

A banner year for ComSHER

By Avery Holton, Head

In what proved to be a banner year for ComSHER, our membership grew to more than 250 in 2018 and we ranked first among all divisions and interest groups in submissions to the annual conference in Washington D.C. We passed our division review with flying colors and also introduced a new format for the Eason Prize, which remains the largest cash award for students. This year we moved from a single, \$1,000 prize to three awards (\$500, \$300, and \$200) to recognize top student submissions.

As we look ahead to 2019 and Toronto, we are working hard to continue diversifying our membership and our panels. We have reserved four panels, including two PF&R, one Teaching, and one Research panel that collectively will welcome one of the most balanced groups of scholars ComSHER has had.

Additionally, we are opening up a call for our inaugural ComSHER Teaching Award. This award will honor multiple ComSHER scholars offering innovative and creative approaches to teaching in their fields. You'll find more information about this unique award in this newsletter or in the coming weeks, and we encourage you to apply. Those selected for the award will automatically be selected to our ComSHER Teaching Panel.

In 2018, we received 145 submissions—21 more than in 2017 and 17 more than the next closest division—and were able to accept 76 of those (52.4%). During our Council of Divisions review, we received praise for our continued growth, our efforts to diversify our panels, and our inclusion of graduate students in research sessions.

For 2019, we are expanding our social media efforts, so you may see invitations to join us on Facebook, Twitter, and beyond. We will also be profiling several ComSHER scholars this year and will be offering more extensive coverage of our time in Toronto.

Speaking of Toronto, be sure to mark your calendars for our annual Member's Meeting and follow-up social, which is currently scheduled for the evening of Thursday, August 8, 2019.

Finally, a deep bow for our outgoing head, Sol Hart. Like so many wonderful ComSHER heads before him, Sol took his position and the success of ComSHER seriously. He worked diligently to grow our membership, to ensure the health of our financials, and to draw more interest to our division. He additionally dedicated efforts to diversifying the gender, race, and ethnicity balance of ComSHER and was a staunch advocate for graduate student involvement and success in our division. A good many thanks to Sol and to all of our past and current officers.

Here's to another wonderful year and a terrific conference ahead of us!

ComSHER 2018 Paper Competition – Another Strong Year

By Rachel Young, Vice Head

ComSHER had another excellent year for submissions to our paper competition. We received 145 papers and accepted 76 for an acceptance rate of 52%. This marks the sixth consecutive year that ComSHER has received the most or second-most AEJMC paper submissions.

Our acceptance rate dipped slightly from 56% last year to be more in line with AEJMC's preferred 50% acceptance rate. We maintained a high rate of acceptance for student papers, at 48%. Faculty or faculty-student co-authored papers were accepted at a rate of 57%

As planned, we revised the Eason Prize to reward more student papers. The \$1,000 prize was divided among three deserving top student papers, with first place winning \$500, second place \$300, and third place \$200.

The topics of accepted papers show a more equal distribution than in years past. Of accepted papers, 39% were about health communication, 28% risk communication, 22% environmental communication, and 11% science communication. The big jump for risk communication might reflect a change in how papers were classified, since many papers could fit more than one category.

Each year we must recruit more and more reviewers to continue to provide useful feedback to our authors. We had 125 reviewers, nearly 20 more than in 2017. Thanks to the efforts of our ComSHER members and others who volunteered to review, we were able to keep the number of papers per reviewer small again in 2018. The average number of papers per reviewer was 3.4.

We're so grateful to all the reviewers who volunteer their time for ComSHER at a busy time of the semester and to the students and faculty who continue to send their best work to the division. We're looking forward to another great conference in Toronto in 2019.

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%
2018	145	76	52%

Topic of ComSHER Research Papers 2013-2017

	<u>Health</u>	<u>Science</u>	<u>Environmental</u>	<u>Risk</u>
2013	59%	3%	20%	23%
2014	54%	13%	19%	11%
2015	56%	11%	21%	3%
2016	55%	15%	15%	20%
2017	60%	16%	18%	6%
2018	39%	16%	22%	28%

Welcoming 2019 ComSHER Division Toronto (Canada) Field Trip Ideas

By Sojung (Claire) Kim, Secretary

Hello, colleagues and friends!

As the new ComSHER Secretary for 2018-2019, I am actively seeking out your suggestions and advices on potential division field trip venues. This year, AEJMC goes international, hosting the conference in Toronto, Canada.

I will offer a few venue ideas, but again, would love to welcome your suggestions! The venue selection criteria can be flexible, as long as it is not too far from the conference hotel (Sheraton Centre Toronto in downtown Toronto) and the admission costs are relatively reasonable (typically around \$20 per person).

1. The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM): This museum offers a lot of interesting exhibitions and galleries, featuring nature, science, history, and art. We may be able to meet its staff member to learn more about upcoming collections, curation choices, and/or community projects. The museum is only 1.4 miles north from the conference hotel. For more information, visit their website at <https://www.rom.on.ca/en>.
2. The Ontario Science Centre: This museum has several interactive and passive exhibits, featuring geology, [nature](#), astronomical science, music and technology, human anatomy, and some miscellaneous artifacts of science. It also offers galleries that display works of young artists and scientists who attempt to eliminate boundaries between arts, science, design, and technology. It is located 7.7 miles northeast from the conference hotel. For more information, visit their site at <https://www.ontariosciencecentre.ca/>.
3. Ripley's Aquarium of Canada: This aquarium offers lots of interesting opportunities including galleries, education programs, and events. Some example galleries are Canadian Waters, Rainbow Reef, Planet Jellies, and Shoreline Gallery. It is only 1 mile south from the conference hotel. For more information, please review their website at <https://www.ripleyaquariums.com/canada>.

Please let me know. My email is skim205@gmu.edu Thank you in advance for your help!

PF&R panels in the works for 2019

By Leona Yi-Fan Su, PF&R Chair

Panel #1. Fake health and science news on social media: The origin, distribution, consequences, and remedy of misinformation (co-sponsored with Mass Community & Society Division)

Panel Description: Health and science misinformation may influence people's attitudes and behaviors, diverting individuals from what they would have thought and behaved if correctly informed, and even pose them to life-threatening risks in certain situations. The problem is rooted in a multifaceted environment, in which budget cuts in news production, barriers to public engagement in science communication, and competing interests and agendas may all play a role. Many forces have joined in the battle against fake news. A variety of remedy strategies, such as fact-checking, correction, and trust indicators are being investigated. This panel will provide insights into the interplay between the journalistic reporting, misinformation campaigns, the public, and social media, in the contexts of science and health communication. We seek to assess the misinformation problem and its impacts, understand its roots and distribution, and draw normative implications regarding how this problem should be managed. In particular, what roles do social media and technology play in spreading health- and science-related misinformation? Who are more susceptible to accepting and acting on health and science misinformation? What psychological and contextual factors may increase susceptibility to the influence of health and science misinformation? And how can different players, including media organizations, social media companies, journalists, communicators, educators, and citizens better respond to the misinformation problem and curb the spread of fake news? This panel will help understand how health and science misinformation may shape the society and what strategies may be effective to fight misinformation in real-life situations.

Panelists: Pending

Panel #2. Strategic use of social media and social media data for science and health communication (co-sponsored with Communication Theory & Methodology Division)

Panel Description: This panel will focus on the analysis and strategic use of social media for science and health communication. The emergence and pervasive use of social media have offered communicators a seemingly infinite amount of user-generated content that can be used to analyze issue awareness, responses to crisis events, and the ebb and flow of user concerns. However, what pitfalls should professionals and researchers be aware of when interpreting social media analytics? How can communicators best utilize social media data for science and health promotion? Taken together, the panel will include discussion about real-world conduct and methodological challenges related to collecting and analyzing social media data to inform practices of science and health communication.

Panelists: Pending

Teaching Panel: Interaction and Conflict of Science and Religion

By Timothy Fung, Teaching Chair

ComSHER is planning a teaching panel for the 2019 conference with the Religion and Media Interest Group on the Interaction and Conflict of Science and Religion.

Panel description:

The debate between science and religion has a long history, and at times it impacts communication about health. The purpose of this teaching panel is on how to prepare students reporting issues that interact between science and religion.

Sometimes, the reporting of science and religion is harmonious. Prophetic figures are often seen as healers, and so religious figure may inspire health practitioners and health communities. This perspective manifests itself in religiously-affiliated hospitals, as demonstrated in Missouri with both the Barnes-Jewish Hospital and Christian Hospital in St. Louis.

Other times, religious groups are targeted with misinformation as demonstrated in a story on Russian bots spreading misinformation about vaccines published in *The New York Times*. Some religious groups also make headlines because their beliefs about health issues like breastfeeding, circumcision and birth control may conflict with current scientific practices and norms.

The purpose of this proposal is to involve individuals from the Communicating Science, Health, Environment, Risk Division and the Religion and Media Interest Group to have a panel in which various perspectives are shared. Panelists will share their experience with classroom activities and case studies that will prepare students to address the challenges when reporting issues of conflict between science and religion.

Call for submissions for the ComSHER Teaching Award

By Timothy Fung, Teaching Chair

We are seeking entries for the inaugural ComSHER Teaching Award, which aims to identify innovative and effective pedagogy in the areas of science, health, environment, and risk. We will recognize outstanding teaching in these areas through an awards panel at the 2019 AEJMC Conference and annually thereafter.

Nominations for the award may include innovative in-class activities or assignments that effectively help students achieve learning outcomes, lesson plans or a syllabus that enable students to effectively acquire necessary skills in a novel way, original ideas for experiential or service-based learning, or other related pedagogical efforts.

The recipients of the award will receive a certificate. Recipients will be invited to present their winning entries as part of a special teaching panel at the 2019 AEJMC Conference. These winning submissions will also be featured on the AEJMC ComSHER division website.

Eligibility

Faculty and graduate students can self-nominate or be nominated by an AEJMC member for the competition. The competition is open to all who teach in the areas of science, health, environment, and risk.

Materials to be submitted include:

- 1) a brief nomination letter (no more than 600 words), including the name, affiliation, and contact information of the nominee;
- 2) a syllabus for an undergraduate or graduate course on science, health, environment, and risk communication
- 3) a brief statement of teaching philosophy from the nominee (no more than 400 words). This teaching philosophy should address how assignments or other practices adopted in the course are innovative and effective for aiding student learning and achieving learning outcomes.
- 4) two letters of support from students, ideally one from a student currently studying with the nominee and one from a former student; and
- 5) a sample assignment, in-class activity, or module from the course that demonstrates evidence of the teaching innovation discussed in the teaching philosophy

Evaluation criteria:

Teaching ideas submitted must not have been presented or published previously. These ideas will be evaluated for:

- 1) how innovative the ideas are;
- 2) how easy it is to adapt the ideas to different contexts;
- 3) how effective the ideas are in creating a positive change to students' learning;

- 4) how closely the ideas can match the current objectives of the division, to promote excellent research and teaching related to science, health, risk and environmental communication; and
- 5) how clearly and comprehensively the ideas are presented;

Submission and contact:

Materials for nominations should be emailed to Dr. Timothy Fung, Hong Kong Baptist University [email: tfung@hkbu.edu.hk]. Materials submitted will not be returned. Deadline for submission is March 1, 2019. Results will be announced at the ComSHER division meeting at the AEJMC Conference, and winner(s) will be notified by April 15 through email. For enquiries, please contact Dr. Timothy Fung [email: tfung@hkbu.edu.hk].

Update from *Science Communication*

By Susanna Priest, Editor, *Science Communication*

The final numbers are in: After all decisions were completed, the 2017 acceptance rate in *Science Communication: Linking Theory and Practice* was 15% for full research papers and 19% for all peer-reviewed research, including the shorter Research Notes. The Notes format allows promising emerging results to be made available, even though more research may be called for in order to make those results definitive. (Commentary items, which receive editorial review only, are not included in these figures.)

During calendar year 2017, we received 219 submissions in all, 196 of them by November 12. As of this writing, on November 12 of 2018, we have received an almost identical 194 papers since the first of the year. That's a lot of papers, folks, and while not everything submitted ends up going into peer review, this still translates to literally hundreds of reviews every year. I'm proud of our growth in recent years but just a little relieved that it seems to have leveled a bit.

Many ComSHER members are among our most intrepid reviewers, and while the sheer numbers mean it's hard to acknowledge everyone by name, rest assured your support is truly appreciated. I mean it when I say that we could not run the journal without your help. I believe the care you take to provide all submitters with detailed critiques and opportunities for improvement has had a big impact on the field, not just the excellence of our particular journal.

Improving the efficiency of reviewer selection: With so many papers to review, getting the best reviewers for every paper has become a challenge and consumes a lot of time. While there is no good way to automate these decisions, we are actively working on finding an efficient way to update the journal's online keyword list in the manuscript system, which is used in initial reviewer searches.

If you have ever submitted a paper to us, you are already in the reviewer database, so if we are not using you as a reviewer and you would like to review more, you are welcome to drop me a note while we get the keyword issue sorted. (Please note that at this time we do not use graduate students as reviewers. Your turn will come, be patient! The journal has generally followed ComSHER policy on this.)

Also, I've been advised that Sage's Thousand Oaks (California) office was evacuated late last week due to the threat from wildfires. However, our production is managed through Sage India and should continue largely on schedule.