

MC&S NEWSLETTER

Mass Communication and Society Division ~ Fall 2004 ~ Volume 38, Number 1
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

Head note

by Denis Wu, Louisiana State University

The Mass Communication & Society Division had a great year, thanks to all of you and Dane Claussen's leadership. From all accounts, Toronto was a big success. I hope you liked the program and enjoyed the city. I would like to express my appreciation to the division officers, paper reviewers, presenters, panelists, and members who participated in different phases of the convention. Together, you made it happen!

As you may have learned from the division business meeting in Toronto, a new team has been elected to serve this year. In accordance with our division bylaws, I automatically moved up to head. The new vice-head/program chair is Jennifer Greer of University of Nevada, a long-time, seasoned officer in the division; George Gladney of University of Wyoming, a past division head, volunteers to be secretary and newsletter editor; Jennifer Henderson of Trinity University takes charge of the teaching committee after excellent service as co-chair last year; Diana Knott of Ohio University takes over the PF&R chair position after a great year on the teaching committee; Renita Coleman of LSU, the winner of this year's faculty paper competition, was voted as the research chair; and Nicole Smith, a

doctoral student at UNC-Chapel Hill, becomes our division's graduate liaison. Last -- but not least -- our division journal has a new editor, James Shanahan of Cornell University. Contact information for each person is in the back of this newsletter. I encourage you to contact them or me if you have any questions or suggestions.

As head of MC&S, I plan to continue all of the division's great traditions. Two changes, however, will likely occur this year. First, we'll team up with several divisions and interest groups to hold a mid-winter conference in Kennesaw (close to Atlanta), Ga., in February 2005. Given our division's size and limited slots at the annual convention, it will likely accommodate and even spur more scholarship and issue deliberation. I hope we will continue this conference in the years to come. The 2005 mid-winter conference call for papers and relevant information about lodging and transportation is also included in this newsletter. Please take a look and join us in the spring. Another change is in response to concerns about whether many graduate students can afford to stay one more day at the annual convention. To accommodate them, we plan to

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Five reasons why you should volunteer to judge research papers

by Renita Coleman, Research Chair

As sure as a Girl Scout will try to sell you cookies and the United Way will solicit contributions through your employer, you can count on hearing from the research chair of your AEJMC divisions to ask for judges. Those notices, emails and phone calls will be arriving soon! Please consider serving. Here's why:

* We need high-quality judges in order to maintain our reputation as a high-quality division. Researchers look to MC&S as a division that

provides journal-reviewer-type comments. That high-quality feedback is appreciated by serious scholars who want to get their articles into the best shape possible before submitting them to publications.

* Better judges means MC&S can attract better papers. Our reputation for high-quality judges helps us attract high-quality papers, further advancing our status in the organization. Also, the more papers submitted, the better our acceptance rate. We need to

accept enough papers to fill the slots our division is allotted. By having more papers submitted, we can keep our acceptance rate near the 50 percent mark, signaling to the AEJMC membership that it means something to get a paper in MC&S.

* We need a lot of judges. As the second-largest division in AEJMC, MC&S attracts a proportional number of research papers -- 66 last year. We

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Drawing some good from bad press about the media

by Diana Knott, PF&R Chair

It's been a rough year and a half for the journalism profession. First, the spring 2003 revelations regarding Jayson Blair's brazen fabrications at *The New York Times*; then in early 2004, similar charges were confirmed against *USA Today* reporter and Pulitzer Prize finalist Jack Kelley. Now its once-proud CBS, whose "60 Minutes" and evening news reports on Sept. 8 were based on questionable -- and now discredited -- documents that made Dan Rather himself the subject of the news.

Shoddy work is the way some are explaining how such a mistake could get through to broadcast. CBS's subsequent response to the story, dubbed "Rathergate," demonstrated more bad judgment. The denial, the finger pointing, the delay in owning up to mistakes only exacerbated the problem, creating two weeks of negative fodder against the network and, by association, its more than 200

affiliates and the 1,000 radio stations that air CBS News. Another byproduct of the mistake and delay: continued diminishing public trust in journalism.

Numerous polls have told us that the public's confidence in mainstream media was already tenuous at best. A 2003 Radio and Television News Directors Foundation poll found 60 percent of respondents agreeing that they had become more skeptical about the accuracy of the news. A Gallup Poll conducted after the CBS incident found just 44 percent of respondents were confident in the media's ability to report accurately and fairly.

Although most journalists seemed to collectively cringe as the Rather story broke, others seemed to take satisfaction in it. An article by conservative syndicated columnist Mona Charen, titled "The Reckoning of Dan Rather," discusses previous CBS reports with questionable fact-checking. She concludes her piece by

admitting "a gratifying sense of justice about the whole thing."

In a *Washington Post* column, Anne Applebaum writes, "I'm sure we'll see this [CBS] episode as the final collapse of network television's dominance over the news, and the final triumph of something else, something in some ways better, in some ways worse."

The something else she describes is a clearly partisan media system, but one that's continually checked, debated and questioned by myriad other outlets. Her point -- that the old broadcast news monopoly had the potential to be more dangerous -- is logical enough, but the notion of no independent voices is, to me, just as frightening.

Other journalists and commentators, while not excusing the basic procedural errors leading to the doomed CBS story, have been more thoughtful and sympathetic toward

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move the popular pre-convention teaching workshop to a regular session, hoping more graduate students can therefore attend.

Even though it's only early fall, believe it or not, it's time to think about next year's convention. Jennifer Greer and I will be heading to San Antonio this December to participate in the "chip auction" with other divisions. Once we finalize the panels and times, we will give you a sneak peek of next year's program in the next newsletter. Also, to give you a heads-up, next year's division theme will be ethnic/minority media's impact on our society. There will be a special call for papers to attract empirical works that address or examine the ownership, production, and marketing of ethnic/minority media, their varied influence on niche audiences and the society at large, or the content or perspectives provided by the ethnic/minority media. This area has rarely been investigated by communication scholars and it could be fruitful to collect the findings that address this multifaceted phenomenon. Ford Foundation's Jon Funabiki shows some interest in this line of research as

well, and it could be possible that some collaboration with the foundation can be formed down the road. I will keep you updated.

Speaking of keeping you informed, I think e-mail would be a more efficient way to communicate with our division members. Unfortunately, the AEJMC headquarters does not provide me with e-mail information (I'm not sure whether e-mails are in their data base). If you have your e-mail address listed in the AEJMC Membership Directory, then you should have already received e-mails about our calls for both the mid-winter conference and the annual convention. If you did not get your e-mail address listed in the directory or did not receive any e-mail, please let me know and I can add you to the list.

Lastly, I am truly honored to serve the Mass Communication & Society Division this year. I am very excited about the changes we'll take on and the programs we'll be working on for all the members and the association at large. Please feel free to contact me with any suggestions, questions, or concerns. I look forward to working with you this year.

Mass Communication and Society Division Business Meeting Minutes

August 5, 2004, Toronto, Canada

Division Head Dane Claussen called the meeting to order at 8:30 p.m.

The first order of business was the presentation of the Traves Professor of the Year Award in recognition of outstanding contributions to the MC&S Division, AEJMC, and the field of mass communication. The award, which may be granted any year, was established in 1986 in honor of Ed Traves, founding editor of *Mass Comm Review*, predecessor journal of the division's current official journal, *Mass Communication and Society*. The award was presented to Everette E. Dennis, currently the Felix E. Larson Distinguished Professor and Chair, Department of Communications and Media Management, College of Business Administration, at Fordham University, New York City.

Committee Reports:

Research Committee: Chair Dietram Scheufele presented awards for top papers as follows:

Top Faculty Papers: Renita Coleman and Stephen Banning (Louisiana State), 1st place; Ron Leone and Wendy Chapman Peek (Stonehill) and Kimberly L. Bissell (Alabama), 2nd place; Matthew Nisbet (Ohio State) and Robert K. Goidel (Louisiana State), 3rd place.

Top Student Papers: Susan C. Sivek (Texas at Austin), 1st place; Ha Sung Hwang (Temple), 2nd place; Jensen Moore (Missouri), 3rd place.

Leslie J. Moeller Student Paper Awards: David Oh and Wanfeng Zhou (Syracuse), 1st place, and Jong Hyuk Lee (Syracuse), 2nd place.

Theme Competition Award: Zengjun Peng and Esther Thorson (Missouri)

Teaching Standards Committee: Chair Diana Knott reported that there were 20 entries in the Promising Professor competition co-sponsored with the Graduate Education Interest Group. The MC&S Division provided \$550 in prize money and GEIG contributed \$150. The Promising Professors Workshop was held as a pre-convention activity. The panelists were Shelly Rodgers (Missouri), 1st place, faculty competition; Chris Roush (North Carolina), 2nd place, faculty competition; Teresa Lamsam (Nebraska at Omaha) and

Jennifer Fleming (California State at Long Beach), 3rd place, faculty competition; David Cuillier (Washington State), 1st place, graduate teaching assistant competition; Cindy Royal (Texas), 2nd place, graduate teaching assistant competition. Gerald Baldasty (Washington) was distinguished educator. The committee also organized a session, co-sponsored with the Media Management & Economics Division, at teaching panel session titled "Serving the Public Interest or Serving the Public Brass: Media Concentration and Its Ethical Implications in the Newsroom."

Professional Freedom and Responsibility Committee: Co-chair Stacey Cone reported that 15 people participated in the committee's off-site tour of the MZTV Museum of Television. Also, the committee co-sponsored with the International Communication Division a PF&R session titled "International Network for Cultural Diversity (INCD), a Global NGO" and another session, co-sponsored with the Newspaper Division, titled "How Media Cover New Immigrants in Canada and the United States."

Claussen noted that Marie Curkan-Flanagan, who served as Secretary and Newsletter Editor for 2003-04, is discontinuing her work with the division.

Mass Communication and Society journal: Outgoing editor Carol Pardun (North Carolina), whose term as editor ends with publication of volume 7, reported that the financial condition of the journal is in "good shape," with the operating account standing at about \$5,000 and the journal having generated as much as \$65,000 in profits. Pardun said the relationship between the editor and Lawrence Erlbaum Associates is excellent, and that the list of libraries subscribing to the journal is growing. Claussen said Pardun should be congratulated on the fine job she did as editor and there was general applause for her efforts to strengthen the journal and maintain high quality. George Gladney (Wyoming), who served six years as the journal's book review editor, also was thanked for his hard work. Claussen then introduced the journal's new editor,

James Shanahan (Cornell), and the new book review editor, Matthew Nisbet (Ohio State).

Vice-Head's Report: Dennis Wu reported that at the 2004 convention in Toronto the MC&S Division sponsored or co-sponsored 17 panels/sessions and two pre-convention workshops.

Election of Officers for 2004-05: Claussen opened the floor for nomination of officers.

>**Head:** Denis Wu (Louisiana State), current vice-head, moved up automatically to division head, without vote.

>**Vice-Head:** Jennifer Greer (Nevada-Reno) was elected after nomination by Denis Wu and second by Carol Pardun

>**Secretary/Newsletter Editor:** George Gladney (Wyoming) was elected after nomination by Stacey Cone and second by Jim Shanahan.

>**Research Committee Chair:** Renita Coleman (Louisiana State) was elected after nomination by Jennifer Henderson and second by James Shanahan.

>**PF&R Committee Chair:** Diana Knott (Ohio) was elected after nomination by Jennifer Henderson and second by Carol Pardun.

>**Teaching Standards Committee:** Jennifer Henderson (Trinity) was elected by nomination by Diana Knopp and second by Stacey Cone.

Claussen announced that Nicole Smith (North Carolina) will be the division's graduate student liaison and Tom Gould will continue as the division's webmaster.

Linda Bathgate of Lawrence Erlbaum Associates gave a brief report of the

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Promising Professor Workshop highlights successful teaching and learning approaches

by Jennifer Jacobs Henderson, Teaching Standards Chair

At the 2004 Promising Professors Workshop in Toronto, faculty winners Shelly Rodgers (Missouri) and Chris Roush (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), as well as graduate student winners David (Washington State University) and Cindy Royal (University of Texas, Austin), offered advice and tips for teaching success. In all, three faculty winners and two graduate student winners received awards ranging from \$50-\$250.

The workshop, comprised of a series of short teaching success stories, is the outgrowth of the yearly Promising Professors competition, co-sponsored by the Mass Communication and Society Division and the Graduate Student Interest Group. The award winners shared their teaching philosophies and offered tips from their own classroom teaching for making student learning more effective.

First Place Faculty Award winner, Shelly Rodgers of the University of Missouri, suggested teachers always convey their enthusiasm for a subject. "If a teacher is excited," she explained, "it rubs off on students." Rodgers also encouraged faculty to "make students accountable" for their own learning. For example, faculty should expect thoughtful classroom discussion, preparation for class meetings and professionalism. In Mass Communication courses, "it is also important," Rodgers noted, "to create a classroom that inspires learning and teaches creativity." To best accomplish this goal, Rogers suggests we "teach by example."

Chris Roush of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, the Roush

"It is difficult to be a journalist today, and we need to light a fire under students who may be burned out from the negative portrayal of reporters today."

***--David Cullier
First Place Graduate Student Winner,
Washington State University***

Second Place Faculty Award winner, described his work with the Carolina Business News Initiative that trains students to better understand business topics and helps professional business writers gain more expertise. Roush explained that he developed new business reporting courses to support this Initiative. Students, he said, need specialized skills for reporting and writing in the area of business as well as understanding in how/why companies operate to become successful business journalists.

First Place Graduate Student Winner, David Cullier of Washington State University, encouraged participants to instill "the passion of the craft" in their journalism students. It is difficult to be a journalist today, Cullier noted, and we need to "light a fire" under students who may be "burned out" from the negative portrayal of reporters today. Cullier said he always teaches his students that when it comes to journalism, "content matters," "presentation matters," and "ideals matter."

Cindy Royal, Second Place

Graduate Student winner from the University of Texas, Austin, described a three-pronged approach she takes in teaching web publishing: 1) "the integration of skills -- how computer programs relate to one another," 2) "judgment -- how to make decisions in the web design process," and 3) "perspective of the new media environment" -- asking students to bring examples of news or websites for class discussion.

In addition to this year's winners, a Distinguished Educator Award was presented to Dr. Gerald J. Baldasty (University of Washington) for a lifetime of teaching excellence and a commitment to enriching pedagogical discussions.

Dr. Baldasty wrapped up the two-hour session by speaking about how he approaches classroom teaching. When he began teaching 30 years ago, Baldasty said, he spent time before each class thinking about what he was going to say. Today, he spends his time thinking about who is listening.

Baldasty also gave specific suggestions for how to engage students in classroom learning. First, "capitalize on their experiences." Second, "give them experiences" to use as a starting off point for discussion and/or learning. Third, "give them enough foundation in class to work on their own." Finally, "make them active participants" in classroom material. To help students learn, faculty should "use visuals" whenever possible, "vary learning and teaching styles," "show students how to see themselves in relation to mass media," and most importantly, ask yourself: "What is the point of all the stuff we are doing?"

Teaching, learning and diverse student populations

by Jennifer Jacobs Henderson, Teaching Standards Chair

To me, the Promising Professors Workshop, co-sponsored each year by the Mass Communication & Society Division and the Graduate Student Interest Group, is an annual call to think more and more creatively about student learning. This year was no exception. As I flew home from Toronto, I began to think about how my teaching could be improved during the upcoming academic year.

While I teach at an institution that is populated with predominantly white and upper-middle-class students, I am constantly concerned with how I present material to classes with students from minority groups. These students are often the lone representatives of their minority group in class, and I am intent on not using them as representatives of their race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or age groups. How do we, as instructors, best introduce subjects that involve minority populations, without highlighting diversity or the lack of diversity in our own classrooms?

To begin grappling with this question, I created a series of guidelines for my class sessions that other instructors may find useful:

* Take into consideration the diverse backgrounds of your students when creating exercises. Students each bring unique life experiences to the classroom. The goal should be to incorporate their

“How do we, as instructors, best introduce subjects that involve minority populations, without highlighting diversity or the lack of diversity in our own classrooms?”

past life experiences, build upon them, and most importantly, expand on them.

* Encourage student choice when crafting assignments. Students will naturally choose projects that highlight their interests, which in diverse populations, means diverse projects. For example, when given an assignment to create a new media product, one of my students chose to create a TV program for Spanish-speaking migrant workers in eastern Washington State. This student went on to have serious conversations with station managers about better serving the migrant population and, a year later, landed a job at that station.

* Avoid labels. If designing case problems or role-playing scenarios, place the people or problem in diverse, non-stereotypical settings whenever possible.

* Use examples that reach across demographic lines. For example, do not always use “Friends” as an example of television programming. Not everyone sees this show as reflective of their lives and experiences.

* Ask students to think about issues in new ways and from alternative perspectives. As instructors, teaching students to adopt alternative perspectives is one of our most difficult tasks. Yet, it is possible to craft assignments that coax them into taking this leap of perspective. For example, in a public relations course, a faculty member can ask students to write press releases for events sponsored by non-profit groups working throughout a city, then ask the same students to write an accompanying piece from the perspective of someone who benefits from the services of that non-profit.

* Introduce information and provide examples that will expand understanding for all. For example, in a course on history of news, include the history of the abolitionist press, and the history of the migrant press.

* Respect student individuality. Never ask students what they think someone of their race or age or gender would think about this or that. They are not the spokespeople for a group -- treat everyone as individuals.

These guidelines will not solve all difficulties with teaching to diverse student populations, but they are a good starting point for thinking about diversity in the classroom. In the long run they may just turn out to be a better souvenir than my Blue Jays T-Shirt.

Mass Communication & Society Division
Call for Paper Abstracts and Panel Proposals

AEJMC Midwinter Conference
February 11-12, 2005
Kennesaw State University

WHEN: February 11-12, 2005
WHERE: Kennesaw State University
 Kennesaw, Georgia (20 miles north of Atlanta)

PARTICIPATING DIVISIONS/INTEREST GROUPS: Communication Technology & Policy, Media Management & Economics, Cultural and Critical Studies, Mass Communication and Society, Visual Communication, Civic Journalism, Entertainment Studies, and Graduate Education.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS: Authors are invited to submit **research paper abstracts** or **panel proposals** to be considered for presentation at the 2005 AEJMC mid-winter conference. Submissions can address any aspect of mass communication & society, and may include work in progress. Work that addresses both mass communication & society and issues of interest to other participating co-sponsors is encouraged. Graduate student submissions are strongly encouraged. Here are some specific guidelines for submission:

1. All proposals must be submitted by **December 20, 2004**. Send proposals to MC&S vice head at jdgreer@unr.edu. Please use a standard word-processing format (preferably RTF) for all attachments.
2. Research paper or panel proposals should include a 300- to 500-word abstract. In addition, each panel proposal should include a list of potential panelists.
3. Identify the paper's author(s) or panel's organizer(s) on the title page only and include the mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address of the person to whom inquiries about the submission should be addressed. The title should be printed on the first page of the text and on running heads on each page of text, as well as on the title page.

RESERVATIONS: Further details on registering for the conference, registering for pre-conference events, housing and traveling to the conference will be available at <https://webspaces.utexas.edu/mark43/www/>

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publisher's activity with Mass Communication and Society. She said Erlbaum's relation with Carol Pardun as editor couldn't be any better, and that the people at Erlbaum are looking forward to working with the new editor, James Shanahan.

Claussen thanked all present for "a great year," and noted that he was handing over leadership to incoming division head Wu now, despite the fact that officially Wu will not assume his new duties until Oct. 1.

Incoming division head Wu said he was

honored to serve as division head. He said that under his leadership he plans to look into the possibility of moving the Promising Professors session from pre-session to regular session of the annual convention. He also said he wants to look into the possibility of the division participating in AEJMC's Southeast Colloquium, if not next spring, certainly by spring 2006.

Claussen then took a straw poll of members present to determine their preference for the 2008 convention site. There was a tie between Chicago and

Minneapolis, and that result was to be reported to AEJMC brass.

Jennifer Henderson moved for adjournment, seconded by Carol Pardun.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
 George Albert Gladney, incoming Secretary and Newsletter Editor

Note: 2003-04 Secretary and Newsletter Editor Marie Curkan-Flanagan was not at the convention to take minutes of the business meeting.

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Rather. Phil Meyer, Knight Professor of Journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, wrote in a *USA Today* column of the competitive pressures, intensity of journalists' drive and the cost constraints in modern investigative work. In a *Washington Post* editorial, Richard Cohen discussed the necessity -- and risks -- of aggressive journalism. Other journalists, too, talked of the passion of journalists like Rather to get the story.

It's hoped that the incident doesn't quell reporters' fire for the truth or news management's willingness to fund investigative work. After all, it was just last summer that *The New York Times* admitted "mistakes" in pre-war coverage and cited "group-think" in its mea culpa editorial about its lack of aggressive reporting regarding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

However, there is evidence of CBS skittishness. Only a couple of weeks after its ill-fated story aired, CBS News announced it had postponed a "60 Minutes" broadcast that questioned the rationales for going to war. Spokeswoman Kelli Edwards was quoted as saying the report would be "inappropriate to air" so close to the election. The question naturally arises, if it was appropriate prior to the scandal, why isn't it appropriate now? And, of course, one could argue that

"I'm sure we'll see this [CBS] episode as the final collapse of network television's dominance over the news, and the final triumph of something else, something in some ways better, in some ways worse."

*--Anne Applebaum,
Washington Post*

it's especially appropriate to air prior to the election.

Despite the negative ramifications of this latest black eye on journalism, some good has come from this. A number of journalists are using the incident to publicly question and criticize their colleagues' coverage of the political campaign overall. For example, the focus on the Swift boat saga and Vietnam-era events have consumed time, space and energy that could be devoted to issues more relevant to today's voters. Student journalists are discussing CBS's breach of trust and writing about it in their campus newspapers. Journalism educators are using the incident to talk with their students about accuracy, responsibility, ethics, source checking, newsroom pressures, election issues and the importance of admitting mistakes. All of us are realizing the

power of the "blogosphere" in breaking the CBS story and, surely, in breaking many other stories to come.

Questions appeared online only hours following the "60 Minutes" broadcast on blogs ranging from Powerline and Little Green Footballs to the better-known Free Republic, according to emarketer.com in a Sept. 24 article called "Blog Justice." In a reversal of the classic two-step flow model of communication, where opinion leaders listen to the mass media then filter the media's messages to others, mainstream media outlets picked up on the bloggers' reactions to the story in this case, then disseminated those messages to the mainstream.

Just as the speed of and accessibility to Internet postings make them dangerous when misinformation is relayed, they also make them valuable in terms of document access and wide-scale vetting. Such access can help journalists get the story right -- or get it corrected as quickly as possible.

The learning points from this CBS incident are many for us as educators, for our professional colleagues and for our students. However, through it all the media are still the watchdogs of government. Aggressive reporters and their managers must not be deterred by potential controversy, especially now, when so much is at stake.

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need at least as many reviewers as papers submitted if each paper is to be read by three judges, and if we don't want to burden the judges with too many papers to read. Which brings us to . . .

* More judges mean fewer papers for each judge to read. We never heard of anyone in academia who wasn't busy, so we like to be considerate and not overburden anyone with too many papers. In addition, we know that each of us is a member of more than one division and may agree to judge for two, three, and even four divisions. In order to keep the number of papers each judge has to read at a reasonable

level -- I'm striving for three to five papers per person this year -- we need to have a large pool of judges.

* More judges means more areas of expertise. We've all had the experience of receiving a review from a judge we were sure was ill-informed, if not completely ignorant, of the topic or method of our paper. What an injustice to have a perfectly good paper rejected because of a reviewer who didn't understand or know anything about it! Don't let this happen to someone else!

I hope you will consider judging this year. Think of it as bread cast upon the waters.

2004-05 MC&S Executive Committee

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