

spig news

Fall 2022: *The official newsletter of the AEJMC Small Programs Interest Group*



Photo by April Newton

Teacher of the Year Masudul Biswas of Loyola Maryland is flanked by outgoing SPIG Head Jeremy Sarachan and Second Vice Head Mary Liz Brooks.

SPIG Teacher of the Year is flexible, understanding

By Brian Steffen
Simpson College

Mas Biswas has considerable research output to his scholarly credit, but he says it's working at a teaching-oriented university "that shaped me into who I am."

Biswas, an associate professor of communication at Loyola University Maryland, was recognized for his teaching talents with the Ginger Rudeseal Carter Teacher of the Year Award from the Small Programs Interest Group during a luncheon at the AEJMC convention in Detroit on Aug. 4.

Luncheon remarks from the winner on page 2

Biswas' recommenders complimented his flexibility in teaching at Loyola – his ability to follow a classroom's collective personality and recognizing where his students are in relation to course material as well as what they are struggling with.

"He is honestly one of the best and most understanding professors," said one of his students in a

*Please see **BISWAS** on page 3*



Jackie Incollingo

head notes

Face to face, SPIG was truly delightful sight

After two years of Zooming into only-virtual AEJMC annual conferences – and missing out on the many delights of San Francisco and New Orleans – it was delightful to be in Detroit and see so many SPIG members in person and participating in dynamic programming! In addition, many who couldn't travel this year to the Motor City were able to join the virtual business meeting in July.

I'm delighted to serve as the incoming head of SPIG – a group I first connected with as a graduate student, when research I co-authored was accepted in a SPIG poster session.

This Interest Group quickly became my home at AEJMC, and I want to express my deep appreciation to outgoing SPIG Head **Jeremy Sarachan**, St. John Fisher, for his leadership and dedication to our organization.

This fall, I'm starting my ninth

*Please see **HEAD** on page 3*

spig cover stories

Mas Biswas' remarks at TOY luncheon

The SPIG Teacher of the Year luncheon was held Aug. 4 at Andiamo, a restaurant in Detroit's Renaissance Center.

Good afternoon, everyone!

It is my great honor to be the 2022 recipient of the Ginger Rude-seal Carter Miller Teacher of the Year Award from the Small Programs Interest group of AEJMC. I am thankful to the award committee for this recognition of my teaching that I deeply care about.

I have been teaching as a full-time faculty for little over 11 years. Over those years, my professor colleagues (one of my colleagues is here today among us), my mentors, students, and teaching-oriented institutions where I work/worked shaped my teaching. So, I am grateful to them as they challenged me with higher teaching standards as well as higher expectations for learning.

Teaching philosophy

As I am advised to share my teaching philosophies, I wanted to reflect on some of my teaching

approaches briefly.

■ **Encouraging students to think in both creative and critical ways** is the major tenet of my teaching. [Explain the type of courses I teach] Instead of making students memorizing course content for quizzes and exams, my pedagogical practice is to create assignments around learning outcomes that allows students to internalize and reflect on what they read, watch, listen and discuss for the course in relation to contemporary societal issues and media phenomena.

■ **Application-oriented:** I make my course assignments application-oriented. Either it is a theory or a software application, students are expected to utilize theory to analyze media text in projects in "Stereotypes in U.S. Television and Films" class. Students are also expected to utilize software applications in creating a professional-quality website or communication design.

■ **Keeping the course content relevant and contemporary** is another teaching philosophy in a new media or a digital design class.

■ **Flexibility and adaptation** to class personality while not sacrificing the course goals is another part of my teaching approach. **Knowing the students and their issues** with the course in progress are important in effective teaching. After the fifth week, I usually conduct an anonymous survey among the students to get their initial feedback about the course and learning outcomes. I also offer **additional office hours to students who struggle** with learning in a course.

■ **Make conscious efforts to manage classroom participation in an inclusive and equitable manner.** Some of the approaches are the use of multiple engagement techniques (online forums, small groups, etc.), taking the advantage of student diversity in class in creating smaller groups representing diversity identities in the class and using/recognizing students' preferred pronouns.

I dedicate this award/recognition to my late father, who was also a university professor. He embedded the passion for academic life and teaching in me.

spig officers for 2022-23

Head

Jackie Incollingo, Rider
jincollingo@rider.edu

First Vice Head

Mary Liz Brooks, West Texas A&M
mbrooks@wtamu.edu

Second Vice Head / TOY Contest

Masudul Biswas, Loyola University Maryland
mkbiswas@loyola.edu

Immediate Past Head

Jeremy Sarachan, St. John Fisher
jsarachan@sjfc.edu

Secretary

Dawn Francis, Cabrini
dawn.francis@cabrini.edu

Newsletter Editor

Doug Mendenhall, Abilene Christian
d1mo8a@acu.edu

Research Committee Co-Chairs

Dave Madsen, Morningside
madsend@morningside.edu

Janice Colvin, Wilmington
janice.k-colvin@wilmu.edu

Teaching Committee Chair

KiYong Kim, Biola
kiyong.kim@biola.edu

PF&R Committee Co-Chairs

Tamara Welter, Biola
tamara.welter@biola.edu

Katherine Orloff, Hood
orloff@hood.edu

Journal Editor

Catherine Strong, Massey,
C.R.Strong@massey.ac.nz

Webmasters

Mitzi Lewis, Midwestern State
mitzi.lewis@msutexas.edu

Dave Madsen, Morningside
madsend@morningside.edu

Listserv

Brian Steffen, Simpson
brian.steffen@simpson.edu

Membership

Kelly Poniatowski, Elizabethtown College
poniatowski@etown.edu

Social Media Chair

Kim Fox, The American University in Cairo
kimfox@aucegypt.edu

Bylaws Subcommittee Chair

Cindy Simoneau, Southern Connecticut St.
simoneauc1@southernct.edu

spig cover stories

Biswas focuses on digital, online

Continued from page 1

review published at ratemyprofessors.com. “You really learn who are the good and bad professors when in a pandemic, and Professor Biswas proved he was one of the good ones. He wants you to excel and gives the best feedback on all assignments. It is obvious he cares and wants you to learn.”

On the Loyola faculty since 2014, Biswas teaches many undergraduate and graduate courses at the university located in Baltimore.

His work focuses on the strategic use of digital/online media in communication and journalism, web-content creation, social media, and diversity in media and communication practices.

Biswas has a bachelor’s degree in mass communication and journalism from the Dhaka, a master’s



SPIG 2022 Teacher of the Year Masudul Biswas (left) chats with outgoing SPIG head Jeremy Sarachan during the award luncheon on Aug. 4 in Detroit.

degree in international affairs from Ohio, and a Ph.D. in media and pub-

lic affairs from Louisiana State.

Head is ready for new challenges

Continued from page 1

year at Rider University in New Jersey, where I am an associate professor.

In the upcoming year, to strengthen our connections, I plan to continue the Zoom SPIG socials, and Jeremy has agreed to carry on hosting SPIG chairs’ virtual meet-ups. I encourage members to join these events and also make use of our community via the Listserv.

We face many of the same challenges in our classrooms and institutions, so if you have a specific topic for discussion at a future social, please email me!

I strongly believe that as many small institutions face financial challenges (and perhaps cut conference reimbursement), these online opportunities remain an important

– and free – resource for all of us.

Despite challenges, we are fortunate to have a large, vibrant and involved Interest Group, with 130 paid members as of July, according to AEJMC. That makes us one of the largest IGs, and on par with some smaller Divisions.

Prompted by input during the business meeting, I have requested information from the AEJMC leadership regarding the requirements and responsibilities if we were to request Division status, and will be in touch with SPIG’s incoming leadership team and the membership as I get more information. One obvious benefit would be that Divisions get more programming opportunities and options. Stay tuned!

The leadership of AEJMC has asked me to remind our members to update their communication

preferences on the website community.aejmc.org/home; however, remember that you do not need to be a paid member to be active on the Listserv or the online socials and chairs’ group. My email is jincollingo@rider.edu – do not hesitate to reach out with ideas, questions or issues you’d like to see SPIG tackle, or to become more involved in our Interest Group.

Finally, a hearty congratulations to our Ginger Rudeseal Carter Miller Teacher of the Year **Mas Biswas**, Loyola University of Maryland, and a big thank you to everyone who volunteered to serve as a SPIG officer this coming year and to the team that continues to make the *TJMC Journal* an asset and a success!

Wishing you all a smooth and successful fall semester.

aejmc 2022 pre-conference

Community partnerships can make small programs bigger

'23 panels will start shaping up soon

It's not too soon to start thinking about exciting panels or pre-conference sessions for AEJMC 2023, scheduled to be held Aug. 7-10 in Washington, D.C.

SPIG's incoming Vice Head Mary Liz Brooks, West Texas A&M University, will be issuing a call for proposals in the early fall on the Listserv and social media channels.

As always, SPIG will seek a variety of Teaching, Research or PF&R proposals for programming in the nation's capital. Stay tuned, and start imagining!

By **Liz Atwood**
Hood College

SPIG opened its program in Detroit with three pre-conference panels that looked at ways community partnerships can help small programs.

The first panel discussed the benefits and challenges of creating alliances that allow students to contribute to professional news sites.

These partnerships can “hydrate” news deserts, said Lara Salahi of Endicott, who has studied these projects. For several years her students have worked with Gannett to cover small towns in Massachusetts.

Carrie Sipes from Shippensburg described an arrangement in which her students work with several news organizations to produce stories about climate change.

One surprising partner has been an African-American theater troupe, she said. But she said one challenge has been finding enough students who want to work on climate stories.

At Simpson College, students must complete a capstone project in which they submit work to Iowa Watch, a professional news website, Brian Steffen said.

“Students are pressed to produce professional results as opposed to good enough for student media,” Steffen said.

Not every student project meets the professional standards, he noted.

While news partnerships have many plusses, not all succeed, said Ken Pybus from Abilene Christian. For example, he said a sports show his students produced went off the air after the football coach refused to participate.

The second panel of the pre-con-

ference program focused on partnerships between schools and public relations agencies.

The panelists described how they place students at internships in local agencies and recruit PR professionals to review student portfolios. These relationships provide students with a realistic view of the PR field and help them make valuable career connections, the panelists said.

Getting students ready for the professional world has become more difficult since the pandemic, however. Dylan McLemore of Central Arkansas said, “Our students have kind of gone into a shell.”

Christina Smith, the panel moderator, said that students demonstrate solid professional skills, but are often lacking critical thinking and personal skills.

The third panel discussed working with alumni.

Panelists said that professional advisory boards with alumni members foster connections that can create job opportunities for students and spur donations to schools.

Another idea is to use or create alumni magazines to create connections. Smith started an alumni magazine at Georgia College and assigned her students to write articles for it, giving them writing experience and helping them meet alumni.

Pam Parry from Southeast Missouri said that even simple projects can yield significant results. She sent holiday greeting cards and created an alumni Facebook page.

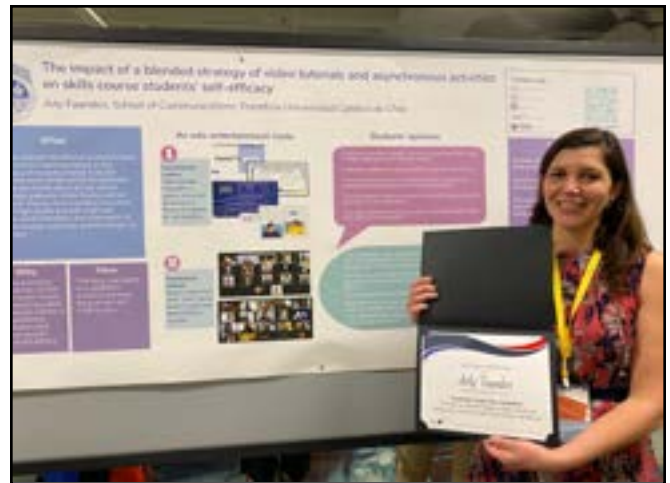
Alumni in return volunteered to speak to classes, helped students find jobs and made donations to the school.

aejmc 2022 conference

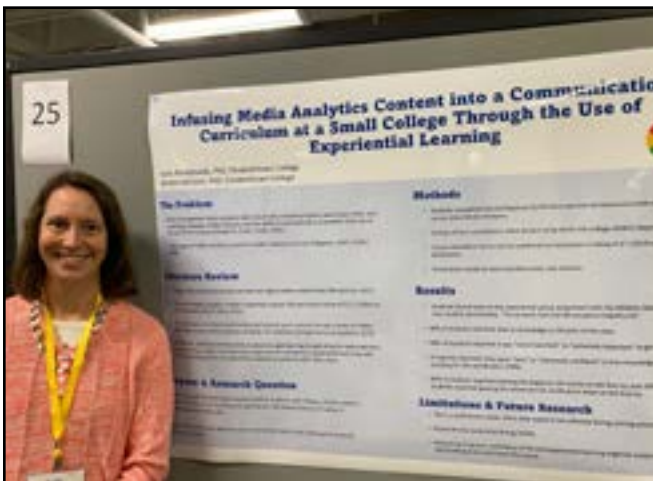
SPIG research poster winners dig into effects of new tools



FIRST-PLACE FACULTY PAPER: Kay Colley of Texas Wesleyan for her paper, “Three Years of the Crisis Game: A Review of How Role Playing in Crisis Simulations Has Affected Public Relations Students.”



SECOND-PLACE FACULTY PAPER: Arly Faundes of Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile for her paper, “The Impact of a Blended Strategy of Video Tutorials and Asynchronous Activities on Skill Course Students' Self-efficacy.”



EXTENDED ABSTRACT: Kelly Poniatowski and Kirsten Johnson (not shown) of Elizabethtown College for their project, “Infusing Media Analytics Content into a Communication Curriculum at a Small College Through the Use of Experiential Learning.”



EXTENDED ABSTRACT: Christina Smith of Georgia College and Lara Salahi of Endicott for their project, “Critical Analysis of Motivations and Strategies of Faculty Overseeing News-Academic Partnerships.”

aejmc 2022 conference

Local journalists got deepest into Flint's water problems

By Doug Mendenhall
Abilene Christian

For two local journalists who actually got close to the dangerous water of Flint, Michigan, the task of providing strong coverage was muddier and more challenging than for national reporters who eventually “parachuted in.”

In a Thursday session co-sponsored by SPIG and the Cultural and Critical Studies Division of AEJMC, two local journalists talked about getting their boots muddy on this story: Jiquanda Johnson, founder/publisher of Flint Beat; and Anna Clark, a ProPublica journalist based in Detroit who is author of the book *The Poisoned City: Flint's Water and the American Urban Tragedy*.

SPIG member Michael Longino of Biola moderated the session, “Flint and the Water Crisis: How to Blend Science, Solutions Journalism and Reporting in the Context of the Tap.”

The session began with Johnson being presented by officer Perry Parks with CCSD's Professional Freedom and Responsibility Award for her coverage of Flint.

Johnson, a Flint-area native, first covered the water issues from other local newsrooms. She said nearly every day brought another boil-water advisory to be reported for the *Flint Journal* or the NBC affiliate, but beyond that most early discussions of bigger underlying problems remained in the newsrooms rather than emerging as expanded coverage.

Then, when the community suddenly had no water, local residents had to dig on their own for information about the causes and conse-



Anna Clark and Jiquanda Johnson discuss their long-term local work on covering the Flint, Michigan, water crisis, and how their approaches differed from national coverage.

quences, as the media lagged.

In part, Johnson blamed media emphasis on audience analytics for this slow recognition of the bigger problem.

At the *Flint Journal* there were 12 to 15 reporters, she said, with requirements that included 2.5 stories a day and 299,000 clicks per month.

“We were sometimes so focused on clicks,” she said. “We miss stuff if we’re focused on that.”

And with repetitive stories about boil notices and other aspects, “at that time we had water crisis fatigue.” That meant another water story, important or not, was unlikely to pay off by meeting the reporter’s click requirements.

“Should we have done better?” Johnson asked. “I think so.”

Clark said that it took more than a year for enough data to be collected that the state finally conceded the danger in Flint’s water.

Many stories in that period boiled down to, “Residents have complaints; state says it’s fine,” Clark said. “What you needed was more and better data. That’s what was missing.”

Johnson said of this time when reporters knew a problem existed but couldn’t corroborate it, “A bigger issue is, when do journalists make the decision not to trust elected officials?”

She said she had no training in the scientific aspects of the story at the time, but does now have a reporter on her Flint Beat staff with a science background, who will cover a topic with an entirely different approach. “I never thought I’d be doing data journalism.”

Flint Beat was founded by Johnson in 2017, leaving behind the bad habits she saw in other newsrooms. It consisted mostly of her own re-

*Please see **FLINT** on page 7*

aejmc 2022 conference

Flint issues were multifaceted

Continued from page 6

portage until about 2020, when grants from foundations and Facebook and Google initiatives allowed her to grow the newsroom. Now, Flint Beat remains strongly local and listens to its community, she said.

She offered a reminder that journalism is for the people, and that no reporter ever said, "I'm doing this because I want to protect government."

Johnson said the ambiguity of seeing a larger pattern but not being able to prove it was one of the issues that made this story difficult. "That was one of the strangest things I'd ever dealt with, scientists saying they still didn't have enough data."

On the other hand, Clark said she looks at reporting sort of like a scientist.

"I usually start reporting with a hypothesis," she said. "It's really a sort of scientific process, and to a certain extent we're all science journalists."

Reporters should trust that the same skills they have as journalists will help them as amateur scientists, she said.

"If they'll let you," Johnson retorted, raising again the speed and shallowness demanded by many newsrooms where journalists are not given the space for a well-researched story that takes a deeper dive.

"It's not as simple when you get into the newsrooms and have to feed the beast," she said.

In Flint, as soon as the admission was made that children were getting poisoned by contaminated water, suddenly the national media was everywhere. Johnson said she had to ask a city official to get her seat back from the national media mob. "They took my spot!" she

joked.

The flurry of parachute reporting didn't last long though, Johnson said. "What did bother me was the lack of follow-up."

That indictment doesn't include Clark, who Johnson acknowledges began as a parachuter but chose to stay on. The two often make presentations together on the topic.

Clark said some progress was made because of the national attention.

For example, Flint residents had never asked for bottled water or groceries. "That all came when the national attention started and people stepped up to help," she said.

As did the start of a criminal investigation. "There was some real muscle there to get something to happen," Clark said.

Still, she said more investment in the infrastructure of local news is a must, because even if the local media had been paying closer attention earlier, "We just don't have enough local journalists to handle more than one catastrophe at a time."

What happened in Flint was much more than a single catastrophe. Clark said the story was hard to keep up with because it had so many facets.

Johnson agreed that it wasn't just drinking water, it was everything. "If you had any kind of skin issue, the problem was 10 times worse."

Clark said the lead-contaminated water is really just a symptom of a whole bigger story raising more and more questions. Why is the city so precarious? Why aren't the resi-

dents trusted as authorities? What are the effects of all this trauma on a community?

"It's about the larger questions about how we address poverty," she said. "Why is justice delayed at a minimum and possibly undone. I think that's an important piece. That kind of accountability is part of solutions journalism."

Both panelists continue to preach that solutions journalism is part of the solution to today's media weaknesses.

They said solutions journalism has to start with strong connections to the community and a respect for its news sense.

"The people closest to the problem are closest to the solution, but a lot of times the journalists get to define what the problems are," Johnson said, and even the New York Times can misdiagnose what's happening by not talking to the community as an important step in setting the news agenda.

"To me it's just another way of telling a complete story," Clark said.

Johnson said she began Flint Journal with a list of 40 solutions stories that needed to be attacked, and still has probably 30 of them. However, these days her newsroom is also stretched to cover all of the summer festivals and other community events popping up in the recovering community.

"Flint is like a blank So-Jo canvas," she said. "It's just problem, problem, problem."

In that case, asked a former Flint Journal reporter in the audience, "How do you go about convincing people outside that Flint is worth saving?"

"I guess I never thought about that," Johnson responded. "Because I always figured we would save ourselves."

"I guess I always figured we would save ourselves."

Jiquanda Johnson
Founder of Flint Beat

aejmc 2022 conference

Panelists suggest strategies for ‘doing more with less’

By Kate Farrish

Central Connecticut State

No academic department wants to do more with less, but that’s often the reality now with declining enrollment, dwindling state support for public universities, rising teaching loads, and drops in revenue at private universities.

Professors offered some useful advice on “Doing More with Less” at an Aug. 3 panel co-sponsored by the Small Programs Interest Group and the Commission on the Status of Minorities at the national AEJMC conference in Detroit. It was moderated by Elizabeth Atwood, an associate professor of journalism at Hood College in Maryland.

The panelists suggested a variety of strategies, including forming an industry advisory board, telling your department’s story, building support across your campus through kindness to others, seeking grants, and forming partnerships in JMC industries.

But Carrie Sipes, an associate professor and chair of the Communication, Journalism and Media Department at Shippensburg in Pennsylvania, said the solutions don’t replace the funding needed to serve students and support faculty members.

“At some point, I don’t want to do more with less,” Sipes said. “It’s overwhelming, and burnout is a real thing.”

Also serving on the panel were: Rockell Brown Burton, the new associate dean of inclusivity, diversity, equity and accessibility at the Newhouse School at Syracuse University; Kay Colley, professor of mass communication at Texas Wesleyan University in Fort Worth, and Angeline Taylor, a doctoral student and adjunct professor in journalism at Arizona State University.

The panelists said that connections made by being kind to others have helped them do more with less.

While interim dean at the Texas Southern University School of Communication for three years, Brown Burton formed several professional partnerships, including with ABC News, HBCU Game Day and the Monterey Jazz Festival. She also formed the school’s first advisory board.

Colley and Brown Burton discussed the importance of advisory boards made up of prominent alumni and industry leaders. If they are giving to the university, make sure the gifts come to your department, Colley said. “If it doesn’t come to us, ask ‘where is it?’” she said.

Brown Burton said it’s also important to build strong relationships with the president, provost and other campus administrators.

“Once you get out of your silo, you find pockets of like-minded people,” Brown Burton said.

Colley suggested making friends with university librarians, the information technology department, grant administrators and development officials.

By treating people with respect, she said, those employees look for

Please see **MORE** on page 9



Photo by Kate Farrish

“Doing More with Less” moderator Elizabeth Atwood, left, with panelists Kay Colley, Carrie Sipes, Rockell Brown Burton and Angeline Taylor. The Detroit conference, first face-to-face annual event for AEJMC since before COVID-19, required face masks in all sessions and public spaces.

aejmc 2022 conference

SPIG-CTEC combine to host ‘Great Ideas for Teaching’



Photo by Dave Madsen

AEJMC’s Small Programs Interest Group and Communication Technology Division collaborated Aug. 4 on a GIFT-Teaching Panel Session during the conference in Detroit. Panelists discussed “The Gift of Inclusivity.” After sharing brief insights on stage, each panelist facilitated a table discussion that allowed participants to informally discuss ideas on how to be more inclusive in the classroom. Topics pertained to: the background of students, the social/emotional challenges brought on by a pandemic, engaging students of varied interests, personalities and bandwidths, and creating assignments sensitive to student abilities, identities and socio-economic statuses.

More relationships a great resource

Continued from page 8

grants and donations to support her department.

“If you make friends, it so incredibly amplifies your reach,” she said.

Sipes agreed that relationships throughout the industry and on campus have helped her stretch resources even as her operating budget has been cut.

For example, her department landed a \$200,000 grant in 2021 from the Solutions Journalism Network to partner with five news outlets and other organizations in

central Pennsylvania to educate residents about climate change.

“Sometimes you just need more people power and good community members who can help you,” she said.

Sipes also suggested being realistic and strategic about what you can accomplish, telling the story of how your department contributes to workforce development and using student workers to market your programs on social media.

Taylor, a former visiting instructor at Florida A&M, said she brings

prominent journalists to speak to her classes, most often for free, to motivate the students.

“This costs nothing, but again, the impact on the student is big,” she said. “That’s really what fuels me.”

At FAMU, Taylor said she landed national advertisements to support the publication of a special election-night section in the campus newspaper.

“I’ve pooled my resources over the years to get my students what they need,” she said.

aejmc 2022 conference

Pushing student collaboration across platforms can be twisty

By Carol Zuegner
Creighton

Because the path to student media multiplatform collaboration can be a twisty one, four panelists offered their advice and examples of what has worked and not worked.

Christina Smith of Georgia College moderated the Aug. 5 panel that featured Brian Steffen of Simpson, Jeff Inman of Drake, Burton Speakman of Kennesaw State and Kyle Miller of Northwest Missouri State via video.

The panel was co-hosted by SPIG and the Community Journalism Interest Group under the title, "If You Build It, They Will Come: Restructuring Student Media to Create a Multiplatform Collaboration 'Field of Dreams.'"

Not surprisingly, consensus on a path was difficult to come by. Even if you build it, panelists said, the students may not participate.

Steffen described a variety of media outlets at Simpson, ranging from the traditional newspaper to FM radio, online digital and newsletters.

"We have succeeded by challenging our students to develop new products," Steffen said, including SCTV.

Speakman said an important cultural shift at Kennesaw State was that students had to expect their articles would be published, which has helped raise the quality. Speakman said Kennesaw State also is fortunate to have the Center for Sustainable Journalism. The center has several publications and a unique collaboration of professional staff and current journalists.

At Drake, Inman said the capstone course that produces Urban Plains – a multimedia online publication – has undergone changes in attempts to make it more multiplatform. The capstone, which innovated with an iPad format, changed to make sure stories had at least one multimedia component.

Inman said this revealed a cultural divide between print

students and video students in their approaches to work. In response, Drake added a course called Video for Journalists to the curriculum to expand the knowledge base of all. The capstone produced innovative programming, events and mashups.

However, post-COVID and with that integration of video, Inman said that students see less need for collaboration. He said that student ambition is trending downward, that students don't want to go out and do big stories.

Miller said one path is to integrate social and the web into all classes, including platforms such as TikTok, so that students think about things in different ways. He acknowledged it can be tricky to get buy-in for collaboration, but suggested focusing on that collaboration rather than on competition.

"Multiplatform doesn't mean losing the identity . . . it doesn't lessen the student media mission," he said.

In the question-and-answer session that followed, one concern was how to transition from a traditional production schedule to an online, more constant schedule. What might be lost in team building and working together? The panelists agreed that was

a problem, with Steffen citing the impact of the pandemic and the "great student disengagement."

The Center for Sustainable Journalism is a resource that strengthens the Kennesaw State program.



aejmc 2022 conference

Majors' professional success gets a boost with data literacy

By Mas Biswas
Loyola Maryland

The Small Programs Interest Group and Scholastic Journalism Division jointly sponsored an Aug. 3 panel on “Data Literacy for All Majors: Teaching and Assessment Approaches.”

Moderated by Peter Bobkowski of Kansas, panelists covered three pedagogical aspects of teaching data in a journalism and mass communication curriculum: what they teach, how they navigate challenges and what they see as a success.

The eight panelists were: Masudul Biswas, Loyola Maryland; Sarah Cavanah, Southeast Missouri; Chris Etheridge, Kansas; Patrick Hadley, West Georgia; Jackie Incollingo, Rider; Susan LoRusso, Minnesota; Gretchen Macchiarella, California State Northridge; and Jeremy Sarachan, St. John Fisher.

Six of the panelists teach data skills and concepts in a dedicated course, such as data visualization, data storytelling, media analytics, media research and analytics, information for mass communication and computer-assisted reporting. The other two teach data skills as a module in multimedia storytelling and research methods courses.

All these courses are offered at undergraduate level; five are required for all majors.

What they teach

How these panelists address data literacy in their courses depends on the nature of the course. Concepts and skills covered in a course dedicated to data literacy are data visualization principles, data ethics or credibility, data gathering, dataset cleaning/preparation for a visualiza-

tion, interpretation of meaning in data, data visualization and publishing of visualization and data stories.

Macchiarella introduces data literacy as a module in a required multimedia storytelling course that covers basics of data resources, mapping and charts. She emphasizes “simple numbers from reliable sources to reinforce a storyline.” Patrick Hadley said he teaches data literacy as part of his required research methods course. He addresses this skill in a social analytics module.

The panelists use a number of data visualization tools, such as Google Sheets, Timeline JS, Tableau, Datawrapper and Flourish.

Because it may be difficult to teach many tools in a course, one panelist said it is important to teach students how to learn a new tool and how they decide on a tool.

Challenges

Panelists agreed that most JMC students have little to no experience with numbers for storytelling.

Incollingo said students struggle “explaining analytical findings in clear language.” According to Biswas, students also struggle with creating pivot tables independently and correctly encoding data.

Panelists suggested tactics that professors can utilize to address these challenges, including:

- hands-on learning with the instructor
- follow-up homework assignments
- project work days
- project draft reviews
- learning reflections

Etheridge advises JMC educators to spend more time on spreadsheets. Requiring students to complete the

Beginner’s Guide course on Microsoft Excel from tutorial sites such as LinkedIn Learning could be a good beginning. Susan LoRusso suggested teachers offer more time on numerical skills assignments.

What success looks like

For Hadley, “It is rewarding to see students who previously focused only creative aspects of media begin to see significance of metrics and analytics for their work.”

Macchiarella was excited to share the news of one of her students finding a job in a newsroom because of data skills learned in a multimedia storytelling course.

Similarly, Etheridge said he measures success at teaching data in students finding relevant jobs. He invites to his class former students who are data storytellers in practice.

Biswas said he sees a success when a majority of the students tackle the entire final project from A-to-Z – story idea generation to data visualization to story narrative – quite independently at the end of the semester. Students leave his class with multiple data storytelling webpages that they can include in their portfolio sites.

LuRusso said those who take her Information for Mass Communication course demonstrate “increased data literacy” in upper-level courses.

When students combine data sources with human sources in a story, it enhances their confidence in data storytelling, Incollingo said.

Sarachan argues that student interest is an important factor in learning outcomes. Students who embrace this topic of data literacy do very well. For them, he said, “It’s a professional win.”

aejmc 2022 conference

LAWP, SPIG panelists reflect on combination of law, ethics

By **Kenneth Pybus**
Abilene Christian

What do we leave out and what do we leave in? Faculty members from a diverse set of institutions identified that question as a core concern when teaching a course that covers communication and media law as well as ethics.

The Aug. 4 AEJMC Teaching Panel, co-sponsored by the Law and Policy Division and the Small Programs Interest Group, included four faculty members from diverse institutions, but each said wrestling with what content was most necessary remained the greatest challenge.

Moderated by Daxton “Chip” Stewart, professor at Texas Christian University, the panel included:

Fred Vultee, professor at Wayne State University

Brian Steffen, professor at Simpson College

Israel Balderas, assistant professor at Elon University

Genelle Belmas, professor at the

University of Kansas

“I’m still struggling to figure out which of my babies am I going to give up,” said Belmas, whose university voted to add ethics to a wide range of its courses three years ago.

Some programs have combined their law and policy courses to comply with university requirements similar to those at Kansas, and others have been motivated primarily by the curricular desire to draw connections between legal and ethical theory. And still others – especially smaller programs – have combined the courses because of staffing limitations.

Steffen, reveling in the recent birth of his first grandchild, said he began teaching his law and ethics course 16 years ago, primarily because the small size of the faculty required it. He found at the time that few scholars had combined the subject matter in their textbooks.

One of his challenges, he said, is deciding what to include in 14 weeks, which is shorter than semesters at most other institutions.

About one third of the course is focused on ethics, though he’s working to make that half.

“I just can’t go into detail on many things I’d like to,” he said. “I wish we didn’t have to do it this way.”

Balderas agreed, and said he sometimes feels like he does ethics a disservice because of the need to cover so many of the core legal cases.

While legal concepts, cases and subject matter are generally well-established, choosing an approach when incorporating ethics is more varied, panelists said. For example, Vultee, who is primarily an ethicist, has been weaving ethical theory throughout the course for several years, choosing not to compartmentalize the two areas.

“I like cutting the butter into the dough,” he said.

Other panelists said they have chosen between melding law and ethics throughout the course, as

*Please see **ETHICS** on page 13*



Photo by Kenneth Pybus

From left, panelists Fred Vultee, Brian Steffen, Israel Balderas and Genelle Belmas, with moderator Chip Stewart.

a spig success story

Little bit extra can be enough to give a student a big boost

By Michael A. Longinow

Biola

We're small. That's our name in AEJMC. And it's true of our programs. We can't cover every possible media direction with faculty and gear and space on our campuses.

But we do what we can – we add a unit to an existing course. We do special-topic electives on niche areas such as lighting and drones and travel writing. We get discouraged when that's all we can do.

But the truth is, some students in our programs are so eager and hungry to learn that they'll take whatever we can offer and run with it. That one assignment, that seminar, even a session at a campus media convention can turn into a career-preparation journey that those students build for themselves.

An example in Biola's program is radio – known better to today's students as audio production. Our program inherited a radio studio in 2007 that was part of an earlier

curricular era.

It had professional-grade gear, but we lacked the full-time faculty in radio. We couldn't fold it into our curriculum in any meaningful way. However, with the help of adjuncts and some eager students (drawing on a fairly generous residual radio budget), we offered one basic course in audio production.

Out of that course, and the co-curricular efforts of students who crafted some online radio programming, one of our students won a National Religious Broadcasters award and got hired by a CBS News radio affiliate in Los Angeles – before he'd graduated. Another got hired by a radio news group because he knew the boards – and he was a relentless writer and editor. Yet another self-driven audio student beefed up the radio programming and, with some adventurous intern work, landed a position with National Public Radio.

More recently, we found that by creating podcast assignments in a few of our classes, students began

taking to this format with vigor.

A recent grad, after a few years of hard-driving local news reporting in metro Los Angeles, got hired by the Wall Street Journal partly for his hard-news gusto but mostly for his interest and background in podcasting. He's part of a team overseeing all the Journal's podcast out of their Los Angeles facilities.

Another recent grad pitched her senior portfolio to Samaritan's Purse, a crisis-intervention/relief group in North Carolina. Leaders there liked her writing ability, her photo work, her video work – but the clincher was a set of podcasts she did totally on her own in connection with courses she was taking. Podcasts are now her main job with Samaritan's Purse.

Big things do come in small packages. And our programs – with your creativity in courses and media innovation – are paying off.

Believe it.

And be prepared to share your success stories with us in the next SPIG newsletter.

Ethics pops up in different places

Continued from page 12

Vultee has, and separating out a module on ethics.

Steffen continues to keep the First Amendment at the center of the course and returns to ethical theory throughout the course, and Stewart said he sets aside three weeks to focus specifically on ethics.

To some degree, the decisions about how ethics is included are

impacted by who will be enrolled in the course. Some programs focus on journalism ethics while others have strategic communication and media studies majors enrolled.

Belmas uses the case-study approach developed by the Minnesota News Council – one in which students must engage with the legal and ethical ramifications of media covering a case of incest. That approach calls for discussion of the

Society of Professional Journalists code of ethics.

Balderas, who serves on the SPJ national board, addresses the organization's code, but because he teaches a course of combined majors, he also touches on ethics theory, including the works of Kant, Bentham and Burke as well as utilitarian and feminist ethics.

"It's not just about journalism and the First Amendment," he said.

on the personal side

Eastern European students grapple with Ukraine conflict

By Michael Ray Smith

LCC International University

KLAIPEDA, Lithuania – The sky above campus unfolded into a dramatic blue just in time for the onset of summer classes at LCC International University.

Classes continue in a country bordered by a Russian satellite, Belarus, that is part of the Russian plan to control Ukraine, just to the south.

Despite the Russian invasion of Lithuania's neighbor, life in Klaipeda goes on as normal, with students enrolling in summer classes where I teach at LCC International University — home to 780 students from nearly 60 countries, including Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia, Georgia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Russia, and others. Twenty-five percent of the students are from Ukraine.

When the war broke out in late February, students dropped by for face-to-face conferences to discuss their work and their futures. The undercurrent of chatter was and is the shock of Russia's intrusion into Ukraine, a country about the same size as Texas considered the crossroads between Europe and Asia.

Klaipeda is the third largest city in Lithuania, a country of about 3 million, or twice the population of Maryland.

Klaipeda is a port city where the Baltic Sea meets the Danė River. The beaches, just a couple of miles from LCC, are full in the summer. These days, more and more people are venturing to the Baltic to enjoy the sun or a stroll on a boardwalk that snakes between sand dunes and skirts a pine forest.

For most of the spring semester, I lived in a Russian-style apartment that included a living room, kitch-



LCC International University Professor Michael Ray Smith, left, poses with Yaraslau Hnatsink and graduate Daria Penkovska, both of the Department of Contemporary Communication, in a recent ceremony on campus in Klaipeda, Lithuania, on the Baltic Sea.

en, bedroom, and closet toilet. Visitors remarked on the appearance of the floor-to-ceiling shelving and the salmon-colored drapes.

“It looks like my grandmother’s house when Lithuania was under Russian occupation,” one Lithuanian friend said with wonder.

In early May, I returned to my house near Gettysburg and truly missed the rhythm of Klaipeda and the guarded caution of Lithuanians, so I went back to that country.

The Baltics, including Lithuania, were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. Lithuania was the first of these to declare independence in 1990. It celebrates freedom and independence in January and February.

With daily reports of Russia battering Ukraine, Lithuanians called Russian President Vladimir Putin a bandit and much worse. With communist-influenced Belarus to Lith-

uanian’s southern border, Lithuania is now home to more than 11,000 Ukrainian refugees, according to Lithuania’s Ministry of Interior. Residents are counting on NATO to prevent Russia from trying to occupy Lithuania again, but they are nervous that history may repeat itself.

Amid these grim reports, summer university classes are under way.

Anastasia, whose name means resurrection, was one of my 100 students during the spring 2022 semester. She is tall, dressed in the typical fashion of Lithuania – black blazer, black leggings and black combat boots. I only recently began to recognize her after months of face masks. As we chatted in my crowded office, home to four professors, Anastasia’s eyes appeared wet despite the green eye makeup.

“My father is a veterinarian,” she

*Please see **UKRAINE** on page 15*

on the personal side

Teaching just outside Ukraine

Continued from page 14

said. “He’s 45, but he’s been called up to fight for the Russians. He has no choice.”

We prayed together, a rarity between students and professors.

Soon, another student arrived, from Ukraine. We reviewed her work, then chatted about her family.

“We live about 100 kilometers (62 miles) from the Russian border,” she said. “My parents are trying to plan for a place to hide the babies. They think a basement may be the safest.”

Her soft voice – so young, so sad – made my eyes well up. I tried to hide the tears, and finally, I asked if I could pray – again.

“Yes, of course,” she said, adding, “I am not religious.”

LCC students are resilient. They work on their degrees. They come to class and rarely take off their coats, even in May when the sun pokes its way through the clouds. They keep their feelings to themselves until asked, and then they politely tell of the pain in a matter-of-fact way.

Ukrainian students and Russian students weren’t talking much either. Kris, a Russian student who wore a baseball cap, isn’t embarrassed about the invasion, he said. He’s just worried about his family, who are within 60 kilometers (37 miles) of the Ukrainian border.

Maryna, another student from Ukraine dressed all in black, recently began her day in tears over the fear of what will be as the war continues. She said the reports of war make her cry, and she wondered how many more of her countrymen will die.

One of our top students, a woman from Kyiv, dropped out of spring semester, and I haven’t been able to contact her in weeks. Another of my senior students left campus to join the Ukrainian army.

I sent him an email in late April and he responded simply: “Thank

you. I appreciate it.”

In a class that explores the development of journalism in the West, students talked about misinformation and the problems with audiences that don’t seem to understand that state news is often distorted.

I suggested a different view: “Audiences aren’t so easily fooled by messages from mass media.”

Yaraslau of Belarus, a tall student with an explosion of blond hair, guffawed like a donkey and snorted, “You don’t understand Russia.”

Other seniors had similar expressions and participated in a small poll designed to help build a scientific survey for the fall semester.

■ A student from Belarus noted, “I am following Radio Liberty (Belarusian edition) to see what is going on. Radio Liberty is independent from Belarusian regime and has no interest in supporting the aggressors.”

■ A Russian student who says he was born in Lithuania praised the BBC and Twitter feeds from independent sources but added, “A lot of Russian-based sources misrepresent, misinform and further mislead their readers/viewers in this media propaganda war – they should not be trusted and any news originating from Russia should be evaluated carefully.”

■ However, another student from Russian, countered, “I trust either Ukrainian sources or a few independent Russians ones that have proven themselves worthy to me in recent years.” She added, the worst sources for news: “The ones that portray Russians as victims.”

LCC is a faith-based university that brings Russians, Ukrainians, and many others together to learn and interact. It has an entire program built on peace studies. This university may be the best crucible for learning another person’s heart-beat in the entire world, and I am

honored to be part of it. Walking down a hall at the university is a testament to the languages heard daily in the United Nations. The difference: Faculty, students and staff seek unity without seeking uniformity.

While public prayer is not seen often, student groups join faculty and others and intercede for students and families from all over who are suffering. One Ukrainian who recently spoke at a church just a few blocks from the sea asked for prayer for Ukrainians and Russians, adding, “May God make a miracle.”

Student leaders such as senior Ilia Tkachenko and others collected supplies for Ukrainian relief. These days his group created a web page for donations to buy insulin for Ukrainians: <https://gofund.me/f64f77cb>

Tkachenko said he is hopeful the site will raise 5,000 Euros to purchase 700 doses of insulin for Ukrainians. By early May, the initiative raised more than 1,600 EUR to buy more than 230 doses of insulin.

LCC also is involved in relief programs, and the leadership works hard to highlight the student relief achievements, promote ongoing relief efforts and do what it can to end the war. LCC president Marlene Wall noted that 164 Ukrainians are scheduled for summer classes at LCC to learn to speak Lithuanian, in addition to the usual summer camps and a summer language course with 200 students.

On the LCC quad, crows the size of feral cats dart back and forth to the nearby Baltic port. The warm weather promises a robust holiday season on the Baltic and residents are hopeful that with summer, God will make a miracle.

Michael Ray Smith is a professor of communication at LCC International University. He is the Journalist in Resident at Christianity and Communication Studies Network.

member milestones



Carrie Buchanan, a SPIG member since 2010, retired May 31 after 13 years at John Carroll University, where she taught journalism and mass communication courses and for three years advised the campus newspaper.

Buchanan

In July, Carrie and her husband, George, moved back to Canada, their birthplace and the site of their careers, hers in journalism and his in software development. While both have retired, they may work part-time after getting settled. Their new address is B-57 Wilson Street West, Perth, Ontario, Canada K7H 2N5.



Sonya DiPalma is the new chair for the Department of Mass Communication at University of North Carolina Asheville. As associate professor, she starts her 14th year with the Bulldogs.

DiPalma

John Hanc took a buyout at the beginning of the 2021-22 academic year from New York Institute of Technology, where he had been a professor for 31 years. He's now a full-time journalist and book collaborator through his company Enhanced Communications, LLC. His latest book, which he wrote with Lorraine Marchand, former GM for IBM Watson Health and an adjunct professor at Columbia University's Business School, is *The Innovation Mindset: Eight Essential Steps to Transform Any Industry*. The book will be published by Columbia University Press in mid-September. Hanc's prior book, *From Survive to Thrive: Living Your Best Life With Mental Illness* written with Meg Chisolm, M.D., was the winner of a 2022 Nautilus Book Award in the Psychology category.



Linda Jones, associate professor of journalism at Roosevelt University in Chicago, retired this month after 30 years. She is continuing as executive director of the Illinois Journalism Education Association.

Jones



Kim Pearson (College of New Jersey) recently had an article published on the AAAS-IUSE Disruptor Blog about the research project funded by the National Science Foundation for which she is co-PI: Collaborating Across Boundaries to Engage

Pearson

Undergraduates in STEM Literacy. Pearson and her co-authors also presented posters related to their research at the NSF IUSE and RESPECT conferences, as well as at a panel at the NABJ/NAHJ convention in August.



Mimi Perreault (East Tennessee State University) will serve as the head of the Commission on the Status of Women and a member of the AEJMC Board of Directors for 2022-2023. Perreault and Sarah Smith-Frigerio (University of Tampa), are the editors

Perreault

of a new upcoming text "Crisis communication case studies on COVID-19: Multidimensional perspectives and applications" which is in editing for the Peter Lang Scholarsourcing Award for 2020-2021.



Melony Shemberger (Murray State) is the guest editor for the December 2022 edition of the *Teaching Journalism & Mass Communication Journal*. Submissions to the TJMC Journal are due Sept. 30 to journaltjmc@gmail.com. The journal is published by SPIG. In addition to her teaching duties, Shemberger serves as faculty regent on the university's Board of Regents.

Shemberger



Brian Steffen (Simpson) stepped down as chair of Multimedia Communication in June

Steffen

after having served since 2000.



Cathy Strong of Massey University and also editor of our Teaching Journalism & Mass Communication journal has produced a chapter in the upcoming textbook *Women in Mass Communication: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*. Her chapter is "Women Journalists and News: Lessons from New Zealand and Australia.", she says New Zealand was the first country to grant women the vote and consistently rates high in women journalist engagement as monitored by the long-running Global Media Monitoring Project. The book will be available in December.

Strong



Cessna Winslow (Tarleton State) was promoted to associate professor with tenure. She also serves as internship coordinator and public relations and social engagement coordinator at Tarleton State.

Winslow

in memory



Dr. Charles H. "Charlie" Marler, professor emeritus at Abilene Christian, died May 27 after a short illness. He was 89. Marler was chair of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication for 22 years, and his guidance prepared it for accreditation by ACE-

Marler

JMC in 2000. The department's Kappa Tau Alpha chapter has been named in his honor. Marler's teaching specialties of Communication Law, Opinion Writing and Publication Design made him a department icon for meticulous standards, tough grading and indefatigable commitment to the First Amendment and spiritual principles. He was named the university's Outstanding Teacher of the Year in 1987.

Compiled by Dave Madsen