



clio

AMONG THE MEDIA

notes 
from the head

Newsletter of the History Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

Secrets of the Penny Press

BY SUSAN THOMPSON

University of Montevallo

Several years ago, a controversial article appeared in one of the leading journals regarding the “mythology” of the penny press. According to the article by John Nerone, a number of facts normally associated with the history of the penny press were unsupported by data and possibly inaccurate. The association between the development of objectivity in news reporting and the penny press was one of the “myths” identified.

Several penny press authors responded to the article, some favorably and others not. What seemed to be missing from the discussion was evidence based on rigorous, historical research with a reliance on primary source material. So, under the careful guidance of David Sloan, I rolled up my sleeves as a doctoral student at Alabama and blissfully dirtied my hands examining archives from the antebellum period. What

resulted was my dissertation, “The Antebellum Penny Press,” and later, my book, *The Penny Press* (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 2004).

I found that with all the hoopla surrounding objectivity and the penny press, many historians had overlooked other important journalism practices that had developed on the pages of the penny newspapers. These practices included the sudden appearance of crisis news and crime news, staples of journalism from that time forward. It’s always dangerous to point to “firsts” in history, but in the case of the penny press, the preoccupation with crime and crisis events and continuing reports on the same story were new to American journalism and marked a turning point. What’s more, these events were, for the first time, being reported to tens of thousands of people on the same day.

In addition to crime and crisis news, the penny press introduced news stories that constitute the very lifeblood of modern journalism. The activities of the stock market, the doings of high society, the antics of actors and entertainers, the move-

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Conducting relevant,
if not ‘useful,’ research
(which doesn’t have to be either)

BY DANE S. CLAUSSEN

Point Park University

This past spring, when I was this division’s vice-head/research chair, I noticed one paper that was rejected for presentation at the AEJMC convention in San Antonio was criticized by at least one judge for supposedly not making clear the significance of the research was. Apparently, the judge thought, the paper had not answered the “so what?” question that at least some of us academics demand of at least some research.

Such attitudes always catch my attention, because my latest book is about magazine coverage of higher education, specifically about evidence of anti-intellectualism in that coverage. (One factor that cannot be overlooked is how extensive anti-intellectualism is within higher education, a phenomenon discussed at length in *The Last Intellectuals*, by Russell Jacoby.) One manifestation of U.S. anti-intellectualism, as theorized by sociologist Daniel Rigney (based on historian Richard Hofstadter’s book, *Anti-intellectualism in American Life*) is “unreflective instrumentalism,” which I have

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Florida historian wins 2004 book award

BY PATRICK S. WASHBURN

Ohio University

Brian Ward, who teaches history at the University of Florida, has won the annual History Division Book Award for 2004.

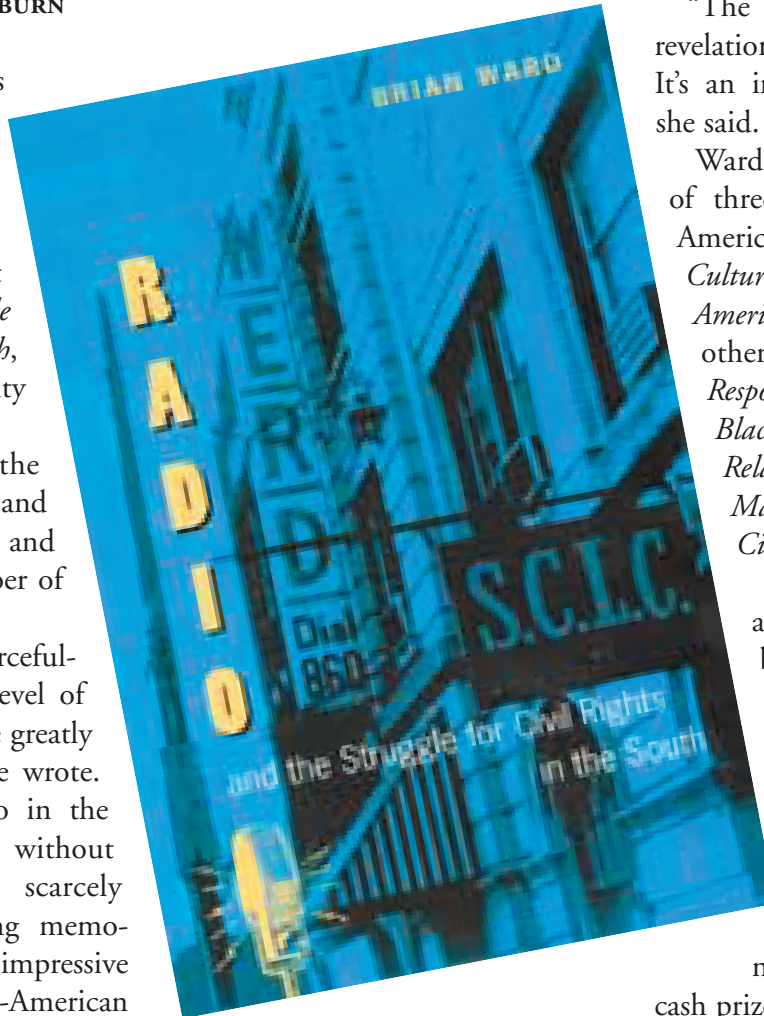
Ward won for his latest work, *Radio and the Struggle for Civil Rights in the South*, published by the University Press of Florida.

One judge noted the book was “well written” and “exhaustively researched” and draws from a “huge number of sources.”

“Ward shows a resourcefulness, a creativity, and a level of persistence and confidence greatly to be admired,” the judge wrote. “Our knowledge of radio in the Civil Rights movement, without this book, would have scarcely been anything but fading memories. Ward brings a truly impressive understanding of African-American and Southern culture and history to every paragraph.”

Another judge called it “compel-

ling scholarship” with impressive depth and breadth in the research.



“The book surprised me with its revelations about black radio’s role. It’s an important story, well told,” she said.

Ward is the author or editor of three other books on African American history. They are: *Media, Culture, and the Modern African American Freedom Struggle*. His other books are *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness and Race Relations* and *The Making of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement*.

The History Division book award is given for the best book on journalism and mass communications history published in a given year. It was presented at the History Division business meeting at the AEJMC convention in San Antonio. The winner receives a plaque and a cash prize.

Seven books were nominated for the award, which the History Division has been giving since 1998.

Committee seeks best book nominations

The History Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication is soliciting entries for its award for the best journalism and mass communication history book of 2005.

The award is given annually. The winning author will receive a plaque and a cash prize at the August 2006 AEJMC conference in San Francisco.

The competition is open to any author of a relevant history book, re-

gardless of whether he/she belongs to AEJMC or the History Division.

Authorship is defined as the person or persons who wrote the book, not just edited it. Only those books with a 2005 publication date will be accepted.

Compilations, anthologies, articles and monographs will be excluded because they qualify for the Covert Award, another AEJMC History Division competition.

Entries must be postmarked no later than Feb. 4, 2006.

Three copies of each book must be submitted, along with the author’s mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address, to:

Patrick S. Washburn
AEJMC History Book Award Chair
E.W. Scripps School of Journalism
Ohio University
Athens, Ohio 45701

History Division had a good year

With the exception of a few disappointments, the History Division had a good year in 2005, according to the annual report.

The Division built new relationships with several other divisions, including Entertainment Studies, Graduate Studies, and Law, and continued to nurture older relationships with other divisions, 2005 Division Head Pat McNeely wrote in the annual report.

The biggest disappointment was the low number of paper submissions received for the San Antonio conference. Usually, at least 60 papers are submitted to the History Division. This year, the Division received only 50 submissions. To maintain an acceptance rate of 50 percent, only 25 papers could be accepted for presentation, and one “high density” slot had to be given back to the organization for use by other divisions.

However, attendance at history panels and research sessions increased from 332 in 2004 to 388 this year.

The best attended panel was a teaching session. More than 50 people gathered at the Alamo for a session that included film clips and music from the Davy Crockett movies and series.

Ginger Rudeseal Carter of Georgia College and State University organized the panel. Her co-panelists included Bruce Winders, historian and curator for the Alamo; David R. Davies of Southern Mississippi University; and Randy Miller of the University of South Florida.

Two sessions co-sponsored by the Law Division were also well attended. “Decisive Years in American Journalism,” organized by W. Joseph Campbell of American University, addressed important years in journalism history. In addition to Campbell, panelists included Susan A. Thompson of the University of Montevallo; Kyu Ho Youm of the University of Oregon; and Debashis Aikat of the University of North Carolina.

The second session with the Law

Division, “The WLBT Case: Toward Free Expression and Diversity in the Media,” addressed the landmark case that established the need for broadcasters to hire more minorities and cover news of interest to the entire viewing population they serve. The case centered on whether the station had fairly covered civil rights issues.

Other panels examined the history of women journalists in Texas, public relations history beyond the usual considerations of Edward Bernays and P. T. Barnum, and the question of what the core knowledge in journalism history should be.

The most popular session was the research panel on war and war correspondents moderated by David Copeland of Elon University. Other panelists included Patrick Washburn of Ohio University; Bradley Hamm of Indiana University; and Shannon Martin of the University of Maine.

Between 10 and 25 people attended each of the History Division-sponsored research sessions.

Nominees sought for research awards

The AEJMC Standing Committee on Research is seeking nominations for two important awards.

The Paul J. Deutschmann Award for Excellence in Research recognizes a body of significant research over the course of an individual’s career. The award is named in honor of Paul J. Deutschmann, who developed the College of Communication Arts at Michigan State University.

The Eleanor Blum Distinguished Service to Research Award recognizes

people who have devoted substantial parts of their careers to promoting research in mass communication. It is named in honor of its first recipient, Eleanor Blum, a long-time communication librarian at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

These awards are not given every year, but nominations for both will be considered in 2006. Nominations are due Nov. 15, 2005, and should include a letter describing the nominee’s contributions in the area of the

award. Late submissions will not be accepted. The packet should also include the nominee’s resume and letters of support from colleagues who vouch for the candidate’s qualifications for the award.

Nomination letters and packets should be sent to Carolyn Kitch, Temple University, Department of Journalism, 2020 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122-6080. Please direct any questions to Kitch at 215-204-5077 or ckitch@temple.edu.

Secrets of the Penny Press

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ments of political candidates, hardships faced by the urban poor and other social tragedies, sporting events, severe weather conditions – all came to be considered big news items because of the penny press.

Several other modern journalism practices emerged in the decades prior to the Civil War, and the penny press embraced them all. As early as the 1830s, penny dailies employed correspondents to report important news at all levels. In the 1840s, correspondence from professional newsmen and newswomen enthralled readers with detailed eyewitness accounts of battles during the war with Mexico. Cooperative newsgathering efforts among rival newspapers resulted in the eventual establishment of the Associated Press. As different types of editorial and reportorial jobs became more clearly defined, the first press clubs and associations sprang to life.

The commercial nature of the newspaper business emerged fully,

publishers often making decisions based upon their intense concern for profits. Advertising allowed publishers to keep newspaper prices low and still realize substantial profits.

The competitive spirit among metropolitan dailies, innovations in communication technology and newspaper production, timeliness of news items, and thus the speed of news reporting, assumed utmost importance. Speed of news delivery and thoroughness in the coverage of important news items locally, nationally, and internationally emerged as important standards that would come to define excellence in American journalism from that time forward.

As for objectivity in reporting, one might simply point to the Moon Hoax of 1835 or the biased reports of correspondents to make a compelling argument for the nonexistence of objectivity in reporting during the period. On the other hand, a possible case could be made in sup-

port of objectivity by simply citing some of the outstanding, truthful, and unbiased accounts that appeared in the penny newspapers.

It is interesting to note that a handful of modern-day newspaper giants began as penny newspapers in the antebellum period. The *New York Times*, *Boston Herald*, *Baltimore Sun*, *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, *Savannah Morning News*, and *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, for example, all began as penny dailies prior to the Civil War. Several other penny newspapers that appeared before 1861 published for more than a century and served as American news leaders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the 1920s, the *New York Herald* and the *New York Tribune* merged to form the *Herald-Tribune*. The *New York Sun* eventually merged with the *Herald-Tribune* and published until the late 1900s. The *Philadelphia Public Ledger* published until the mid-1930s.

Best faculty, student papers are recognized at conference

Carol Wilcox of Virginia State University won the best faculty paper award from the History Division this year. Her paper was titled, "Squeezing the 'Exotic Bug': Madrid Press Criticizes Hearst's Coverage of a Cuban Revolutionary."

The top student paper, and winner of the Price Award competition, was by Noah Arceneaux, a Ph.D. student at the University of Georgia. His paper was titled, "How Much is That Wireless in the Window? Department Stores and Radio Retailing in the 1920s."

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AMONG THE MEDIA

Editor: *Debbie van Tuyl* (Augusta State University)

Webmaster: *Kittrell Rushing* (University of Tennessee-Chattanooga)

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Submissions to Clio are welcome. Please send them to: *Debbie van Tuyl*, Department of Languages, Literature and Communications, Augusta State University, Augusta, GA 30904. Electronic copy, either disk or e-mail, is preferred. For information, contact Van Tuyl at 706/737-1500, or e-mail her at: **dvantuyll@aug.edu**.

Recent issues of Clio may be accessed at:

<http://www.utc.edu/Outreach/AEJMC-HistoryDivision/histpub.html>

History Division Officers, 2005-06

Dane Claussen
(Point Park)
Head

W. Joseph Campbell
(American)
Vice Head

Debbie van Tuyll
(Augusta State University)
Secretary/Newsletter Editor

Elliot King
(Loyola of Maryland)
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(Tambor College)
Teaching Standards Chair

W. Joseph Campbell
Research Chair

Kittrell Rushing
(Tennessee-Chattanooga)
Webmaster

Patrick Washburn
(Ohio)
Book Award Chair

Karen List
(Massachusetts)
Covert Award Chair

2005 History Division Minutes

Division Head Patricia McNeely (South Carolina) called the annual members' meeting to order at 6:50 p.m. Sixteen members attended, including Division Secretary W. Joseph Campbell (American). Division Vice Head Dane Claussen (Point Park) arrived later, owing to his duties of chairing the simultaneously scheduled members' meeting of the GLBT Interest Group, of which he is head.

The minutes of the Division's annual members' meeting in 2004 in Toronto, Canada, were approved as published in the Fall 2004 issue of *Clio*, the Division's newsletter.

McNeely then called for the nomination and election of officers for 2005–06. Claussen will be Division head and Campbell will be vice-head and research paper chair. Campbell nominated Debra van Tuyll (Augusta State) as secretary and *Clio* editor for 2005–06. Her nomination was seconded and ratified by acclamation.

Under new business, McNeely noted that the Division's bylaws seem to be missing and that the AEJMC national headquarters in Columbia, SC, could not locate a set. Considerable discussion followed, during which former Division Head Carolyn Kitch (Temple) said she believed she had a set of the bylaws and promised to search for the document.

David Mindich (St. Michael's) presented a brief report about the JHISTORY listserv, which has more than 450 members from a dozen or so countries. Mindich noted that the listserv is home to some of the most interesting and varied discus-

sions in the field—discussions that attract top scholars, news professionals, and graduate students. He said five-to-ten postings a week are typical and invited prospective members to join by visiting: <http://www.h-net.org/~jhistory/>.

McNeely asked the members for their preferences among the candidate cities for AEJMC's convention in 2009. The leading candidates were Boston, Cincinnati and Montreal. In their first vote, the members divided 8–8 between Boston and Montreal. In their second vote, the members, by a 10–7 margin, expressed their preference for Boston.

Pat Washburn (Ohio) announced he would turn over duties of the Division's Book Award Chair if any member were interested.

Announcements about upcoming regional conferences followed. Those conferences include the Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression in Chattanooga, TN, in November 2005; the Southeast Regional Colloquium in Tuscaloosa, AL, in early March 2006; and the joint AEJMC History Division/American Journalism Historians Association Northeast conference at Fordham University at Lincoln Center in New York City in mid-March 2006.

Elliot King (Loyola–Maryland) is seeking contributions in the range of 500 to 2,500 words for the *Encyclopedia of American Journalism*, of which he is general editor.

With no further business to address, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Submitted by
W. Joseph Campbell

Conducting relevant, if not 'useful,' research

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paraphrased as being “beliefs and behavior indicating that knowledge is worthless unless it immediately and directly leads to material gain, such as profits or higher wages.”

I think it will be obvious to anyone who is reading this that historical research rarely leads to such material gain (unless one is Michael Beschloss, David McCullough, or the plagiarist Stephen Ambrose and Doris Kearns Goodwin, etc.) and that if we start applying this criterion to historical research, then the game is over. And I would argue that demanding the purpose(s) of much historical research be articulated is getting close to that; in other words, much historical research is knowledge for the sake of knowledge, and I use that phrase supportively, not dismissively.

Perhaps, you say, the judge wasn't being an unreflective instrumentalist, but was merely was more narrowly claiming that the paper in question had not made a good enough case for its significance or originality within the narrow confines of mass communication history. Maybe. But the judge didn't point out that this new paper repeated research that had already been done—regardless of whether such research was cited—let alone that this paper's author had overlooked it. Moreover, the paper at issue was overwhelmingly and obviously based on archival research, original archival research to be sure. The bottom line is that the paper's originality was self-evident, and given that the paper was about a large organization which, without question, directly and indirectly influenced indi-

viduals and other organizations, the paper's significance also should have been self-evident. When one of us conducts original historical research, must we belabor exactly how and why it is original? Apparently that's what the judge wanted, but I thought that's what literature reviews are for—whether completed by social scientists and formally reported or completed by historians and woven into narrative and endnotes.

Ironically, Hurricane Katrina gives us journalism historians a fascinating opportunity to conduct research that should seem at least relevant, if not exactly useful. As of this writing, I (and most other Americans) have sat through weeks of the news media telling us that Hurricane Katrina was the largest natural disaster in American history. They all but tell us that no other disaster in U.S. history has been as extensively covered, and there is a lot of rhetoric about how news reporters, in covering the Hurricane's aftermath, are allowing themselves to be emotional for the first time, or for the first time in a long time, or whatever.

Media historians certainly could consider conducting research over the next few months about how national magazines and metropolitan newspapers covered such events as the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906 (which left about 225,000 to 300,000 people homeless and actually killed 3,000-6,000 people—far more than the official claim of 478); the May 31, 1889, Johnstown, PA, flood (2,209 dead); or the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 (90,000 home-

less and 300 dead). Also notable were the April 20, 1927, flooding at Greenville, MS (500 dead; 162,000 homes flooded); the Jan. 22, 1937, Ohio River and Mississippi River floods (380 dead; almost 1 million left homeless); and the Aug. 17, 1969, Hurricane Camille (256 dead); and the Sept. 21-23, 1998, Hurricane George (600 dead in the Caribbean and the United States).

Although media coverage of weather has received relatively little attention, a few helpful articles exist in the social scientific literature, such as “News of Hurricane Andrew: The Agenda Sources and the Sources' Agenda,” by Michael B. Salwen (*Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, Winter 1995). A media historian certainly could research patterns in sources in disaster stories throughout history.

A media historian could conduct research to identify and explain instances (since the widespread practice of modern, so-called objective reporting) in which hard news journalists (as opposed to, say, sports staffers) expressed their own emotions in covering various manmade and natural disasters—and what the public reaction to that was.

(At least one of my graduate students is cheering what she regards as the awakening [and resulting emotionalism] of national journalists to the incompetence of the Bush administration after giving it a pass for so long. Regardless of whether one agrees with the premise of her

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Two share 2005 Covert award for best article in comm history

Two scholars of gender and communications share the 21st annual Covert Award in Mass Communications History.

They are Susan Henry, a professor in the journalism department at California State University-Northridge, and Michelle Jolly, an assistant professor in the history department at Sonoma State University.

Henry won the award for "Gambling on a Magazine and a Marriage: Jane Grant, Harold Ross, and the New Yorker," published in *Journalism History* in Summer 2004. Jolly won the award for "The Price

of Vigilance: Gender, Politics, and the Press in Early San Francisco," published in the *Pacific Historical Review* in 2004.

This is the first time two articles tied for the award that was endowed by the late Catherine Covert, a professor of public communications at Syracuse University and former head of the AEJMC History Division. The award is given to the article or chapter in an edited collection that represents the year's best essay in mass communication history.

Karen List of the University of Massachusetts (1992) chaired the committee.

Notes from the head

Conducting relevant, if not 'useful,' research

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point, I told her that generally the American public does not allow doctors, nurses, police officers, firefighters, judges, airline pilots, air traffic controllers or other professionals to become emotional in stressful and critical moments, and I don't know why we would or should expect any less of journalists.)

A media historian could research how news media have or have not covered the recovery periods after previous major disasters, and what patterns in that coverage may or may not say about the attention spans (among other things) of journalists and/or their audiences.

One of my graduate students asked me if mass communication scholars would be writing articles and papers documenting erroneously used weather terms and other jargon

in the media coverage of Hurricane Katrina. I told her I was confident that someone would, but I didn't tell her that researching the entire history of U.S. journalists attempting to cover subjects about which they knew little or nothing would instead require a rather lengthy book. Or that such a book, while arguably significant and even relevant, wouldn't be particularly useful.

AEJMC conventions in years ahead

2006: San Francisco (Marriott), August 2-5

2007: Washington, D.C. (Renaissance), August 9-12

2008: Chicago (Marriott Downtown), August 6-9

Salutory

In the middle part of the 19th century, whenever someone new assumed the editor's tripod, he (and on very rare occasions, she) would offer his aspirations for the publication in an editorial headlined, "Salutory."

As one who spends most of her spare time rummaging around in 19th century newspapers, it seems only natural that I indulge in the same practice in my first issue as *Clio* editor.

One story in particular deserves comment, and perhaps a bit of disclosure: Susan Thompson's article on the penny press.

Thompson has published a new history of the penny press that is impressive in its research and scope. It's a work I had the privilege of watching develop from conception through completion since Thompson and I have an association that goes back to the early 1980s when we worked in the same newsroom.

One of the practices I hope to institute during my year as *Clio* editor is running pieces like Thompson's that might stimulate an idea for teaching or researching a topic, or that might give division members a better "feel" for the key issues related to some topic out of media history.

In the winter edition, we'll have an article by Elliot King of Loyola University-Maryland that considers the core knowledge in journalism history.

I hope all of you will consider submitting a piece about your area of specialization.

Debbie van Tuyl

Calls for papers and upcoming conferences

AEJMC History Division 2006 panel proposals

Panel proposals for the 2006 History Division program are due by Oct. 15. The Division is open to proposals from any time period and regarding any form of mass communication. Panels may deal with ideas for teaching or researching mass communications history, or professional freedom and responsibility.

Panels dealing with teaching ideas should be sent to:

Dr. Aleen J. Ratzlaff
Communications Department
Tabor College
400S Jefferson
Hillsboro, KS 67063

Panels dealing with professional freedom and responsibility should be sent to:

Dr. Elliot W. King
Media Studies Department
4501 N. Charlest St.
Baltimore, MD 2120

Panels dealing with research topics should be sent to:

Dr. W. Joseph Campbell
American University
4400 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20016-8017

AEJMC Southeast Colloquium seeks paper proposals

Papers are sought for presentation at the AEJMC Southeast Colloquium, which will meet March 2 to March 4

in Tuscaloosa, AL.

Papers dealing with history, newspapers, law, magazines, and radio and television journalism will be accepted. There is also an open division. Papers must be postmarked by Monday, Nov. 28, 2005.

Conference information is available from http://www.aejmc_sec06.com.ua.edu/.

For more information, contact Wilson Lowrey at (205) 348-8608.

Joint Spring Meeting American Journalism Historians Association and the AEJMC History Division

You are invited to submit papers and abstracts (250 to 500 words), research in progress, and proposals for panels to the AJHA-AEJMC History Division Joint Spring meeting.

The Conference will be Saturday, March 18, 2006, at Fordham University-Lincoln Center. Registration cost is \$40.

We are particularly interested in innovative ideas to liven up this intimate, interdisciplinary, interesting academic gathering. We are interested in all areas of journalism and communication history from all time periods and welcome scholars from all academic disciplines and stages of their academic careers. Abstracts should contain a compelling rationale why the research is of interest to an interdisciplinary community of scholars. (Electronic submissions preferred. Please send three copies of hard copy submissions). The program

will close with a roundtable discussion about core knowledge in journalism history in which all attendees will be welcome to participate. Acceptance notification date is Feb. 4, 2006.

Send all submissions by Jan. 5, 2006 to:

Dr. Elliot King
Department of Communication
Loyola College in Maryland
4501 N. Charles St.
Baltimore, MD 21210,
E-Mail: eking@loyola.edu

Send copy of Electronic Submission to eking212@comcast.net.

Are you willing to serve on the organizing committee and/or review submissions? If so, please contact Elliot King eking@loyola.edu. Tel: 410-356-3943

Media History in Canada Ryerson University, Toronto, Ont.

Paper submissions are sought for a conference on Canadian media history. Anyone, Canadian or not, may submit papers that deal with Canadian media history, including Canadian scholars working on media history outside Canada. University faculty, graduate students and independent scholars are all encouraged to submit proposals for original research papers or panels.

For more details, contact:

Gene Allen, Ph. D.
Associate Professor
School of Journalism
Ryerson University, Toronto
e-mail address: g1allen@ryerson.ca