

Static

The Newsletter of the Radio-Television Journalism Division of AEJMC March 1998

Online Journalism Raises Ethical Questions

by DON HEIDER
RTVJ Head

Does delivering news on the internet change journalistic ethics? That was the topic for discussion at an RTVJ sponsored session at the Midwinter Conference on Convergence in Dallas. Joining me on the panel were Philip Seib from Southern Methodist University, Walt Zwirko, webmaster for WFAA-TV in Dallas, and Ron Lubke, an online writer and editor for Cox Interactive/Austin 360. There were more questions than answers, which isn't unusual in discussions of new technologies.

As broadcasters we're used to having the ability to break in with a story immediately, but for newspapers with online editions, this new immediacy has called into question ethical news gathering practices. Recent retractions by news organization no less esteemed than the Dallas Morning News have raised questions as to whether the pressure to be first is new and unfamiliar territory to our print colleagues. Several panelists asked whether the speed of the internet has put a strain on traditional fact-checking.

Walt Zwirko and Phil Seib both also pointed out that putting news online also calls into question what

is a publication of record. In other words, if you have an incorrect fact in a story posted on the web, once you become aware of the problem, do you simply go back to the original text and repair it? Or should you leave the mistake as is, but note the correction somewhere else? If so, will readers ever see the correction?

“In an online environment, do terms like ‘journalist’ still apply?”

Ron Lubke pointed out that since online editions have small staffs, many may have eliminated a level of editing. In others words, apparently few online publications have people working strictly as copy editors. On broadcast web pages, there may be no executive producer reviewing copy before it is posted, therefore news organizations may lose a crucial fact-checking step in the process.

Another point of concern involves links listed on a news organization's

web page. Is a news organization responsible for the veracity of information on links they recommend? By listing other links, is a news organization endorsing those other organizations?

Bigger issues raised by Seib and by myself included asking what, in an online environment, constitutes a news organization, or do terms like “journalist” still apply? How will consumers be able to judge information sources in this new high tech environment? Zwirko pointed out many web pages may look professional, but may have little credibility as a news organization.

Finally, several audience members and panelists expressed concern about the blurring of lines in online publications between advertising and editorial content. There may be relationships between sales and news that call into question how stories have been selected and what promises have been made to online advertisers.

In all, the new technology has brought along a host of new questions and we're just beginning to discuss and consider what ethical standards will be used in this new environment of information delivery.

Webpage Better Organized, Easier to Navigate

by LARRY BURKUM
RTVJ Webmaster

My dissertation committee chair once warned me about time management. "Even the hamster has to rest once in a while," he said. Perhaps I should have listened more intently.

My mother used to warn me about prioritizing. "Don't jump in the lake before you learn to swim," she said. Perhaps I should have paid better attention.

Both bits of wisdom are useful to those thinking about creating a web page. I've learned the hard way the importance of planning the web site before you begin building it. Two years ago I began incorporating web page construction in one of my courses. To be a better teacher, I decided to build my own web page, and then volunteered to create a page for the RTVJ division. I learned H T M L (H y p e r T e x t M a r k u p L a n g u a g e) code and

created some graphics on my computer. I wanted to have a theme to build the division page around and decided on the color bars used to calibrate video equipment. Because there were six colors, plus black and white, I decided there would be six sections in the RTVJ website. About two months later, RTVJ Online debuted.

I was very proud of my design, until I began studying other web sites and learning more about the principles of design. And I came to realize how much there is to learn about good web design, and how easy it is to create a bad design. The goal of any web page is to communicate to an audience, and it is important to define who that audience is. In some cases, you may be designing the page for yourself. But usually you will be creating a page for others to see. Everything about a web page communicates a mes-

sage. It's important to make sure it's the message you intended.

viewers using non-graphic browsers and those with images turned "off." They can't see the graphics, so you must provide an alternative textual navigation menu.

Last fall I decided it was time to upgrade and improve RTVJ Online. My goal was to make it easier to find information, and to make the site more attractive and coherent. My original design tried to follow the color bars theme too closely so that too many pages contained either too bright or too dark a color for the background, making the text difficult to read.

The improved site relies less on the theme and instead maintains a constant color scheme throughout. While most of the information is still organized in the original six sections, each section now organizes the information into subsections.

These changes resulted, in part, from a better application of design principles. But they also are the result of better planning.

When I created RTVJ Online, I quickly learned how time-consuming it can be just to maintain the site. The site is now updated as information warrants. But originally I attempted to add new material on a weekly, if not more frequent, basis. And every minor change on one page often meant making changes

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<http://www.evansville.edu/~rtvjweb>

The key, I believe, is to always keep your audience in mind. Make it easy for visitors to navigate your web site. Don't assume they're entering through the "front door" (the first page on a site), but instead provide a navigation menu on every page. And always remember the

Baltimore Bound!

by DON HEIDER
RTVJ Head

Head Notes

Jim Upshaw and I had a successful trip to New Orleans for the annual "chip auction" for program slots at the 1998 AEJMC Convention. Baltimore promises another good convention for the division.

We'll kick things off Wednesday Aug. 5 from 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. The topic will be: Covering God on Television. This panel will look at how good (and or bad) a job the networks and local stations are doing in covering the religion beat. We'd love to line up Peggy Wehmeyer from ABC News, but suggestions for others are welcome. Our co-sponsor is the Religion and Media Interest Group.

Thursday, Aug. 6, we have three panels slated, all centered on crucial issues. First, from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. we'll take a hard look at recent criticisms of journalism programs, sparked by the recent piece in Rolling Stone. Are J-schools flunking in the fundamentals? We're looking at gathering together panelists such as James Ledbetter (author of aforementioned article), Robert Blanchard, Betty Medsger and others to critique the current state of journalism education. Our co-sponsor is the Advertising Division.

From 2:45 - 4:15 p.m. the panel is: Teaching on the Edge. Panelists will discuss using technology in the classroom, and trying to prepare students for the new multi-media world ahead. John Doolittle from American and Larry Burkum from Evansville head this slate. Our co-sponsor is Comm Tech and Policy.

Finally, from 6:15 - 7:45 p.m.

we'll convene a panel looking at Media Impact on Ideas About Race. Yours truly will moderate speakers that hopefully will include Michael Thorton from Wisconsin, Franklin Gillian from UCLA and Howard Winant from Temple. We'll discuss how people learn their ideas about race, and what role broadcast news plays in that process. This panel is co-sponsored by Minorities and Communication.

Friday brings forth three more not-to-be-missed panels. From 8:30 - 10:00 a.m. Hubert Brown from Syracuse will head up a panel examining how joint ventures and continuing education can play a role for professionals and for broadcast journalism programs. Panelists should include Bob Papper from Ball State, and Barbara Cochran, President of RTNDA. Our co-sponsor is the Internship and Career Interest Group.

At 1:00 p.m. we'll take a look at the continuing trend of Audience Based News. Is local content a complete sell-out for the goal of getting increased ratings? Are broadcasters who chase ratings with scandals, sex and Springers (Jerry) damned if they do and doomed if they don't? We're hoping to get Ted Koppel or Jeff Greenfield to moderate this discussion that could include Baltimore Sun columnist David Zurawik, Bob Kaplitz from ARD, John McManus from St Mary's, and a local news director or two. The Media Management and Economics Division is co-sponsoring.

How well TV news covers science and the environment will be

the panel topic from 4:30 - 6:00 pm. Jim Upshaw is anchoring this panel that will take a close-up look at whether covering the environment was just a passing fad and what can be done to insure continued good coverage of crucial science issues. The Science Interest Group is our co-sponsor.

We'll end with bang on Saturday, with what could be one of the best panels of the convention: Feminization of Broadcast News. With the growing number of women in news management positions and the large number of women in broadcast news program across the country, what is the impact on news? Has the ascent of women not only affected the power structure of the newsroom but the nature of news itself? Nancy Benson from Illinois is helping us organize this panel, co-sponsored by the Commission of the Status of Women.

We are also co-sponsoring some panels, to which we can add panelists:

- Internships: More trouble than they're worth? Primary sponsor: Internships and Career Interest Group Wednesday, August 5, from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.
- Professional Responsibilities and Challenges Facing International News Broadcasting in the 21st Century. Primary sponsor: International Communication Division. Friday, August 7, from 2:45 - 4:15 p.m.

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- Negligence Suits for Injuries and Death: A Rising Threat for Media, But Are They in the Public Interest? Primary sponsor: Law Division. Saturday, Aug. 8, 10:30 - noon.

We're also in the process of working on an off-site panel at Baltimore's Fox affiliate that we would co-sponsor with the Mass Comm and Society Division. Details are forthcoming.

Our business meeting and Distinguished Broadcast Journalism Educator Award Gala will be Friday from 6:15 - 9:30 p.m., location to be announced.

We'll have three research sessions on Wednesday, August 5 at 8:15 - 9:45 a.m., at 1:30 - 2:45 p.m., and at 9:15 - 10:45 p.m., and a fourth session on Thursday, August 6 at 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.

If you have any interest in these panels or have good suggestions for panelists, please e-mail Jim Upshaw at jupshaw@ballmer.uoregon.edu or myself at DonHeider@mail.utexas.edu. Hope to see all of you in Baltimore!



Webpage

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on many other pages. Sometimes it was necessary to change the name of the file used to generate a page. That meant changing every page containing a link to that page. Now, it typically means changing only a few pages, often only one, because the first page in each section serves as a table of contents for the section.

The "front door" of RTVJ Online serves as the gateway to each section as well as providing some basic information about the division, and the most current changes to the site. Right now you will find links to information about the 1998 AEJMC Convention in Baltimore. Following that link will connect you to a page with links to information about the sites of the 1999 and 2000 AEJMC conventions, for those of you wanting to do some advance planning.

The '98 Convention page includes links to information about Baltimore and the two convention hotels. In the coming months travel information will be added, as well as more detailed information about the RTVJ convention program.

You'll also find information on RTVJ Online that may be useful for teaching or research, including calls for papers and articles, grant and award opportunities, and links to sites with information about electronic media industries. Back issues of *Static* are also archived on the site.

At press time there were more than 2,000 visits to the RTVJ website in just under 2 years. I hope the site is useful to you. If you have a contribution to make to the site, or would like to see something added, please let me know. You'll find an email link on every page for your comments, questions, and suggestions. Or you can email me directly at burkum@evansville.edu.

TASK FORCE SEEKS INPUT

AEJMC President Steve Lacy commenced a task force charged to improve electronic communications within the organization. The task force's main concern is improving the AEJMC web site. There is a new server, a better look, and a new URL (<http://www.aejmc.sc.edu>). Other improvements will be announced at the 1998 Convention in Baltimore.

Paul Lester (California State-Fullerton) heads the task force and is attempting to create an online bookstore on the AEJMC website where members can list and sell their books, videos, and other course materials. Lester is currently seeking feedback and book lists. Contact him at:

Dr. Paul M. Lester
Department of Communications, H-230
Cal State University-Fullerton
Fullerton, CA 92834
Telephone: (714) 278-5302
Email: lester@fullerton.edu

PRECONVENTION GRANT WRITING WORKSHOP PLANNED

by CRAIG TRUMBO

CT&M Teaching Standards Chair

The central purpose of this article is to provide a description of the grant writing workshop that will be offered during the Baltimore pre-convention (9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, August 4). This also seems like a good opportunity to stir the waters on the general topic of funded research in journalism and mass communication. First, the workshop.

During the Baltimore pre-convention, Research Administration Management Systems, Inc. and Federal Information Exchange, Inc. (RAMS-FIE) will conduct a full day workshop on identifying funding sources and grant proposal writing. Detailed information on RAMS-FIE services and workshop instructors can be found at (<http://www.rams-fie.com/seminars/>). Among a number of other functions, this organization is the prime electronic disseminator of federal funding announcements, and regularly conducts workshops on many aspects of acquiring and managing funded research.

In Baltimore, they will blend together two of their seminar topics (each usually a full day) into a single morning-afternoon presentation targeted specifically at academic researchers who are new or fairly new to this pursuit. Background information on AEJMC and the range of research we approach will be provided to the workshop instructor(s) so that the experience can be tailored to our interests. The planned sessions are (quoting from their web page):

1. Identifying and Applying for Federal, Foundation and Corporate Grants. This course is designed for grant seekers (education, non-profits, hospital, individuals, community organizations). The intent is to develop skills in the identification and assessment of funding opportunities, and to analyze the requirements and processes for developing an application.

2. Proposal Writing for Faculty and Researchers. This seminar is designed for faculty and researchers interested in developing grant proposals to support their research activities. The intent is to instruct faculty and researchers in the fundamentals of proposal writing. Specifically, this seminar presents the content, skills

and tips necessary to make a proposal stand out amongst the many, and will apply “hands-on” experience in proposal writing.

The workshops are conducted by individuals who have had long-term success in acquiring research funding. Instructors typically have also had some insider experience serving as proposal reviewers for one or more of the federal funding sources.

AEJMC is contracting with RAMS-FIE so that workshop registration will be handled within the regular convention registration. Details are being ironed out as of this writing as to price (depending on advertising costs, potential subsidization, etc.). Something in the \$200-\$250 range is anticipated. This is a modest investment in contrast to the potential benefits. Interested persons should solicit their departments, graduate colleges, and offices of sponsored programs for support to attend this workshop.

Details will be publicized in the near future.

Some Thoughts on Funded Research

These thoughts are directed especially toward two types of individuals: those beginning their research careers who have a program of research to develop, and those who have taken a shot or two at acquiring funding but haven't had a good experience. I'll just cover three quick topics. How do those in our field do in terms of research grants? Do we even do the kind of research that can be funded? Are we missing opportunities?

Our area of teaching and intellectual inquiry is nothing if not diverse. Blessing or curse, ferment or fragmentation, that's the way it is. For obvious reasons, this condition makes it somewhat difficult to assess the wider issues of achievement in the “discipline.” How do we do in terms of funded research?

To my (limited) knowledge, there has not been a systematic examination of the research of AEJMC members that has evaluated our success in grant-winning. A quick browse through the last few issues of *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* provides some insight (let's not quibble over methods). Observing funding acknowledgment in the opening footnote reveals that just under one quarter of the published articles thanked benefactors. Most were of the

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Grants

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private foundation or University achievement varieties, with a few from Federal resources. Without a hypothesis to guide evaluation of this summary statistic, I choose to make this “study” comparative. Over the same period of time (approximately), Human Communication Research sported exactly half of it’s articles with funding acknowledgment, and a slightly higher incidence of Federal involvement.

Why JMCQ and HCR? An arm’s reach convenience sample, I confess. Point is, we’re out there but perhaps we could be doing better; perhaps we’re missing opportunities. Of course, there is certainly a great deal of useful and valuable research conducted without funding, as well as some well-funded failures. But on average, I would bet that most of us would prefer not to work on shoestrings.

Do we do the kind of research that can be funded? On one hand, research will “follow the money.” Those working in health communication know this well, and attend to the regular requests for applications that flow from federal and state government. Researchers working on aspects of violence and media, for example, have also fit this model. Those of us investigating communication and the environment are on the EPA’s mailing list. But for most of the researchers working within the broader traditions of journalism and mass communication, there is no equivalent of the National Institutes of Health. We are among the “unsolicited.”

Yet I believe there are many opportunities for shaping research in

J&MC into theoretical and/or contextual forms that would meet the review criteria at, for example, the National Science Foundation. For example, some of us work on methodological issues that involve sampling, survey questions, modeling and the like. Proposals of this nature could be sent to the Methods, Mathematics and Statistics division at NSF. The fact that your research problem might involve something like understanding newspaper subscription trends matters little compared to the rigor of your approach and the value of your theoretical problem. This fact applies regardless of your research topic. Research problems involving J&MC regularly take us into a variety of domains: cognition and perception,

“The payback...from funded research is non-trivial.”

social psychology, economics, decision sciences, political sciences, law, sociology, science and technology, ethics and values. Each of these domains are represented at NSF, and will readily entertain your proposal even though you are working in ... journalism.

Consider some of the possibilities. Changes in the newsroom offer opportunities for studies based in the management sciences, organizational behavior, or social psychology. Shifts in media use patterns can be approached from a social-structural perspective. The role of media in political socialization, or the effect of changes in the boundaries of political reporting are both valid concerns within divisions

of political sciences or ethics and values studies. One should not be dissuaded because a division of “communication science” does not exist at NSF (that itself, perhaps the topic of another article).

Grant proposals are work. And they take time. And you almost always have to resubmit. But optimism, long-term planning and perseverance pay off. The pay off can be in terms of more robust designs, a better pool of recruited subjects, professional survey services, a couple of grad students, time freedom bought through salary recovery, that computer or software package that would aid the project, the heart rate monitor for your lab, travel to present the results. Other values exist as well. There are a number of ways to earn clout on a University campus, and bringing in federal research dollars with their associated recovery of “indirects” will open eyes — especially if your unit rarely makes the sponsored projects newsletter.

OK, you’re a believer now. But you’ve never written a grant proposal and finding an appropriate sponsor for your work is a trip through a maze. Fortunately, there’s help out there. The workshop described above is an excellent first step, and will provide useful insight for both the novice and the researcher with one or two successes. The payback to the University—and your department—from funded research is non-trivial. If you have an idea for a project that could be facilitated or improved by support, write up a brief and submit a proposal to your University to cover the costs of this workshop. Be convincing and this could be your first in a long series of funded proposals.

Excellence in Teaching Paper Competition Announced

AEJMC's Teaching Standards Committee is sponsoring a special paper competition designed to promote excellence in teaching. The authors of the top three papers will receive cash prizes, \$300 for the top paper, \$200 for second, and \$100 for third.

In addition, the five top papers will receive plaques, and will be presented at AEJMC's 1998 convention in Baltimore—and submitted to *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* for consideration by its editor.

The Teaching Standards Committee encourages a diversity in topics and methodologies. Applicants can submit papers that encourage excellence in teaching of any type or at any level: undergraduate, graduate, distance, etc.

Papers might, for example, assess courses or programs; compare the effectiveness of various teaching techniques; investigate the innovative application of computers; analyze successful or innovative programs; consider diversity issues; or address instructional objectives and the measurement of those objectives.

Papers will be refereed and should go beyond simple descriptions. They should include a rigorous analysis of the findings: an analysis that suggests some direction for the future. Teaching tips, literature reviews, and papers about curriculum design are not appropriate for this competition. However, teaching activities

that include a careful, systematic assessment of results are encouraged.

The competition is open to both faculty and graduate students. Applicants should send one original and four copies of their papers to:

Fred Fedler
School of Communication
University of Central Florida
Orlando, FL 32816-1344

A cover page, attached to only the original, should list the name, title, address, affiliation, and office and home telephone number of every author. Also include a 250-word abstract, the paper on a 3.5-inch computer disk, and the AEJMC permission form published in early 1998.

The maximum length for papers is 25 pages, excluding endnotes and tables. Papers must be post-marked by April 1, 1998. Faxes will not be accepted. Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope or post-card for notification of arrival.

Only original papers will be accepted. A paper presented to another organization or submitted to other AEJMC divisions, conventions, or publications is ineligible.

Call for Research Paper Judges

If you are interested in reviewing research papers for the 1998 AEJMC Convention, please contact:

Phillip Jeter
Division of Journalism
Florida A&M University
428 Tucker Hall
Tallahassee, FL 32307-4800
(850) 599-3112
E-mail: gldnbull@aol.com

Please provide your name, mailing address, telephone numbers—home and office—and e-mail address as well as a general description of your area(s) of expertise for which you could judge papers.

Papers will be sent to judges shortly after the April 1 submission deadline. Judges will have **THREE** weeks to evaluate and return the papers. Each judge will receive no more than four papers.

Look for a preview
of the 1998
AEJMC Convention
in the July issue of



CALL FOR PAPERS

1998 AEJMC CONVENTION

The Radio-Television Division of AEJMC Invites Submissions of Original Research Papers on radio and/or television journalism for the 1998 Convention in Baltimore, Maryland August 5-8, 1998. All research methodologies are welcome.

RULES & GUIDELINES

- Your paper, excluding notes, should be approximately 6,250 words or about 25 pages of double-spaced 11-12 point pica type.
- Your submission must have a postmark or delivery service receipt dated no later than April 1, 1998.
- Papers submitted to the Radio-Television Division may not be simultaneously submitted to any other AEJMC division, interest group or commission.
- Papers previously published, presented, accepted or under review are ineligible.
- Only one paper per author will be accepted for presentation during the Radio-Television Journalism Division's convention research sessions and at least one author of each paper accepted must present the paper during a 15-minute presentation during the convention in Baltimore.

To enter the competition, send by April 1, 1998 the following:

1. Five copies of your paper. (Except for the title page, your name and affiliation should not appear anywhere in the paper)
2. Five 75-word abstracts of the paper including the title. (Your name and affiliation should not appear on the abstract)
3. One 150 - word abstract of your paper including the title. (Your name and affiliation should not appear on the abstract)
4. One title page identifying the paper's author(s), affiliation(s) and address(es), including telephone numbers and E-mail (if available).
5. One self-addressed postcard or label to acknowledge receipt of your paper.

Incomplete submissions will be returned. Electronic (E-mail) submissions or faxes will **not** be accepted.

STUDENT PAPERS

Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled during the 1997-98 academic year may submit papers and the Division awards \$100 to the best student paper. The top three student papers are selected for presentation at the convention. Students should identify themselves on the title page only of their submission.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Papers will be evaluated on their relevance to radio-television journalism, purpose, literature review, appropriateness and effectiveness of the research method chosen, relationship of evidence presented and the claims made in the paper, clarity of conclusions, relationship of conclusions to stated purpose of the paper, contribution of paper to knowledge and understanding of electronic media journalism and quality of writing.

Send papers to: Phillip Jeter
Florida A&M University
Division of Journalism
428 Tucker Hall
Tallahassee, FL 32307-4800

Call for Nominations

1998 Distinguished Broadcast Journalism Educator Award

The Distinguished Broadcast Journalism Educator Award is presented annually by the Radio-Television Journalism Division of the Association for Journalism Education and Mass Communication to an electronic media educator who has made a significant and lasting contribution to the field. Criteria for nomination and selection:

- **Teaching:** Evidence of excellent teaching may come from a nominee's dean, director, or department chairperson, current or former students, faculty colleagues, etc. Letters should contain specific examples of teaching quality.
- **Service:** Service may include major responsibilities or leadership in professional or educational organizations such as AEJMC, RTNDA, SPJ, state broadcast news organization, etc.
- **Research:** The nominee should exhibit enhancement of teaching and service through professional and/or academic writing and research. Examples include journal articles, articles in professional trade publications, and creative works for broadcast.

The award will be presented at the RTVJ's business meeting at the conference in Baltimore, MD in August. The recipient will receive a personal plaque and registration fees for attendance at the conference. In addition, the recipient's name will become part of a permanent plaque that is housed in the Poynter Institute for Media Studies in St. Petersburg, FL.

Nominations are solicited from the broadcast media, professional organizations and associations, and broadcast educators or students. Send nominations by April 1, 1998 to:

Prof. Robert H. Wicks
Department of Communication
Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences
Kimpel Hall 417
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, AR 72701

Past winners: Jack Shelly, Iowa State (1983); Ed Bliss, American University (1984); Dick Yoakam, Indiana (1985); Henry Lippold, Wisconsin-Eau Claire (1986); Rod Gelatt, Missouri (1987); Mitchell Charnley, Minnesota (1988); Don Brown, Arizona State (1989); Irving Fang, Minnesota (1990); Ernest F. Andrews, Syracuse (1991); Al Anderson, Texas-Austin (1992); Michael Murray, Missouri-St. Louis (1993); Joseph R. Dominick, Georgia (1994); Joan Konner, Columbia (1995); Gordon Greb, San Jose State (1996); Travis Linn, Nevada-Reno (1997).

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of AEJMC Volume 37, No. 2, March 1998

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Newsletter of the RTVJ Division of AEJMC
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