AEJMC Communication Theory and Methodology Division Newsletter

Volume 32, Issue 3, Summer 2003

Division Head:
Chip Eveland, Ohio State University

Vice Head:
Patricia Moy, University of Washington

Research/Program Chair:
Dietram Scheufele, Cornell University

PF&R Chair:
Maria Elizabeth Grabe, Indiana University

Executive Committee:
Erik Bucy, Indiana University
Glenn Leshner, University of Missouri
Maria Elizabeth Grabe, Indiana University
Dietram Scheufele, Cornell University

Teaching Standards Chair:
Glenn Leshner, University of Missouri

Minority Doctoral Scholarship Chair:
Kim Neuendorf, Cleveland State University

Recruitment Chair:
Pat Meirick, Univeristy of Oklahoma

Newsletter Editor:
Lara Zwarun, University of Texas at Arlington
zwarun@uta.edu for comments or submissions

Words from the Division Head: Is it the Right Time To Take A Stand?   1
by William "Chip" Eveland

There's been a debate brewing for some time now about the divisional structure of AEJMC—should AEJMC reorganize, should once useful divisions be cut if they're no longer relevant, and so on. This debate is currently being taken up by the Task Force on the Status and Future of the Structure/Organization of AEJMC, on which several current and former CT&M leaders—myself, Annie Lang, Dhavan Shah, Erica Austin, and Betsi Grabe—currently serve. Part of the debate on this task force has centered around the role of the standing committees of AEJMC—Research, Teaching, and Professional Freedom & Responsibility—in dictating what divisions should and should not do in terms of conference programming. With this article I'd like to bring this debate to the members of CT&M—and I'd like to see it continue on the CT&M Listserv (send emails to the following address: ctm-discussion@journalism.wisc.edu). I'd like to have the members come to some sort of a decision—codified in a statement that we may or may not choose to submit to AEJMC—at the business/members meeting of this year's conference (6:45 - 8:15pm on Friday, August 1).

For those unfamiliar with the standing committees, their charges are as follows (copied directly from the AEJMC Web site):

Professional Freedom & Responsibility
The Professional Freedom and Responsibility (PF&R) Committee provides annual constructive reviews of activities of AEJMC divisions and groups in the five areas of professional freedom and responsibility. The areas are Free Expression; Ethics; Media Criticism and Accountability; Racial, Gender, and Cultural Inclusiveness; and Public Service. Each division should give concern to all five categories over a period of a few years. No division is expected to emphasize all five categories every year, but each division is encouraged to make general improvements and maintain a high level of PF&R activity.

If you'd like to see the details, this committee posts a list of "expectations" of the divisions at the following Web address: http://www.aejmc.org/about/pfrexpect.html

Teaching Standards
According to the AEJMC Bylaws, the Teaching Standards Committee shall be concerned with:
> *Standards of academic and professional preparation for teachers in the field.*
> *Standards of appointment, tenure, promotion, compensation, research and retirement for teachers.*
> *Minimum standards of equipment and facilities for instruction and research.*
> *Standards of faculty-administration relationships.*

The Teaching Standards Committee of AEJMC is charged with encouraging a commitment to teaching among the many divisions and interest groups of the association. In carrying out this responsibility, the Committee proposes to enlarge its leadership and service role, and modify its evaluative roll (sic).

A detailed description of the enlarged mission of this standing committee can be found at http://www.aejmc.org/orgs/TSmission.html and the criteria for division evaluation and goals are available at http://www.aejmc.org/orgs/TScriteria.html.

Research
The Elected Standing Committee on Research provides annual constructive reviews of activities of AEJMC divisions and interest groups in the area of research. It has developed guidelines for conducting research paper competitions. A sample judging sheet is available. The committee has also developed information on how to standardize judges' scores.

Criteria for evaluation of divisions regarding research can be found at http://www.aejmc.org/orgs/rescrit.html.

One issue in the debate among members of the task force is the weighting of research, teaching, and PF&R in each of the divisions of AEJMC. For instance, should AEJMC dictate that each division devote programming space and other efforts to each of these three areas, or should divisions decide for themselves where their focus should be based on the interests of their members? Is it appropriate, for example, to expect the Scholastic Journalism Division to focus on research as strongly as CT&M, or conversely, to expect CT&M to devote as much effort to teaching as some other divisions? Many among the current leadership of CT&M feel that the division is forced to pay lip service to three masters when the desire of our membership generally is on one master—research. In part this desire to downplay teaching and PF&R relative to research may stem from the history of CT&M as AEJMC's first "research division." But, it is true that today all divisions are doing at least some research. Given that CT&M is often seen as the research division, but that other divisions now do research as well, some in AEJMC have raised questions about whether CT&M serves any unique role that can justify its existence in AEJMC. That is, do we need a research division if all divisions are doing research? What is it about CT&M that makes it unique? These are important questions because it is possible that, with the proliferation of divisions, AEJMC may begin to eliminate some divisions if they believe their time has passed or their function has been taken over by other divisions.

AEJMC stands for the Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication, and so education (and thus teaching) is part of the organization as a whole. By contrast, the other major associations to which many CT&M members are likely to belong—ICA, NCA, AAPOR—tend not to focus on teaching or "professional freedom and responsibility" at the organizational level (although certainly some of their divisions do, such as the Instructional and Developmental Division of ICA and the Basic Course Division of NCA). I don't think those organizations have formal rules regarding division obligations to devote conference time and newsletter time to these issues, though.

Interestingly enough, AEJMC also has such divisions in addition to a requirement that all divisions address all these issues. For instance, the Scholastic Journalism Division and Community College Journalism Division would seem to be most in tune with the interests of Teaching Standards, whereas the Media Ethics division would seem to have a clear fit with goals of PF&R. CT&M, I think, would see a clear kinship with the goals of the Standing Committee on Research (as would some other divisions). This is not to say that the issues of teaching and PF&R are not at all important or that CT&M would not of its own accord ever schedule a session on teaching or PF&R. The issue is more centrally whether AEJMC should demand such a focus from the "research division" or whether they should demand research from divisions whose members are oriented more toward PF&R or teaching. Should there be a division of labor among divisions or should each division have to be a jack of all trades?

Given the feelings of many of the division's leadership, at this year's midwinter programming meeting I asked the Council of Divisions whether or not the standing committees have a formal power to punish divisions that do poorly in their annual evaluations. The answer appears to be that, beyond a public scolding (appearing each year in the AEJMC newsletter), the standing committees are not empowered to take away programming chips or engage in any other formal punishment of divisions for doing poorly in their evaluations.

This then begs the question—should our division choose it's own path (probably focusing even more attention on research and reducing efforts on teaching and PF&R) and simply ignore the standing committees "expectations" or goals? Upon learning that there is no formal punishment mechanism in place, program/research chair Dietram Scheufele, teaching standards chair Glenn Leshner, and I (the CT&M leaders present at this winter's programming meeting) decided that we would devote fewer sessions than normal to teaching and PF&R and divert these resources to research sessions. In a typical year (at least in the past few years that I have been involved in the programming process), the division schedules around five or six competitive research sessions plus a couple of teaching panels and a couple of PF&R panels—but rarely any research panels. This distribution of sessions is, compared to other divisions, heavy on the competitive research side of things but low on the research panels. This year we chose to slightly increase the number of chips devoted to competitive research sessions and greatly increase the number of research panels (given a base rate of about zero). The result is that this year we will offer only one teaching panel and one PF&R panel—at least a 50% reduction from recent years.

The question that I hope will be discussed on the CT&M discussion list in the coming weeks before our conference is this—did we do the right thing? What do you think about the role that the standing committees should have in dictating the content of a division's conference program? What role should the CT&M division play in AEJMC? How should the CT&M leadership in the next year, and for years after that, handle these sorts of programming decisions, and more generally the relationship between the division and the larger organization? I look forward to hearing your thoughts and to a lively debate on the discussion list. And, I hope that as many of you as possible will attend the members/business meeting at the conference where I hope we can vote on some sort of CT&M policy or statement.

Oh, and if you aren't on the discussion list but would like to join, go to the CT&M home page at http://www.jcomm.ohio-state.edu/ctm/index.htm where there are instructions on how to sign up.◆

Embedded Reporting and Narrow News: A Matter of Professional Freedom and Responsibility
by Erik P. Bucy, Executive Committee

Journalists have been on the battlefield to cover armed conflicts involving American soldiers since the rise of mass media. Matthew Brady's Civil War era photographs and Ernie Pyle's evocative World War II dispatches were landmark feats in war reporting made possible by direct access to the front lines. But never before have journalists been enmeshed with troops so fully as during the second war in Iraq.

The notion of embedded reporting–providing news media not just with access to the battlefield but actually including them in with troops–seems to have provided unprecedented access to developments at the front lines. At the same time, however, embedded reporting subjected journalists to some severe restrictions, a certain degree of prior-restraint, and cultivated a narrow, fragmented view of the war, raising issues of professional freedom and responsibility.

The military's decision to embed journalists with troops can be seen as part of a longer-term media management problem. During the Vietnam war, especially, the feeling in Washington was that news coverage of the war cast doubt in the public mind about the legitimacy of U.S. involvement.

Political scientists who have analyzed the Vietnam period of American history contend that negative coverage of the Tet Offensive, in particular, transformed a military victory into a troubling psychological defeat. Critical reports and graphic coverage of the war, so this argument goes, eroded support for American foreign policy and contributed to the sense of defeat.

The influence of this thinking can be seen in subsequent American military interventions, which have been characterized by a high degree of media management. Since Grenada, the Pentagon has artfully managed the electronic media to such a degree that only those images (tidy, technocratic, and usually of a sanctioned nonhuman target) favorable to U.S. objectives are broadcast.

The first Gulf War in 1991 demonstrated the degree to which news coverage of modern warfare has become orchestrated (although less than two years later, in Somalia, the media were curiously a step ahead of the Navy SEALS, waiting like a welcome party for the amphibious landing with lights, cameras, and microphones). But reliance on pooled reporting and videotape replays of precision smart bombs hitting their targets from a safe distance only forces reliance on military sources for information and takes the storytelling ability of individual reporters out of the equation almost completely.

The relationship between the military and the media has always been uneasy, due to their sharply differing institutional roles and aims. While the military sees information as a weapon to be used in the form of propaganda, journalists are charged with cutting through the half-truths of military spokespersons and reporting both sides of the story.

The military's new policy of embedding journalists with troops attempted to make up for excessive media handling during the Reagan and Bush (Sr.) eras. The Pentagon even reached out to diverse media outlets beyond straight news where public opinion is shaped, including reporters from MTV, *Rolling Stone*, *People* magazine, and *Men's Health* in addition to international media and the mainstream American press (Purdum & Rutenberg, 2003).

But the roughly 500 correspondents who covered Operation Iraqi Freedom (Rich, 2003) were not free–that is, not without prior authorization–to report the news as they saw fit, divulge specifics about troop movements and locations, or state their true opinion, as Peter Arnett's and Geraldo Rivera's expulsion from the front lines demonstrated.

The precise guidelines that embedded journalists operated under were not routinely publicized but the *New York Times* summarized the most salient ground rules (Purdum & Rutenberg, 2003). The Pentagon's guidelines allowed journalists traveling with troops to report on:
- general troop strength and casualty figures
- confirmed figures of enemy soldiers captured
- broad information about previous combat actions
- the identities of wounded or killed Americans after a 72-hour embargo or until next of kin could be notified

Absolutely off-limits, unless authorized, was information about troop movements and locations. In addition, the Pentagon prohibited journalists from:
- reporting that might divulge details of future operations
- using private satellite telephones
- using personal cellphones
- carrying sidearms

Although stories were not outright censored and reporters were not required to submit scripts to military reviewers before being broadcast, each attached journalist was required to sign the guidelines in advance of being embedded, transforming their assignment into a contractual arrangement about what would (or wouldn't) be written or broadcast before any reports were filed. Local military commanders were also free to impose embargoes as they saw fit to protect operations.

In exchange, the Pentagon provided embedded journalists with protection and, for U.S. correspondents, some rudimentary military training before shipping out. Certain reporters were also given extraordinary access to unfolding operations, secret briefings, and satellite intelligence photos. However, the message of restraint was reinforced continuously.

Pentagon spokesperson Victoria Clarke reportedly warned editors in a conference call in the early days of the war that some reporting had provided too much specific information about troop locations and movements. She also reminded journalists that, even if commanders on the scene divulged such news, it was up to the reporter to withhold it under the guidelines.

The message of journalistic complicity in national security was reinforced during Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's first televised war briefing. Behind him was the image of a little girl in pigtails, with the warning: "Don't kill her Daddy with careless words."

Whether the practice of embedding journalists with troops resulted in higher credibility reports or higher quality news is difficult to tell. Certainly the practice generated more immediacy than ever before, and it provided journalists with protection. But it also resulted in a certain degree of myopia, with up-close media coverage preventing news organizations from drawing broad conclusions–and forcing them to rely on the government for big-picture information.

Lewis Lapham of *Harper's* commented that scattered, incessant news reports from Baghdad were, for the most part, "blind to the hope of a coherent narrative."

Embedded journalists were only allowed to report on the battle looking through a narrow rear-view mirror, as it were, and with unprecedented access exercised (for the most part) unprecedented caution. Even the *New York Times* noted that the bulk of the war coverage was "so positive as to verge on celebratory" (Purdum & Rutenberg, 2003), if not jingoistic, as in the case of the FOX News Channel's unabashed boosterism.

Many factors undoubtedly influenced the tone and substance of the war coverage, and reporters like Geraldo were rightfully reassigned for endangering lives, but news organizations should think carefully about whether the Pentagon's restrictive conditions and contractual approach to the news truly serves the public interest.

Did the press, by giving up so much editorial freedom, maintain enough autonomy and professional responsibility? These issues should be thoroughly considered before news organizations agree to a new set of restrictive conditions at the outset of any future military engagement.

References

Purdum, T. D., & Rutenberg, J. (2003, March 23). A nation at war: The news media. Reporters respond eagerly to Pentagon welcome mat. *New York Times*, B3.

Rich, F. (2003, March 30). Iraq around the clock. *New York Times*, B1.

More Research at Kansas City Convention
by Dietram A. Scheufele, Program Chair

On May 15 we sent the preliminary program for CT&M to the AEJMC headquarters in South Carolina, and it is one of the most research-oriented programs we have had in a while. There are a total of five refereed paper sessions, two refereed poster and scholar-to-scholar sessions and one co-sponsored research panel. Even our co-sponsored Teaching and PF&R panels have a strong research focus.

This strong research focus is a function of two developments. First, at the Midwinter Meetings in Palo Alto last year Chip Eveland, Glenn Leshner and I decided to spend more programming chips on research sessions and panels than we had done in previous years. Chip has outlined the rationale behind this in his column. Second, all of you submitted excellent papers. This made my job as program chair especially hard since I had to reject a lot of good papers. But it allowed us to schedule many research panels and refereed research sessions without compromising the quality of the presentations. All in all we had 94 submissions and accepted 44 papers for an acceptance rate of about 47 percent. This acceptance rate was somewhat lower for student papers (37%) than it was for faculty submissions (56%). This does not mean, however, that students did not submit excellent work. In fact, the standardized ratings for the top student papers did for the most part not differ significantly from those of the top faculty papers. With very few exceptions, all papers were blind-reviewed by three reviewers and decisions about acceptance or rejection were made based on scores that were standardized across papers and reviewers.

Our opening refereed research session on **Wednesday, July 30 from 11:45am to 12:15pm** is devoted to the issue of **"Communication, community, and democracy: Exploring media's role in promoting and undermining democratic citizenship."** It is moderated by **Verena Hess** of the University of Washington. The discussant is **Patricia Moy**, also of the University of Washington.

The second research session of the conference focuses on **"New and old methods of communication research"** and is moderated by **Jochen Peter** of the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Discussant is Charles Whitney of the University of Texas at Austin. This session is also scheduled for **Wednesday, July 30, from 5:00pm to 6:30pm**.

Like every year we will also be showcasing the **"Best of CT&M."** It is scheduled in a prime slot on **Thursday, July 31, from 5:00pm to 6:30pm**. This session gives the authors of the top-three faculty papers and the top-student paper the chance to present their work to all CT&M members. We intentionally scheduled only four papers to give ample time for questions from the floor. I will moderate this session myself and **Jack McLeod** will discuss the papers. This makes me especially happy since the winner of the Chaffee & McLeod Top Student Paper Award will be presenting his work in this session.

The top-three faculty papers are:

"The automatic activation of drug attitudes: Anti-drug ad viewing styles and strength of association," **Carson B Wagner**, University of Texas at Austin, and **S. Shyam Sundar**, Penn State University (Top Faculty Paper)

"Understanding the relationship between news use and political knowledge: A model-comparison approach using panel data," **William P. Eveland, Jr., Andrew F. Hayes**, Ohio State University, **Dhavan V. Shah**, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and **Nojin Kwak**, University of Michigan (Top-Three Faculty Paper)

"Talking politics and engaging politics: An examination of the interactive relationships between structural features of political talk and discussion engagement," **Nojin Kwak**, **Ann Williams**, **Xiaoru Wang**, and **Hoon Lee**, University of Michigan (Top-Three Faculty Paper)

The winner of the Chaffee & McLeod Top Student Paper Award:

"Assessing co-termination between coders in unitizing textual data: A multi-response randomized blocks permutation approach," **Li Cai**, Ohio State University

On **Saturday**, we have two more sessions. The first session, from **8 :15am to 9:45am** is titled **"From Herpes to substance abuse: New directions for health communication research."** **Sam Bradley** of Indiana University will be moderating. The discussant is **James E. Shanahan** from Cornell University.

The second **Saturday** session is scheduled for **11:45am-1:15pm**. It is titled **"From explication to measurement: Research on new media."** The moderator is **Spiro Kiousis** from the University of Florida and **Tom Johnson** from Southern Illinois University will be moderating.

In addition to these refereed research sessions we have two poster and scholar-to scholar sessions. For both sessions, we will have discussants that will provide authors with written and verbal feedback. Many presenters found this very helpful at previous conferences and we continue that tradition. The discussants are **Julie Andsager**, Washington State University, **Edward Horowitz,** University of Oklahoma, **Gerald Kosicki**, Ohio State University, and **Patrick Meirick,** University of Oklahoma.

Please plan on attending as many of these excellent panels as you can!◆

If you'd like to add your theory or methodology syllabus or course Web site address to the CT&M Syllabus Exchange, email an electronic copy or URL to William Eveland (eveland.6@osu.edu).

Check out past and current issues of CT&M Concepts (and much more!) at the CT&M Web site: http://www.jcomm.ohio-state.edu/ctm/index.htm

Department of Communication
University of Texas at Arlington
Arlington, TX 76019