

[ComSHER in Chicago](#) by Sol Hart, Division Head

A summary of important highlights from AEJMC 2017 Conference in Chicago including the top paper awards and what to expect at AEJMC 2018 Conference in D.C.

Chicago was a blast! ComSHER continues to grow and demonstrated why we are one of the largest divisions at AEJMC. We had well-attended research, teaching, and PF&R programming across the board, and a wonderful field trip to the Adler Planetarium and social as well! ComSHER is strong, and we are looking forward to building on our success in Washington D.C. in 2018.

In case you were not able to attend our business meeting, here are some of the highlights:

We had 124 paper submissions, and were able to accept 70 of them for a 56% overall acceptance rate. For our top paper of the year award, we had 10 submissions that were judged by 6 leading scholars in the field. First place went to:

Ahern, L., Connolly-Ahern, C., & Hoewe, J. (2016). Worldviews, Issue Knowledge, and the Pollution of a Local Science Information Environment. *Science Communication*, 38, 228-250.

For the Eason award, which recognizes the top graduate student paper submission, the winner was Chelsea Ratcliff, with the paper "Do narratives attenuate message resistance? A Meta-analysis." The top poster award, which selects the best poster amongst the 45 on display, was awarded to Jason Holley.

The membership and financials for ComSHER continue to be strong. Nevertheless, we continue to reach out to our colleagues to encourage AEJMC attendees to affiliate with ComSHER.

Looking forward to next year, one of our major initiatives is to expand the presence of ComSHER at AEJMC. To do this, in addition to our regular programming, we have added an additional PF&R panel (3 PF&R panels in total) as well as a new research panel that will bring experts together to discuss key research issues.

Finally, a big thank you to our outgoing head Anthony Dudo. Anthony has offered many years of service to ComSHER and was an effective leader as Head to place ComSHER in the great position it is in today. Thank you Anthony! The new group of elected officers are already working together to continue our legacy of growth and excellence. We are expecting another big year for ComSHER in 2018!

[2017 Research Paper Competition Summary](#) by Avery Holton, Vice-Head

A summary of this year's submission and acceptance rates for the division including paper volumes by each ComSHER topical category - health, environment, science, and risk.

In what proved to be another banner year for ComSHER, our division received 124 papers (nearly 7 % of the AEJMC total) and accepted 70 of those (56%). This marks the fifth consecutive year that ComSHER has received the most or second-most AEJMC paper submissions.

Notably, our acceptance rate was up six percentage points (56%) from 2016's 50%. We also accepted nearly three times as many student papers (34 submissions, 17 acceptances) and voted to shake up the Eason Prize traditionally given out to the top student paper. The award has traditionally included a single

top prize of \$1,000. However, the 2018 prize will be distributed among the top three papers (\$500, \$300, \$200) and will remain the top monetary student prize awarded at AEJMC.

Looking to the topics of the acceptances, Health Communication again accounted for more than half of the ComSHER papers (60%), followed by Environmental (18%), Science (16%), and Risk (6%).

We were fortunate enough to have 107 reviewers who individually reviewed 3-4 papers. This marks the fourth consecutive year more than 100 reviewers have volunteered their time for ComSHER.

We're thankful for the depth and consideration each reviewer provides and look forward to another great conference in 2018.

ComSHER Research Paper Submission Summary 2013-2017

	<u>Submitted</u>	<u>Accepted</u>	<u>Acceptance Rate</u>
2013	148	69	47
2014	134	85	63
2015	139	80	58
2016	129	65	50
2017	124	70	56

Topic of ComSHER Research Papers 2013-2017

	<u>Health</u>	<u>Science</u>	<u>Environmental</u>	<u>Risk</u>
2013	41 (59%)	2 (3%)	7 (10%)	16 (23%)
2014	46 (54%)	11 (13%)	16 (19%)	9 (11%)
2015	45 (56%)	9 (11%)	17 (21%)	2 (3%)
2016	36 (55%)	10 (15%)	10 (15%)	13 (20%)
2017	42 (60%)	11(16%)	13 (18%)	4 (6%)

[Teaching Panels for the 2018 Conference!](#) by Sara Yeo, Teaching Chair

Two teaching panels will cover the topics of how to successfully integrate a practical approach to crisis communication into their courses as well as how to develop and manage online and hybrid courses when teaching controversial science related topics.

I am happy to announce two co-sponsored teaching panels at the 2018 Annual Conference:

Panel 1: Communication and Media Relations Training in Risk and Crises

(co-sponsored with Small Programs)

The purpose of this panel is to create a dialogue with attendees about how to successfully integrate a practical approach to crisis communication into their courses. Audience members will be provided with ideas about how to merge theory and real-world practice from a variety of perspectives, as each panelist differs in terms of the size of their course and institution, whether crisis communication is taught alone or as part of a unit, as well as the methods used to teach the topic.

The suggested best practices are grounded in industry experience, curriculum development, personal experience, and student success. Attendees will learn about creating impactful lesson plans, the opportunities and challenges involved in using a service learning approach with a real client, teaching students how to create a crisis communication plan in one semester, co-teaching across institutions, and using a distance learning approach to mimic the challenges created by today's corporate environment. Attendees will also be provided with sample syllabi and assignments.

Panelists:

Lucinda Austin, University of North Carolina (confirmed)

John Besley, Michigan State University (confirmed)

Michelle Baum, Metropolitan State University of Denver

Kristi Gilmore, Texas Tech University

Chuck Lubbers, University of South Dakota

Michelle M. Maresh-Fuehrer, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Panel 2: Tips and Techniques for Teaching Online and Hybrid Courses

(co-sponsored with Political Communication)

This panel will help instructors manage two colliding trends in the modern classroom: How do you handle class lectures and discussions that cover scientific issues that are potentially politically contentious? And how do you do so in an environment in which institutions are encouraging instructors to make use of online tools to facilitate learning, including a greater emphasis on hybrid and online classes? The panelists will offer resources, tools and tips that can be used to navigate the challenges these issues present. Panelists will also highlight resources for teaching these topics. As institutions of higher education continue to encourage the use of online learning tools (e.g., Instructure, Moodle, Desire2Learn, social media), panelists will offer helpful tips and techniques for best practices.

Panelists:

Linda Pfeiffer, Purdue University (confirmed)

Avery Holton, University of Utah (confirmed)

D. Jasun Carr, Idaho State University (confirmed)

Guy Golan, Syracuse University (confirmed)

[Looking Forward to 2018 PF&R Panels](#) by Timothy K. Fung, PF&R Chair

Three panels will discuss 1) Strategic crisis communication in the wake of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, 2) Communicating environment, health, and science related risks across sociocultural contexts, and 3) Localized fear: Communicating science and risk for communities.

We have three exciting co-sponsored PF&R panels to look forward to 2018 AEJMC in Washington D.C.

Panel #1: Natural disasters and publics: Strategic crisis communication in the wake of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma (co-sponsored with Public Relations Division)

This panel will explore communication before, during, and after natural disasters Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. These natural disasters resulted in record urban catastrophes. The hurricanes also brought forth some new contexts through which to understand crisis communication. For example, Hurricane Harvey devastated communities from all socioeconomic levels, and as such, communicators must understand how to send meaningful messages to different publics. Furthermore, as social media are ubiquitous platforms, to what extent were social media able to better provide non-discriminating information to affected publics? Also, how do different publics perceive the different social media platforms as credible? This panel questions existing theoretical and empirical boundaries by proposing new theories that examine social media, crisis, and publics.

Confirmed panelists:

Lucinda Austin (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)
Erica Ciszek (University of Houston)
Brian Houston (University of Missouri)
Kim Golombisky (University of South Florida)
Jen Vardeman-Winter (University of Houston)

Panel #2: Communicating environment, health, and science related risks across sociocultural contexts (co-sponsored with International Communication Division)

Global risk-related issues (e.g., climate change, influenza pandemic, nanotechnology) have a political, social, and ethical impact on society that often transcend cultural and national boundaries. Addressing the risks of global health, environment, and science issues requires international action. However, the sociocultural environment has a contextual influence on how people from different societies and countries make sense of the risky issues and on how they form their decisions to address the risks. Therefore, communication plays an important role to mobilize the international effort to deal with the risks. This panel showcases the challenges faced by communicators such as journalists, public officials, advocates from non-profit organizations, public relation specialists to communicate global risks across cultural and national boundaries. Through comparative research on the risks related to environment, health, and science issues, panelists will discuss the role of the media in the communication process. The panelists will also discuss the implications for researchers and scientists to reach out global audience.

Confirmed panelists:

Dominique Brossard (University of Wisconsin – Madison)
Jianbin Jin (Tsinghua University)
Dean Cummings (Georgia Southern University)
Additional panelists TBA-Stay Tuned!

Panel #3: Localized Fear: Communicating Science and Risk for Communities (Co-sponsored with Participatory Journalism Interest Group)

Coverage of complex science and risk-related issues, especially at the local and community level, presents a number of challenges and opportunities. Using theoretical and practical approaches as well as case study examples, this panel will broadly approach how such reporting works, to what means, and how such reporting might be improved. Specifically, this panel discusses how engagement with the public within these communities and through multiple channels (e.g., social media, traditional media) can improve such reporting and its impact.

Panelists: Pending. Stay Tuned!

[2018 DC Field Trip Ideas- Welcome Suggestions!](#) by Chris Clarke, Secretary

A discussion of some exciting field trip options in D.C. and welcome feedback and suggestions.

Hello everyone:

As ComSHER Secretary for 2017-2018, I am tasked with planning our annual field trip during the August AEJMC meeting. With the conference moving to Washington, DC, this year, the opportunities are considerable – government agencies, non-profits, etc.

I welcome your suggested destinations in/around the DC area. The criteria are flexible – generally, the costs for any admission should be low (typically \$20 or less in my experience), and the location shouldn't be too far from the conference hotel to accommodate field trip attendees who wish to attend sessions before or after the trip.

I offer a few potential ideas:

(1) National Museum of Natural History – a former student works there, and she might be able to arrange a behind-the-scenes tour (I must emphasize the “maybe” part, as I have yet to speak with her). The museum, like most Smithsonian museums, is fairly close to the conference hotel.

(2) National Botanical Garden – one of my father's former university students, I believe, either directs the Garden or is high-up on the chain-of-command. We might be able to arrange a special tour or at the very least visit the facility, which is close to the conference hotel and a true DC gem.

(3) The National Zoo – I don't know anyone at that facility, but it's also a great place to visit. (We visited a similar place – the Montreal Biodome – during the 2014 AEJ conference). The Zoo is farther from the conference hotel but easily accessible using the Metro-Red line.

Again, I welcome your suggestions for the field trip AND for our annual post-Business Meeting social. If you know if any bars or restaurants close to the DC-Chinatown area that would make for a good venue, let me know.

Best,

Chris Clarke

ComSHER Secretary (cclark27@gmu.edu)

[Science Communication - Year in Review & Look Ahead](#) by Susanna Priest, Editor-in-Chief, SC
The latest news from *Science Communication*, including a detailed summary of 2017 acceptance rates and manuscript characteristic analyses.

We have just now (as of December 11) logged in year 2017 submission number 209 to *Science Communication: Linking Theory and Practice* (SC). This year, already a record year for submissions even though we are not quite at year's end quite yet, continues an upward trend that has been obvious for some time: In 2016 we had 191 total submissions and an acceptance rate for research papers of 14%; in 2015 we had just 150 submissions and an acceptance rate for research papers of 18%. Before that things fluctuated quite a bit from year to year, but still with an upward trend overall. The bottom line is that we've been increasingly popular and increasingly competitive, with a current impact factor of 1.852. Our new "Research Note" submission category, also peer-reviewed, has been partly responsible for this increase. As many of you already know, we now also publish shorter (about 4000 to 6000 word) Notes reporting on novel, emerging findings – including unexpected ones not predicted by theory or other results that can be expected to inspire new research ideas, going forward. Review and evaluation of Notes is expedited to the extent practical, as are revisions of earlier submissions. Full papers normally receive three reviews, although occasionally we can decide them on the basis of just two, while Notes typically get two reviews or – once in a while – even just one. This all adds up to a lot of reviews!

Even with three Associate Editors, the newest addition being David Secko, journalism program chair at Concordia University in Canada, it has been a challenge to keep up with this surge. We may look for a fourth AE, so if anyone is interested in this volunteer work on behalf of the field, please let me know directly at editorscom@gmail.com. Despite the struggle to keep up, at the same time it is truly exciting to see our field and our journal being characterized by such a great and growing diversity of researchers from interdisciplinary backgrounds and international locations.

By being a bit more strict about article length (our preferred length for research papers is 7000 to 9000 words, while non-reviewed Commentary essays are generally limited to 3000) and by not publishing non-essential supplements or appendices, we've been able to accommodate most of this growth without much (if any) impact on total time to publication. And yes, we still publish in print as well as online, although most ComSHER members can probably access the online version through their university library services.

We still pride ourselves on finding the best reviewers for each paper, regardless of the discipline, the locations of the authors, and whether the work is qualitative or quantitative. Our cornerstones for evaluation are a focus on communication, a specific focus on communicating science (including health science, environmental science, and social science as possible foci of study), a rigorous empirical approach, and a theory-based design. Theory is expected; articulating implications for professional practice is also encouraged, wherever warranted.

For those not very familiar with us, I strongly recommend a good look at scx.sagepub.com to see the full range of things we actually publish, as well as more details about procedures. As always, I welcome

questions on the process involved, as well as topic suitability; we use mc.manuscriptcentral.com/sc for submissions.

Our October special issue on social media and science communication appears to have been quite well received, helping to address a gap in our research and striving to adapt contemporary theory and method to problems involving less traditional forms of science communication. Perhaps as a spin-off benefit of that special issue, we've continued to receive submissions in this area. Watch the journal in the next few months for other contributions on this theme!

We're still committed to quick turnaround times, as well as a thorough and constructive review process, resulting in a first decision very likely within two to three months of submission and nearly always available within four.

And we are continually revisiting our manuscript evaluation process with an eye toward efficiencies. Right now it takes us about six weeks to get a new research submission evaluated and (if warranted) reviewers assigned. This sometimes looms as a bit of a bottleneck because we take each new submission in the order it came in rather than skipping over any of them – and risk overlooking anything. We'd like to shave that part of the process back to as close to four weeks as we can get it under the present deluge, and we continue to work on this every day. Meanwhile, please be patient – the manuscript system does not actually allow me to lose papers, so if yours has received an acknowledgment, it has been received and will be read soon.

I wish everyone involved with the journal and all those hoping to become involved in future a great holiday season and a wonderful 2018. I wish I had time to individually thank every reviewer, every submitting author, every SC board member, and especially our hardworking AEs one by one. I am aware of your contributions, and deeply appreciate each of you!

[New Officer Information for 2017-2018](#)

A summary of new elected (and volunteered) officers for the division!

2017-2018	Name	Email	University Affiliation
Head	Sol Hart	solhart@gmail.com	University of Michigan
Vice-Head	Avery Holton	avery.holton@utah.edu	University of Utah
Vice-Head Elect	Rachel Young	rachel-young@uiowa.edu	University of Iowa
Research Chair	Kajsa Dalrymple	kajsa-dalrymple@uiowa.edu	University of Iowa
Teaching Chair	Sara Yeo	sara.yeo@utah.edu	University of Utah
PF&R Chair	Timothy Fung	tfung@hkbu.edu.hk	Hong Kong Baptist University
Secretary	Chris Clarke	cclark27@gmu.edu	George Mason University

Newsletter Chair	Sojung Kim	sojung07@gmail.com	George Mason University
Website Chair	Mo Jang	mo7788@gmail.com	University of South Carolina
Social Media Chair #1	Roma Subramanian	rsubramanian@unomaha.edu	University of Nebraska Omaha
Social Media Chair #2	Leona Yi-Fan Su	leona.yi-fan.su@utah.edu	University of Utah
Membership Chair #1	Matthew VanDyke	vandykems@appstate.edu	Appalachian State University
Membership Chair #2	Tsung-Jen Shih	tjshih@nccu.edu.tw	National Chenchi University
Grad Student Amb. #1	Jacob Copple	jgcopple@utexas.edu	University of Texas at Austin
Grad Student Amb. #2	Sushma Kumble	szk220@psu.edu	Penn State
Grad Student Amb. #3	Christopher Wirz	cdwirz@gmail.com	University of Wisconsin-Madison
Grad Student Amb. #4	Jiyoung Lee	jlee08@syr.edu	Syracuse University
