# LeadTime

The Newsletter of AEJMC's Newspaper Division

aejmc.net/newspaper

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Red Rocks, home to a certain vibe and many an outdoor concert, is about 15 miles from the city.

## The climb to Colorado

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# Writing for a reader named ...

Every writer needs a Great Aunt Martha, a bit gruff but loving, tolerant but a tad impatient, experienced in the ways of the world but wise enough to know that she doesn't know everything – and, of course, plain-spoken and direct. She's the one who sits in the living room before the family's big Sunday dinner and asks, "So, what are you writing now, honey?" And if you can't explain your project in plain English, she'll pout and demand, "What does that mean, smarty-pants?"

Great Aunt Martha may not actually be named Martha. She may not be your great aunt by blood, marriage or adoption, or a woman, or even a living person. Instead, she is a presence reminding you to write clearly and appropriately for the audience, whether it's readers of the local newspaper, Boy Scout leaders, nursing home administrators, lacrosse buffs, hip-hop fanatics or sheep farmers.

But don't mistake Great Aunt Martha for a dummy or feel that you need to dumb down everything you write so it makes sense to her. She might be a high school dropout but can talk about the intricacies of climate change with a meteorologist and childrearing with a preschool teacher. She might have an MBA and 40-year career in financial planning but her eyes glaze over at a home carpentry magazine. Many Great Aunt Marthas know that a hat trick refers to a hockey player who scores three goals in a game, but they can't articulate the difference between a bull market and a bear market on Wall Street. Many Great Aunt Marthas understand Wall Street jargon but not the lingo of hockey.

I've written hundreds of freelance articles about lawsuits for trade publications for specialized audiences, with nary a mention of "summary judgment" or "Daubert standards." Instead, I tell those readers – the vast majority of whom aren't lawyers – that a judge dismissed a case without trial or that an expert witness's testimony didn<sup>1</sup>t meet scientific standards of reliability. When I freelance for legal publications, however, I know my readers understand the legal jargon. On the other hand, I expect readers of Automotive News to understand references to OEMs (original equipment manufacturers of vehicle parts) and readers of Community College Week to know that Pell grants are a form of federal financial aid for low-income students.

As singer-songwriter Pete Seeger is credited with saying, "Any darn fool can make something complex. It takes a genius to make something simple." Great Aunt Martha surely agrees. She doesn't prioritize but knows what's most important. She doesn't utilize implements but uses an electric drill, a GPS and a laptop. And she dismisses the semicolon as a "pretentious poof of pompous punctuation" while relishing the dash or the plain-vanilla period.

Here are five pointers that my Great Aunt Martha graciously offers to writers and that I in turn offer my students:

• Paint a picture in words. Essayist John McPhee's profile of a Princeton University physicist in "Ice Pond" described the scientist's proposed interplanetary spacecraft this way: "The spaceship Orion, with its wide, flat base, would resemble the nose of a bullet, the head of a rocket, the ogival hat of a bishop. It would travel at a hundred thousand miles an hour and be driven by two thousand fission bombs."

• Put unfamiliar or complicated numbers, facts and statistics into a familiar context. As originally written. one of my students' articles for Capital News Service about a power plant mentioned gigawatt-hours of electricity. While editing the story, I asked him what a gigawatt-hour is, and so the published version told readers that it's enough electricity to power 1 million 100-watt light bulbs for an hour. And when Yvonne Vizzier Thaxton wrote about environmental regulations for Poultry, she led with "Every hour we lose 125 acres of farm and ranch land to urban development," an image easily grasped not only by readers of her trade magazine but also by the general public.

• Share the setting. This technique is common in travel articles. My feature about an island nature sanctuary near Dublin included this sentence: "As we hiked the narrow trails over



Pro Talk

Eric Freedman

Michigan State University

rough rocks encrusted with lichen of gray-green, puke yellow and deep burgundy, birds on the alert rose from their ground-level nests of dried grass, hovering – almost floating – overhead." But journalists share the setting in other types of articles as well through a few lines describing the jeering crowd in a political campaign story or the ornately renovated Art Deco theater in an opera review.

• Don't be embarrassed to admit that you don't know something essential. I often ask my students the meaning of jargon that pops up in their articles and require them to explain it to readers in plain language. I call experts such as economists and scientists to "translate" or double-check technical terminology and processes into words a lay audience can comprehend, and I've never had one call me an idiot for not being able to explain a Laffer curve or supercolliding cyclotron without their help.

 Before submission, read your article aloud to a friend or colleague, or if you feel too shy, to yourself and to Great Aunt Martha. I can still picture a former colleague with more than 25 years' experience as a newspaper reporter mumbling aloud while typing. As writers, we process words and information differently if we hear them, read them on paper or see them on the computer screen. This is the most effective technique for detecting awkward phrasing, unnecessary repetition, wrong word choices, grammar and punctuation errors, poor story structure and missing facts.

By the way, when your article gets published, remember to send a copy to your Great Aunt Martha with a handwritten note thanking her for the help.

Pulitzer Prize winner Freedman is also director of Capital News Service.

### By BILL BROUN East Stroudsburg University Web Co-Editor

As the Newspaper Division's new blog (aejmc.net/news) approaches six months online, one enduring irony may be that it often blogs about dying print paradigms using the same digital technologies that have helped see them off.

But for the division, the potential to publish news and announcements instantly, widely and at a negligible cost gives it a powerful, forwardinglooking asset.

I joined the division's longtime Web editor, Bob Stepno of Radford University, as Web co-chair. We rapidly post a range of division news briefs and notices as well as interesting industry news, crumbs of opinion and calls for discussions of timely issues in journalism education.

Like most of us, we're incredibly busy in our academic lives, and I think Bob and I have to squeeze in the time to work up posts. But when I look at what we've accomplished in the last six months, I'm actually impressed. It's been a lot of fun, too.

The blog also seems to be gaining attention and some important readers. It was recently featured on Jeremy Porter's Journalistics blog (blog.journalistics.com) as one of "91 Journalism Blogs and Websites You Will Love."

I blogged last fall about the attempted revival of the (for me) sorely missed New York Sun newspaper. It was a brief entry. But within hours, literally, I had an e-mail from the Sun's famous publishing chief, Seth Lipsky. I don't know the guy. But he had information for me.

It was Stepno's idea to use the open-source blogging software WordPress for the site. Former division chair and computer-assisted-reporting pioneer Randy Reddick (Texas Tech) helped install the software in ways that would meet the needs of the organization in a streamlined way.

The whole installation process was itself very new-media. Randy walked us through his WordPress software setup over the free Google Voice teleconferencing service, which recorded the call for Bob to listen to later. Imagine trying to do all that 15 years ago for free – free software, free teleconferencing, free archiving.

An RSS feed from the blog makes it possible to include the most recent posts right on the division's "home page" -- http://aejmc.net/newspaper --

### News Div, this blog's for you





which houses a LeadTime archive and pieces of division history going back to 2003, including surveys, essays, INMA documents, conference photo albums, links to NRJ, officer lists and more.

**Broun** 

Stepno has been blogging about newspapers and journalism education for nearly a decade, so his work on the new blog puts him on familiar terrain.

"Sharing Web resources with students and faculty is what got me into blogging in 2001," he said. "So, when we started [the old division site] in 2004, I linked it to any of those blog posts that might interest members of the division. (The 2004-2009 items are

### *Blog:* http://aejmc.net/news *Home:* http://aejmc.net/newspaper

archived at http://www.stepno.com/oldblog/categories/aej/). Another RSS widget puts a "Bob's Bookmarks" list in the right margin of the blog; it contains whatever newspaper-related things Stepno bookmarks at delicious.com.

"Lately," said Stepno, "I've been doing some historical research, so recent items include a downloadable film about Newsday's early years and a 1927 book about the history of stereotype printing."

(His newspaper bookmark list is approaching 1,000 items at http://delicious.com/bstepno/newspapers.)

### How-to

#### By BOB STEPNO Radford University Web Co-Editor

Official division announcements, such as the call for "Outstanding Educator" nominations, are "pegged" to stay atop the front page, followed by more general-interest blog posts.

The site is fully searchable, but a "Topics" list in the right column will take you directly to all posts tagged "AEJMC," "Denver 2010," "Newsdiv," "Calls for papers" and more.

Any item can become a discussion, using a "comment" link right beneath the headline. To prevent "comment spam," registration is required, but the process is automated and quick. After the first post, a user's comments go online immediately.

The site can feature embedded multimedia, such as a video of Knight-Ridder's 1994 "concept" newspaper tablet we uncovered to put Apple's iPad (http://aejmc.net/news/?p=326) in perspective.

The site generates its own RSS feed, for readers who prefer to subscribe that way, at http://aejmc.net/ news/?feed=rss2

But the blog is not in the "information overload" business. Even with two contributors, it has rarely carried more than two or three items a week – approaching its 50th as this issue of LeadTime went to (virtual) press.

# What's our handle?

I thought of beginning with some pithy little saying that would accurately describe the issue I want to address in this column. I could have written something like "It's the elephant in the room," or "We've been down this road before," or maybe even some reference to "stirring up a hornet's nest."

Well, it seems I've gone and done just that. But, here's the bottom line: I strongly believe that we need to revisit the issue of changing our division's name and bring the conversation to some kind of conclusion.

Indeed, we have been down this road before. In her Summer 2008 column, former division head Susan Keith stated, "I believe we need a name that better embraces the full range of what our scholars study and what our industry does."

From there a spirited discussion about a possible name change ensued on the division's listserv. Anyone interested in revisiting the exchanges can do so. Our division Webmaster Bob Stepno has smartly placed a link to the discussion on the division's homepage and it can be accessed directly at http://bit.ly/9zlNPf

During this time the division membership was also surveyed to see if the discussion should be continued. While those responding only constituted a fraction of the division membership (N=49), former division head Jack Rosenberry said in his Fall 2008 column that 58 percent of respondents believed the discussion was worthy of continuation.

Comments from the respondents were wide-ranging and the survey results, combined with the listserv discussion, prompted division leadership to conclude that while there didn't appear to be strong support for a name change, the issue needed to remain on the agenda.

Now it's nearly two years later and there are additional reasons to reboot the discussion — including some that are practical, rather than



Cassidy Division Chair

Bill

philosophical. I outlined a couple of these in my previous column. It's possible that our name has a negative impact on membership. While membership numbers haven't changed much in the past couple of years, there is an overall decline in the last several and it certainly seems that we don't attract as many younger members as some other divisions. More than a few members have told me their graduate students are uninterested in both submitting to and joining the division because they feel it lacks relevance in the 21st century. Admittedly, this information is anecdotal. But it certainly adds to the importance of a discussion about a potential name change. Related to membership is the issue of money. Declining numbers means less money for the division and we have already reached the point of having to be very judicious with our funds.

Another concern that came up in the previous discussion was the impact a name change would have on other divisions and our relations with those divisions, most notably the Radio-Television Journalism Division (RTVJ). This issue becomes increasingly relevant if any name change we consider includes the words "news" and/or "journalism." To that end I have been in contact with Gary Hanson, the head of RTVJ, to invite their membership to contribute to our discussion. Gary has informed me that RTVJ is also considering a name change. Perhaps our divisions can explore the pros and cons together. At the time of deadline for this column, Gary and I have made arrangements to further discuss the subject.

In the hopes of spurring even more conversation, I would like for the discussion to take place on the division's excellent new blog at http:// aejmc.net/news/. This column will be posted on the blog and any interested parties can utilize the blog's "comment" feature to participate.

I have purposely made the focus here one of getting the conversation started, as opposed to stating my personal preferences. In part this is because, while I do think our name needs to be changed in some form, I'm not quite certain what that name should be, exactly. But I strongly encourage those participating in the discussion to also provide suggestions for a name.

For now, there is no timeline for bringing the issue to a conclusion. Division leadership will analyze the discussion and proceed from there.

I will finish with the following in the hope it can provide a starting point for the conversation. In examining the papers accepted by the division at the national convention in the past two years, more than one-third (36 percent) addressed newspaper Web sites. This information can be looked at in two different and very distinct ways. It can be argued that because such a significant number of papers address newer media, the division's name should reflect that. But, on the other hand, the results might also suggest that newer media scholars are finding and utilizing the division in solid numbers and a name change is unnecessary.

Let the conversation begin (again)!



## Panels offering plenty

### By JOHN CARVALHO Auburn University Division Vice Chair

For an example of how scholars apply knowledge, check out the Newspaper Division panels for this summer's convention.

Through the imagination and hard work of division members, we will be presenting panels on a variety of current topics in the industry.

### In chronological order:

**Tuesday, noon:** "Newsroom to Classroom: Adapting from JMC Pro to JMC Faculty" (Mitch McKenney, Kent State). This pre-conference session, cosponsored by the Radio-TV Journalism Division and the Civic & Citizen Journalism Interest Group, is for professionals making the transition to the college classroom. Separate sessions will highlight preparing for the classroom and developing a research agenda.

Wednesday, 8:15 a.m.: "Rebooting the Curricula: Teaching Journalism in a Digital Tempest" (Jody Brannon, Arizona State University). This panel will discuss the challenges of building, maintaining and evolving a curriculum that balances the fundamentals of traditional journalism and the need to teach the next generation of journalists. It is co-sponsored by the Radio-TV Journalism Division. Wednesday, 10 a.m.: "News Coverage and Commentary About Local Governments" (Stephen Lacy, Michigan State University). Originating from a study of local government coverage in 200 cities, Lacy and his team will present their findings on the factors affecting news coverage and commentary in both newspapers and their Web sites. The panel, which will include representatives from the co-sponsoring Community Journalism Interest Group, will discuss the findings.

Wednesday, 1:30 p.m.: "Planning, Launching and Running a Convergent Student News Web Site" (Jake Batsell, Southern Methodist University). With so many student media departments going "multi-platform," this panel will help provide the information for others still struggling with the transition. Jim Stovall of the University of Tennessee and Alfred Hermida of the University of British Columbia have been there and done that, and they will share from their experience.

Friday, 8:15 a.m.: "Pedagogical Approaches to Investigative Reporting" (Marcy Burstiner, Humboldt State University). Investigative reporting has long been the backbone of print journalism, but as the profession has changed, so has the priority of hardhitting, well-reported pieces. Journalism schools face the same uncertainty. Marcy Burstiner, division member and author of the new book, "Investigative Reporting: From Premise to Publication," is leading a panel that will help faculty stay focused on this important practice.

The Newspaper Division will also be co-sponsoring several panels that other divisions and interest groups are lead-sponsoring:

**Thursday, 11:45 a.m.:** "A Minority Is a Minority Is a Minority." With all of the emphasis on diversity in reporting, has the number of underrepresented groups complicated the term? The GLBT Interest Group is sponsoring a panel to look at definitions of diversity and putting them into practice.

Friday, 1:45 p.m.: "Community Newspapers: Healthiest in the Trade, but for How Long?" The Community Journalism Interest Group is presenting a panel that looks at the continued strength of community newspapers, compared to their metropolitan counterparts, and whether that trend can continue in an Internet-driven age.

Saturday, 10 a.m.: "Losing My Religion Page: The New Normal for Faith Coverage." As newspapers cut back staff, one victim is the religion reporter. The Religion and Media Interest Group's panel will discuss the effects of neglecting this important cultural force.

Saturday, 11:45 a.m.: "The Ethics of Immersion: In Search of Objective Moral Standards for the Practice of Subject Journalism." Critics have assailed the field of journalism, particularly those long-form projects in which the journalist becomes more intimately involved with the story. This panel, sponsored by the Media Ethics Division, will look at the practice and its moral implications.



### Submit papers the right way

#### By CHRIS ROBERTS University of Alabama Research Co-Chair

The "All Academic" Web site is up but dormant as I write this in early February, with no papers submitted and no reviewers signed up for the Newspaper Division.

That will change long before midnight Central Time on April 1, the deadline to submit papers for the August national convention in Denver.

If you're planning to submit (and we hope you do), here are some things to remember:

• Make sure your paper matches the call. Be sure to read the division call as well as the AEJMC's uniform paper call, at www.aejmc.org/\_10call.php.

• A few submitters don't follow the rules. Be sure your paper has no identifying information, because papers that identify the author will be eliminated.

• If possible, save your file as a PDF before submission. While the All Academic site is better, it has been known to eat the tables and references of word processing files during the uploading process.

• For reasons beyond our control, we are unable to have a special call this year for industry-related research. We hope that call will return.

We want to do another great job of finishing the review process in early May. Results were back to submitters before the 2009 deadline, thanks to reviewers who made it a priority (maybe it's because many of us were journalists and know about deadlines).

One more thing I learned: We need more judges. Our goal is to have at least three reviewers for each paper. We're not there yet, if submissions match the 2009 levels. Please drop an e-mail to croberts@ua.edu if you're not submitting and can spend a few hours performing this vital service.

### The call

The Newspaper Division of AEJMC invites faculty and students to submit research papers on newspaper topics for presentation at the AEJMC 2010 annual convention. Sessions will be devoted to theoretically based studies of newspapers or issues concerning the newspaper industry. Qualitative and quantitative research in newspaper history, law, policy, effects, processes, use, ethics and new technologies are welcome. Papers may not be longer than 25 pages, excluding tables, figures and references.

The Newspaper Division offers an open competition in which student papers compete with faculty papers. However, student authors are encouraged to submit their papers for consideration for the MacDougall Student Paper Award, \$200 and a plaque given to the author of the top student paper.

Papers to be considered for the MacDougall award should be noted as such in the accompanying cover note. All authors of the paper must be students for the paper to be considered for this award. In addition, awards are given for the top three Newspaper Division papers. Winners receive a \$100 prize and a plaque. All papers submitted to the division are automatically considered for the top three paper awards.

Submission of papers: All submissions will be blindrefereed by a panel of independent readers. All entries should follow the AEJMC Uniform Call for Papers.

Questions may be directed to the Research Co-Chairs, Chris Roberts at croberts@bama.ua.edu, or Jin Yang at jinyang@memphis.edu.

### If you can TNT, apply within

### By SUSAN KEITH Rutgers University

Do you have concrete ideas for improving the teaching of newswriting, reporting or editing? If so, you can share them in the division's teaching competition, Teaching News Terrifically in the 21st Century or TNT21, for the chance to earn recognition and a cash prize.

The competition was founded last year to publicly acknowledge good ideas for foundational journalism courses from not only full-time faculty members but also adjunct professors and graduate student instructors. This year, the deadline has been moved to 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on May 21 to allow professors to enter ideas they used in spring 2010.

Three \$100 prizes will be offered for the best ideas, one from each of the following entrants' categories: full-time faculty members, adjunct or part-time professors, graduate student instructors.

To facilitate participation by

adjuncts and others not able to attend AEJMC's annual convention in Denver, where most other Newspaper Division awards will be given, the competition will be held online. Top entries will be published in a downloadable PDF booklet available on the AEJMC Newspaper Division's Web site.

Teaching tips should be suitable for use in newswriting, reporting or editing courses, though they might be tailored for specific versions of those courses. For example, tips for teaching newswriting across media would be welcome, as would tips for teaching a specific type of reporting, such as public affairs, business or environmental. Tips can address practical skills or conceptual knowledge, showing, for example, how to teach students to report ethically or edit to avoid libel. Tips that help professors address the challenges of teaching in a world where technologies are rapidly changing are especially welcome.

To enter, download and fill out the entry form available at http://rci.rutgers.edu/~susank/NWSP/TNT21.html or on the Newspaper Division Web site. Then send the completed form and any supporting materials to Susan Keith of Rutgers University at 21stcenturyteachingtips@gmail.com by 11:59 p.m. ET May 21.

Ideas will be judged for their originality, innovative nature, ease of application, completeness, writing and whether they would work in more than one course and/or at different types of schools. All entries should reflect original teaching ideas that have not been published elsewhere and have not been winners or finalists in other teaching awards competitions. Ideas should not have been adapted from the teaching practices of another instructor or submitted to another teaching awards competition sponsored in 2010 by another AEJMC division or interest group.

Winners will be announced on the Newspaper Division Web site and through its e-mail listserv about July 1. If you have questions about the competition or would like to serve as a judge, please e-mail Susan Keith at susank@ rutgers.edu or call her at 732-932-7500, ext. 8235.

### Seeking nods for PF&R prof

#### By JUDY POLUMBAUM University of Iowa

Do you have a colleague in the academy whose work brings to mind the highest standards for free expression, ethics, public service, media accountability and/or racial, gender and cultural inclusiveness?

In short, does this person uphold and further the values associated with professional freedom and responsibility?

If so, consider nominating him or her as the Newspaper Division's 2010 Professional Freedom & Responsibility Professor of the Year (PF&R).

The award honors someone whose life and work show a commitment to

one or all of the five areas that comprise professional freedom and responsibility, and is open to any journalism classroom teacher who is a full-time faculty member of a bachelor's degreegranting institution of higher education. It will be presented at the Newspaper Division meeting during the 2010 AEJMC convention in Denver.

The evidence should be clear— but the spectrum of possibilities is as broad as the energies and imaginations of our fellow educators. It could include, for instance, developing programs to improve diversity among journalism and mass communication majors, strengthening students' abilities to do watchdog journalism, working with news organizations to improve journalists' skills, or running outreach workshops. The relevant activities may have taken place in the classroom, on campus, in the community, nationally or internationally, and may be evident in teaching, research and/or service.

Nominations require a letter of no more than two pages explaining the nominee's commitment to PF&R, accompanied by a copy of the nominee's vita.

The division welcomes all efforts to further publicize this opportunity. Please note that self-nominations will not be accepted.

The deadline for nominations is March 26. Please send materials as PDF e-mail attachments to judypolumbaum@uiowa.edu (and direct any questions to the same).

### **Call for Nominations**

### OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR AWARD AEJMC Newspaper Division Deadline: April 1

The AEJMC Newspaper Division seeks nominations for its Outstanding Educator Award. The award is open to any journalism professor who is a full-time faculty member of a bachelor degree-granting institution of higher education in the United States.

The nominee should have a demonstrated track record of achievement in preparing journalism students, advancing journalism education and promoting career development.

Please attach a nomination package consisting of the following:

1. A letter of nomination of no more than two single-spaced pages. This letter should indicate the nominator's name, title, school/organization/affiliation, e-mail address and phone number. Self-nominations are welcome.

2. A two-page document from the nominee that lists the nominee's achievements.

3. A maximum of three letters of support from the nominee's students, former students and industry professionals may also be included. Each of these letters should be no more than one single-spaced page. These letters should be included in the submission, attached to the ONE e-mail, and not sent separately from individual letter writers. Each letter should include a statement like "This person deserves the Newspaper Division's Outstanding Teacher Award because . . ."

4. The names of and contact information for two colleagues or professional associates provided by the nominee whom the selection committee might call for more information. Include the title, e-mail address and phone number of each colleague.

Please e-mail applications and letters by April 15 to:

Brian Carroll AEJMC Newspaper Division Teaching Standards Co-Chair Berry College bc@berry.edu

Please note in the subject line of the e-mail that it is a nomination for the AEJMC Newspaper Division Outstanding Educator Award.

### CALL FOR ENTRIES

### 2010 AEJMC NEWSPAPER DIVISION NEWSPAPER PROJECT AWARD

The Newspaper Project Award recognizes publications produced by students and professors in journalism classes or as special curricular projects connected to courses. These publications must be special projects, not routine stories that were published in a newspaper. To qualify, the publication must have been edited and produced as part of the curriculum, the text reported and written by students, and professors must have been responsible for editing and/or advising. Magazines, newspapers or Yellow Page-like compilations cannot be accepted. Eligible publications must have been published in the 2007-08 or 2008-09 academic years. Online newspaper publications are eligible and may be submitted on a DVD or CD.

Entries will be judged on writing and visual storytelling. As a result, photojournalism, layout and design that aid in storytelling will be evaluated. Online-only publications will be evaluated using the same criteria as the print submissions. However, they must be college, weekly or daily newspapers that were published online. Blogs and Web sites not affiliated with newspapers are not eligible.

The following form should be filled out and accompany the entry:

Professor's Name:	
Institution:	
Address:	
Phone with area code:	
E-mail:	_
Name of Newspaper Publication:	
Date(s) Published:	
Course/s or project affiliated with publication:	

ATTACH a one-page double-spaced explanation about the newspaper project. Address why you chose this project, its target audience, special challenges the publication faced, what you and the students learned in completing this project and how it fits into your journalism curriculum.

Submissions: Entries will consist of five copies of a single issue of the newspaper or DVDs or CDs. Please be sure to staple copies of the entry form and the one-page explanation about the project to each of the five copies you submit. They must be postmarked by April 7. Address queries to rnankney@samford.edu.

Send entries to: Dr. Bernie Ankney, Samford University, Journalism and Mass Communication 800 Lakeshore Drive, UCA 105, Birmingham, AL 35229 (205) 726-2948 9