Storytelling Organizational Practices: Managing in the Quantum Age. (See the reviews posted on Routledge’s website.)

David invented the term antenarrative—defined as the double move: a bet (ante) on the future and the before (ante) of our living story on its way to grand narrative coherence—which is part of his triadic theory of storytelling (in which antenarrative connects the living stories to the grand narratives). His handbook on the subject is the first text to offer a systematic examination of non-traditional narrative inquiry in management (see Storytelling and the Future of Organizations: An Antenarrative Handbook published by Sage).

David also is founder of the Tamara Journal for Critical Organization Inquiry. He is known to teach barefoot as a protest against sweatshops of multinational corporations in developing countries. His current project looks at the storytelling involved in the conflict-minerals trade, the slavery and genocide in the Congo, and how corporations such as Intel have taken the lead in creating new supply chain practices for a conflict-free-minerals trade.

Wenkai (W): Please introduce yourself.

David (D): I'm David Boje, a professor here at New Mexico State University's management department.

W: How long have you been here?

D: Seventeen years.

W: Where did you earn your Ph.D.?
D: The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

W: Why did you choose to come to New Mexico?

D: I met my lovely wife, Grace Ann Rosile, while she was living in Pittsburgh. It's really cold there. I was in Los Angeles teaching at UCLA and Loyola Marymount. That's not a great place for horses. She has several horses and New Mexico is a wonderful place for them.

W: What is your primary research interest?

D: My area is storytelling.

W: Please elaborate.

D: Every organization has a founding story and a strategy that's kind of a story. Every person working in an organization has a living story of their own, their life path through this planet Earth from womb to tomb, right? And they also have grander narratives of their careers, so there is a storytelling dynamic occurring in every organization. These grander narratives are often sketchy—a simple beginning, middle, and end—and provide a rather abstract view of their life.

W: Why did you land in the management department? To me, storytelling relates to many disciplines.

D: It is related to many other subjects. Our Management Department invited me to serve at its department head and I accepted the offer. My wife also is a tenured faculty member here, so it's a good place for us and the horses. You can buy a lot of land here compared to what we paid for land in California or Pittsburgh. You can live a lot better here, so here we are.

You mentioned how storytelling is related to other disciplines and you're right. This year, I'm delivering keynote speeches at four storytelling conferences—one in England, one in Denmark, one in the U.S., and one in Mexico. One is a cross-cultural conference in Warwick; another is a conference on counter-narrative studies in Denmark. People working in many different areas are interested in storytelling.

W: What are you most passionate about besides academics?

D: Blacksmithing.
W: Why blacksmithing?

D: When I was 52 years old, my mother disclosed this family secret: after crossing the Rocky Mountains in a covered wagon, my great grandfather became a blacksmith in Goldendale, Washington. I was fascinated by that Wild West notion of frontier person and striking across the Rockies. I later learned my grand-mother was a trick rider in the rodeo and my mother identified herself as a city person who didn't want to be identified with the Wild West, farming, or ranching. So I took up blacksmithing!

W: Please tell us about the sustainability program at NMSU, as I know that you are one of its initiators.

D: We are trying to brand the ‘green leaf’ as a signifier of sustainability on campus so that students can view the course catalogue, see a course denoted by that leaf, and know that course relates to sustainability. We display that ‘green leaf’ at all career fairs. Also, I speak to many employers about NMSU's brand of sustainability to let them know many NMSU graduates available for hire are well trained in environmental sciences, environmental engineering, and environmental management. There are now scholarships we helped establish in ‘sustainability; one for each college and one for general financial aid.

W: Are there other programs like this nationally or internationally?

D: There are. In fact, our college's graduate program committee has approval a ‘greening’ focus for our MBA program. Roughly 30 excellent MBA programs in the U.S. have branded themselves green and we’re following suit. That repositioning allows us to move away from the vanilla pack—the same old things taught to MBA students in the same old ways.

W: How could this program benefit businesses of New Mexico?

D: The key issues for New Mexico businesses are water, air, soil, and power; those are all environmental issues. Running a company and saving money by implementing sustainable business practices, as well as adopting sustainable water and soil (if you’re in farming or ranching) practices, are important to businesses in New Mexico.

W: What one thing would you most like to tell New Mexico business people?
D: I've two rather than one. First, if you hire a NMSU graduate, you've hired someone with a green conscience. Second, show your Heart of Care and donate at our sustainability website.