

# STATIC

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ELECTRONIC NEWS DIVISION OF AEJMC

Vol. 50, No. 4 April, 2012

---

## ***Experiments with Integration: END and Electronic News***

By Kathleen Ryan, Electronic News Division Head

This year, the Electronic News Division has been working closely with the editors of the division journal, *Electronic News*, to brainstorm ways to raise the profile of the journal and maintain the quality of journal submissions. One idea was to streamline the flow of conference presentations to journal submissions, perhaps by having conference research papers automatically be forwarded to the journal editors (Bob Papper and Anthony Moretti) for publication review.

While that plan is still being revised, we have another experiment we're trying: a coordinated call for papers from *Electronic News* in partnership with the Sports Communication Interest Group. This is the first time we've done such a call at the annual conference. The papers would go through the typical journal review; and three to four would be accepted for presentation on the panel entitled BROADCAST MEDIA COVERAGE OF CRISES IN COLLEGE SPORTS.

The call for papers reads:

- The editors of *Electronic News* are accepting papers for a peer-reviewed, invited paper session at the 2012 AEJMC convention exploring media coverage of scandals in college sports. The papers can address broadcast media coverage of the sexual assault scandals at Penn State and Syracuse, the rape accusation against three members of the Duke men's lacrosse team, or the allegations of

improper benefits to athletes at multiple institutions, including USC, Ohio State, Miami and elsewhere. Some of the papers will be published in a planned special edition of *Electronic News*, likely December 2012.

- The papers may use any methodology and can address media coverage of more than one of the scandals listed above. Opinion pieces and essays will not be considered for presentation at the conference or publication in the journal. Any paper that is presented at another conference or published in any publication will not be considered. Acceptance at the invited paper session does not guarantee that the paper will be published in *Electronic News*. Because of EN's mission to highlight scholarship pertaining to the academy and industry, it is expected that the paper will have clear relevance to the industry.
- We're hoping this will be just the first in a series of such collaborations between the division and the division journal. By having top-notch research on cutting edge topics, we're hoping to raise the impact level of the journal and make it an even more important destination for research in our discipline.

## **2012 END Panels**

By David Cupp, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

A great lineup awaits **Electronic News Division** members who will be gathering in Chicago for the AEJMC convention during the second week of August.

Take a look at this preliminary schedule:

### **WEDNESDAY**

Which do you prefer? **Final Cut Pro or Adobe Premier?**

You can learn more about both at our first session, scheduled for Wednesday morning at 9:00, when END will join Visual Communication in a teaching panel devoted to these two programs.

### **THURSDAY**

Thursday morning the conference shifts into high gear bright and early, with an 8:15AM panel that will see END partner with the Media Ethics Division to explore both the ethics and the techniques involved in **Storytelling in Electronic Media**.

As we all know, the news business is continually evolving. How do things stand right now? What job prospects await our next graduates? Our division has provided timely answers to those questions periodically for our members over the decades, and we will do so

again at 10AM when we join our friends in the Newspaper and Online News Division in sponsoring an important session that gives us a 2012 look at **The State of the Industry**.

We're back to exploring new ways to tell timeless human stories at 11:45 with a panel devoted to **Documentary and Narrative Non-Fiction in the Digital Age**.

Grab a quick bite of lunch and get ready for a busy afternoon. At 1:30 many professors who want to stay on the cutting edge will head for a teaching panel titled: **Innovating Social Media in the Classroom**. We'll be exploring those innovations along with our colleagues in Cultural & Critical Studies.

How much of your communication these days is done using a computer? More with each passing year, right? You can learn a lot about why that is important at 3:15 when we join our Communication Technology colleagues for an important look at **Social Media Metrics and Analytics**.

We'll round out a full day with a **Refereed Research** panel at 5:00.

Enjoy yourself during the evening, but get some rest. A busy Friday is right around the corner.

### **FRIDAY**

Again our day starts early, with a hot cup of coffee and a look at some cool **Refereed Research** in a panel at 8:15.

Then, how about a field trip? Chicago is home to a fascinating museum devoted to the very business we teach; and our END division is joining the Entertainment Studies Interest Group in an 11:45AM off-site panel titled: **Broadcasting Lives: Lessons for Students from the Museum of Broadcast Communications**.

Back at the conference center, one of the top research papers submitted by our division will likely be featured in a 1:30 **Scholar to Scholar Refereed Research** session.

Our jam-packed day will end with a final session at 3:15; a critical look, co-sponsored by our Visual Communication colleagues, at one of the most important news stories of the decade. Mark your calendar for **Arab Spring on TV: Global Perspectives on Coverage by CNN, BBC and Aljazeera**.

*Continued on page 3*

## **SATURDAY**

Journalists are usually comfortable with covering other people when they make news; but the situation becomes decidedly uncomfortable when the cameras and microphones are pointed back at journalists. The Media Ethics Division is joining us at 1:45PM to examine this situation in a session titled **Weathering the Storm: What Happens When News Personnel Make the News?**

We turn from covering one type of crisis to another when we join our Sports Communication colleagues at 3:30PM for an Invited Research panel called **Sporting News: Reporting on Crises in Collegiate Sports.**

Plan to take some more interesting information away from another **Refereed Research** panel at 5:15, which will likely include one of the top papers submitted to our division.

Then, relax and reward yourself with good food and good conversation at 7PM during an offsite **Electronic News Division Members Meeting** including the **Bliss Award Ceremony.**

## **SUNDAY**

Haven't had enough? We'll be back Sunday morning at 10 to assist our colleagues in the **Newspaper and Online News Division** in predicting the future with an Invited Research panel looking at **Changing Newsrooms: Contributions from**

## **Newsroom Ethnography in the Digital Age.**

Finally, at 11:45 we will close our conference by keeping our eyes focused firmly on the future in our final panel, co-sponsored by the **Internships and Careers Interest Group**, exploring the change-or-die subject of **Innovation or Annihilation: The Future of Journalism Curriculum in America (The Conversation Continues).**

Indeed it does.

And you won't want to miss a minute of it.

I look forward to seeing you in Chicago!

---

## ***Paper Reviewers Needed***

By Dale L. Edwards, Ph.D., University of Northern Colorado

We invite everyone to be paper reviewers for the Electronic News Division's paper competition for this summer's AEJMC Conference, August 9-12, 2012, in Chicago. This year's conference promises to be one of the best yet, as the association celebrates its 100th anniversary.

Our division's theme this year is "Content in a New Media World." The Division's Executive Board chose this theme to illustrate that content has always been the most important aspect of journalism. We have always gathered information and written stories. But generating that content must now also contend with a media world that encompasses new platforms, styles, and an insatiable appetite for news. What

changes have these new delivery platforms wrought?

The Division offers cash awards for top papers, and accepted papers are automatically submitted to the Division's journal, *Electronic News*, for consideration for publication. You may certainly opt out of that automatic submission by simply emailing me of your desire to do so.

Be sure to volunteer to review our paper submissions by emailing me. If you have questions, feel free to call or email me: Dale Edwards, University of Northern Colorado, (970) 351-2471. Email: dale.edwards@unco.edu.

## *Is there anybody out there?*

By Michael Huntsberger, membership coordinator  
mhuntsb@linfield.edu

Yes, it's a great song by Pink Floyd. But it's also a call from the Electronic News division to members past and present who have let their division membership lapse. It's not an exaggeration to say that emails have gone our worldwide to everyone I believe has left the division in the last two years, and the message is simple: I'd love to have you back in the fold.

Of course, I know that people disconnect from the division for all sorts of reasons. Some have moved on to other interests. Some have left the profession entirely. But the most common reasons are that people simply neglected to renew their AEJMC membership, or they forgot to add their division membership when they did renew. Communications get lost in the mail, people move to other institutions, and invoices get buried under endless stacks of papers to be

graded. In any case, I'm hoping that we'll be able to reconnect with colleagues who we have missed in recent months.

And here's a reminder: Membership invoices for the coming year went out in the mail this month. If you haven't received one already, you should look for it very shortly. If you don't see one by the end of the month, contact the national office to see if something's amiss with your membership. (I've had to do this each time I've moved to a new position.) And when you do renew your membership, be sure to check line "K" on the membership form under Divisions and Interest Groups, and add \$32.00 for your membership in the Electronic News Division.

At this time, we're also looking to connect with graduate students to let them know about all of the activities and benefits that

come with division membership. In addition to the subscription to our journal, *Electronic News*, students have the opportunity to forge connections with peers, mentors, and future colleagues through division meetings, presentations, and social activities. Those connections provide the basis for the research activities and scholarly collaborations that contribute to a successful career in journalism and mass communication education.

In the coming weeks, communications will go out to graduate students throughout AEJMC, inviting them to join the Electronic News Division. At the same time, I hope that our members who are currently working with graduate students will help them to learn about the association and division, and urge them to join with us. Membership is one of the best investments students can make in their professional future.

---

**DON'T FORGET TO MAKE YOUR RESERVATION FOR THE 2012 AEJMC CONVENTION IN THE WINDY CITY OF CHICAGO!**  
Chicago Marriott Downtown

**It's AEJMC's 100 Year Birthday Bash...August 9-12**

We HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE

## ***WHY WE FIGHT: Journalism & Our Responsibility to Students***

Laura K. Smith, Ph.D.

Chair, Professional Freedom & Responsibility, END

More and more, I find myself defending the importance of what I teach. Interestingly enough, the harshest critics of journalism are sometimes my own students. Many of them are losing steam for the job. They read and watch very little mainstream news themselves. They wonder whether there's a future for them in a business that their friends and family find "boring." Even *they* find it boring – old-school; out of touch with the times. And they wonder *why* they're learning these skills if they may not get a chance to use them out there in the real world. The job market is incredibly tight. According to Becker's most recent survey of Journalism & Mass Communication graduates, only 58% had a job offer within a year of graduation. Six in ten. Now that leaves a lot to be desired. But it's an improvement over the previous year.

I say: Keep fighting. Keep working. Keep with it! Whether you end up in journalism or not, you will have a really well-trained brain. You'll be able to come up with ideas. You'll be a critical thinker. No matter where you end up, your employers will be happy to have you because you can write! You can sift fact from opinion. You know the importance of double-checking your work. You know how to produce multi-media digital content. And you know how to present yourself in a professional way.

I remember hearing that very same advice from my professors (minus the multi-media content part) when I was an undergrad. That was a very, very long time ago. But you know the saying, "what's old will be new again." It seems I'm giving the same advice to my students. Trust me, you'll be employable. The jobs just might look a little different. In fact, we haven't even

invented a job for some of you! Be patient. The jobs will come. Keep working!

Critics argue we do our students a disservice by training them to be journalists. Journalism, they say, is a dying profession. They say we lack responsibility when we advise our students to stick with it. I don't think that's true. Research suggests that the state of the American news media is improving. Yes, fewer people are listening to, watching and reading news in traditional media and ad revenues are down. But according to Pew's Annual Report on American Journalism ("The State of the News Media," 2011), news and information models are simply shifting and changing. In 2010, "some of the biggest new media institutions began to develop original newsgathering in a significant way" (p. 4). And local news – especially online local news – remains a significantly "untapped territory."

To be sure, traditional organizations are shedding many jobs. But new venues are being created every day: news aggregators, tablet-only news publications, online niche magazines, and specialty news channels. All are potential pipelines for our students. Just recently, a hospital chain where I live in Austin, Texas premiered an online niche radio station. Launched in conjunction with National Heart Month, the station delivers health news and gives local doctors a venue to share what they know. Sure, it's PR, but it's also useful news and information. Americans have significant health concerns that need addressing. The "voice" of the station ([www.seton.fm](http://www.seton.fm)) is a former broadcaster. He worked in radio and TV for four decades before he wound up working for Seton Healthcare. He's an old pro. And now he's streaming, and podcasting.

*Continued from page 5*

These are jobs our students will begin doing in the near future. Some will work in news; Some Public Affairs or Integrated Marketing. But it has always been thus. No matter what they do, they'll be communicating. True, benefits and pay are better in other fields – like Engineering and Mathematics. It's hard to ignore all the news about STEM fields. While they may only pull in \$30K a year, our students will get to write, think, and communicate their ideas. For many of my students... that what they came to college to learn in the first place.

It's strange. It used to be that people criticized journalism programs for being "tool schools," places where students only learned to push buttons, not think. Now, Journalism educators are fighting the good fight to protect our roll on campus – to maintain our expertise in digital media and maintain a conversation about communication and social responsibility. We're here to produce thoughtful, well-rounded citizens. We shouldn't apologize for our liberal arts roots and what we bring to the University. We should fight to protect it. And we should get our students to start reading a little more "old school journalism." They'll thank us for it later. Being well-informed and thoughtful will certainly help them land a job. About that, I am sure.

If this sort of conversation interests you and you're coming to AEJMC, be sure to stay through Sunday afternoon! We have a great panel scheduled for Sunday, August 12<sup>th</sup> from 11:45am-1:15pm. Called *Innovation or Annihilation: The Future of Journalism Curriculum in America (The Conversation Continues)*, the session address the concerns that parents, students, and administrators have about shifting job prospects for Journalism & Communication grads and what programs are doing to facilitate hiring. The session is Co-Sponsored by Electronic News & Internships & Careers Interest Group.

Panelists include:

- Don Heider, Dean, School of Communication (Loyola/Chicago)
- Barbara B. Hines, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, MCMS (Howard)
- Lovette Chinwah-Adegbola, Interim Dean, College of Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences (Central State)
- Ava Greenwell, Ava Thompson Greenwell, Associate Professor, Medill School of Journalism
- Sonya Duhe', Director and Professor, School of Mass Communication (Loyola/New Orleans)



## ***Disaster Media Training***

By: Victoria LaPoe, Graduate Student Representative

This month, will mark the two year anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Nearly two years ago, oil flowed in the Gulf, while experts tried to figure out how to cap one of the worst maritime disasters in U.S. history. While the one-year anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon came and went, coverage the “year later” coverage was not as extensive as when this story first broke. When talking to scientists and journalists, both groups said they recognized that the recovery of the Gulf is a story.

This disaster was a particular visual story with oil compared to the blood of the Gulf. Networks lead with the Deepwater Horizon disaster when it was visual. And, when it *wasn't* visual, the story no longer was a television "top story. However, since this disaster was not as environmentally damaging as originally first thought, this story appears to have been bumped by more topical stories.

As Gulf scientists have noted what the media labeled as the “Deepwater Horizon spill” wasn't a spill at all, but an oil gusher. The difference: one is in water and the other off shore and deep below the surface. This gusher couldn't truly be compared to Exxon Valdez because that oil spill happened off shore.

My dissertation chair, Dr. Andrea Miller and I, conducted a content analysis on sources and visuals for the first and sixth week of the Deepwater Horizon gusher. We found what the scientists mentioned when it came to sourcing and visuals: local news outlets stressed recovery and containment while national networks highlighted the size of the disaster. Overall sources were also primarily white males. As with Katrina, news outlets did not interview a diverse group within a regional area that is very diverse.

Scientists interviewed seemed to understand the media more than journalists understood science. Scientists touted local journalists as they were the ones who they said truly understood the area that they were covering – they were working to inform the community versus stressing the continued damage. While the national outlets had more resources and were respected, they did not appear to have the same agenda as the local media.

Last year, I have interviewed some of the most top cited scientists in the media as well as Gulf journalists. Speaking with scientists and journalists this summer, there are still questions left unanswered about the Deepwater Horizon disaster – questions that go beyond the one story that still appears from time to time: is the seafood safe? (On this note: scientists told me that if there was even a question that seafood was contaminated during the Deepwater Horizon that it was destroyed.) Questions like how many birds were truly oiled? How will the life cycle of animals be impacted? Will Louisiana's state bird - the brown pelican - still be reproducing at the rate before this disaster? Were scientists able to get funding to gauge this type of research?

While interviewing scientists, I learned not all scientists were able to get samples of the dispersant, Corexit, or BP Oil from the Horizon for research testing. Oil has a specific type of molecular make-up and it benefits scientists to have oil and what functions like detergent, the specific dispersant used to clean up the oil. While one scientist said it was easy to receive Corexit and BP oil, another said she gave up because of the turnover governing the documents needed to receive these materials; her paperwork she said ended up in e-mail junk mail. This raised the question: did the ideology of scientists matter when trying to gather materials?

Scientists received media training to communicate effectively within the media so what should journalists *and those of us teaching visual courses like broadcasting* remember when another crisis like the Deepwater Horizon happens:

1. *Keep asking questions.* There are still stories out there on the Deepwater Horizon gusher. Questions such as how was the crab industry affected? Not a lot of research has been released on this animal. Scientists were not always able to examine the life cycles that they needed to evaluate during the Gulf so this also affects the outcome of research.
2. *Do your Science Homework.* As journalists in Gulf newsrooms noted during the spill, understanding the *science* of the Deepwater Horizon story is like covering a lot of stories – you have to do your homework. As a former television news producer, who has only been out of station for two years, I can tell you that you just have to keep reading until you understand the key scientific language used when discussing this gusher. The problem: when you are going from one story to another in the newsroom, you don't always have time like you do as a Ph.D. student to research a topic. There aren't as many specialized reporters any more in newspaper or television. You have to take it upon yourself to read and compare sources.
3. *Curiosity is the key.* Become curious and question. Science is a long process. Both scientists and journalists said that the research process was important when understanding this disaster. In the land of research, there is a review process. Scientists look at past research, it is then peer reviewed and then (if acceptable) published. When you speak to scientists during a disaster like the Deepwater Horizon a lot of the findings are preliminary. As journalists, it is important to not take one piece of preliminary research as an end – the final

put the nail in it - conclusion. It is important to go back and check with your sources and see what stages the research project is at right now.

4. *A Ph.D. is not good enough to be a source.* Know your sources. Scientists noted that journalists a) didn't always do their homework before interviews so they weren't even sure of some of the questions they needed to ask or people they needed to speak to and b) some journalists were just looking for a Ph.D. Ph.D.s are different from each department. If I was in a newsroom today, I would make a list of experts and each expert's specialty. For example, for our research we talked to bird experts, dispersant experts, crab experts, food and safety experts as well as an overall coastal expert. While these folks might be in the same departments or right across the parking lot from each other, scientists have specific expertise. A Ph.D. in English will not be able to speak with authority about coastal disaster like a dispersant expert.
5. *Instant visuals do not always mean a better story.* In television, visuals are important. I worked with a reporter who was adamant that he did not want a newspaper story to cover for top TV story. With a maritime disaster, there are not always a rock star visual moment. Research will tell you that the video always wins over audio. (This is one reason why in the newsroom television journalists are told to write to their video.) When the Deepwater disaster first occurred, television networks relied heavily on graphics. When this happens as a reporter, you have to get creative. Walk and talk – explain what we can't see demonstratively. Have a MSNBC Tim Russert's "white-board election - breaking down numbers moment" and detail step-by-step what is going on. Just because you can't go see the control burn of the oil, doesn't mean you shouldn't cover it.



Continued from page 8

6. *Don't talk over me: I'm the expert!* Scientists told us that sometimes they were on panels with experts that were not as well-versed in the topic as them, but the other source we speak over the top of them. As a journalist, you have to manage your coverage and pre-interview some of your panelists. If you have one person who is going to be dominant, but not as educational about a topic, you may not want to put that person on a panel with someone who is not as gregarious; it may be better to just conduct a one-on-one interview. With technology like Skype, where you can conduct instant interviews from almost anywhere, you can get great sources on topics. (From Oprah to the networks you see Skype interviews appearing in news type stories.)
7. *Politeness.* A top scientist we spoke to said he was really impressed by a network anchor because he got back on the IFB and thanked him for his time. Connections with people and how you treat them matters! The old phrase - you get more flies with honey still is true!
8. *Knowing the story.* The same scientist impressed by the network anchor said that when one network was going full force on a story and they realized they were heading in the wrong direction, they changed gears. This also was very impressive to the scientist.
9. *Pronouncing science.* Scientists were very skeptical of even network anchors who pronounced scientific *incorrectly*. Don't guess or ask your peers in the newsroom – they probably don't know how to pronounce the word either if you don't. Ask the expert how to say it.
10. *Social Media: the last and probably most important topic.* Gulf reporters said that they were tweeting promotion while at Gulf press conferences as well as posting on Facebook. In a study I conducted a year after the

Deepwater Horizon disaster, tweets that appeared from the everyday person to the science expert mirrored many of the frames that the local and national stations put forward during the first few weeks of this disaster. What does this say? Your coverage may be more powerful than you realize as folks were retweeting the same themes as the media from a year before.

Where Social Media really seemed to work during this disaster was when it could provide *more*. *The Times-Picayune* in New Orleans had some wonderful graphics explaining the breadth and depth of this coverage online. You don't want to just regurgitate what folks have seen or the same stories they expect on a one year anniversary. With social media, give your viewers, users, and readers something more and something *specific* through social media.

Good news: In a time where overall jobs are dwindling and the economy is still struggling, television is needed on stories like the Deepwater Horizon. Local journalists are a HUGE asset. These journalists know the area and have contacts – they aren't mispronouncing towns and officials, etc. They have credibility. Local journalists are needed when big stories break in their backyard. During the Deepwater Horizon disaster, scientists recognize and trusted the local journalists because they knew their area. Trust is a key to covering science based stories. National networks have more resources and can fill holes in local newscasts, but the wrap-around packages from the networks cannot fill the specific stories that a lot of local audiences are accustomed to. Local Gulf Coast TV news producers were frustrated when they received wrap-around, all-inclusive, news package and their stations asked them to lead with the stories in the middle of the Gulf disaster; this general network package could not provide the local flavor that the producer felt the audience needed.

Continued on page 9

*Continued from page 9*

Resources were low in the some local stations during the gusher; while it may be convenient to lead with a national package, it caused frustration and some specific local topics not to be covered.

There is still time: The Gulf coast is still recovering. Money is being put into universities to conduct science related to this disaster. This story isn't over. Research the angle you are covering, find the experts, and don't give up on stories that continue to happen in the news – like Oil Spills. When reviewing coverage of oil spills over the past twenty years, there were very similar types of coverage. If viewers put these disaster up back-to-back you could almost produce the next Gulf story newscast in your living room from anywhere in the country. So when the next disaster happens break out of this mold and dig to get the exclusive story for your station that can change things – how officials look at the story and a how community affected is informed. Don't let the news viewer guess what you are going to cover and feel like television is in a cookie-cutter format from one disaster to another.



Victoria LaPoe is a Ph.D. Candidate and broadcasting instructor in the Manship School of Mass Communication/Public Affairs . She is program coordinator

for the Louisiana Scholastic Journalism Institute, managing editor of LSU's national Media and Ethnic Diversity forum, and a member of the Native American Journalists Association. She worked in television news for over ten years including in consultation and as a news producer. She recently won BEA's Vincent T. Wasilewski award. She along with her dissertation chair, LSU undergraduate Dean, Dr. Andrea Miller, and Dr. Miller's former graduate student, Shearon Roberts (current Ph.D. student at Tulane University), will have a book coming out next year on the Media Lessons of Two Gulf Disasters: Katrina and the Deepwater Horizon Disaster.



# Could texting be destroying ur grammatical skills?

To what extent are social media acronyms acceptable in other settings?

BY KRISTIAN SCHOLLER  
SPECIAL TO THE AMERICAN PRESS

QMCJ: Is it the end of proper, civilized communication as we know it?

While acronyms provide a faster way for SM (social media), they are expanding (EM) from modernized technology such as FB (facebook), EM (email) and texting TXT (text) to more formal means of communicating.

Are such informal acronyms acceptable in formal and oral mediums?

People are expected to understand social media acronyms, such as LOL (laugh out loud), BRB (be right back), TTYL (talk to you later), and the like to communicate advantageously. LSU communication experts agree.

"People expect more (and faster)," said Victoria LaPoe, broadcast instructor at LSU. However, she believes there is a place for such acronyms and a place for them to be shelved.

The use of social media acronyms is a function of the Web, LaPoe notes, meaning they are accepted more as written than oral tools.

Acronyms are not as powerful when spoken as they are in writing, says Nathan Crick, communication studies instructor at LSU. They have "limited sphere acceptance," he said.

"Communicating with friends via social acronyms on Facebook, email or texting should not be the same as communicating your thoughts and ideas via more formal writing situations," said

**"Sometimes the quick and easy way of doing things is not always the best way."**

**Joel Burcher**  
LSU communications teacher

Joel Burcher, another LSU communications studies teacher,

Crick believes formalizing social media acronyms restricts and ruins their function, adding that social media acronyms are "meant to be fun."

Social media sites, such as Twitter, commonly promote short, fast communication. Twitter allows only 140 characters per tweet.

Social media acronyms also are meant for "a quick message," LaPoe added.

Unlike formal grammar, the informal use of acronyms is an "initial, emotional response" that has not been analyzed, Crick said.

"Sometimes the quick and easy way of doing things is not always the best way," Burcher warned.

Burcher says the difference between spelling out words and using acronyms is like having "a desk that has been hand-carved by a wood craftsman as opposed to one that comes pre-made on the assembly line."

When texting and using other social media, people are skipping revision steps, punctuation rules and other grammatical guidelines expected in formal writing. And that can cause confusion.

"I have had several students use these acronyms in their papers for my class," Burcher said. "I now have it written in my guidelines that I will deduct points if social acronyms are used in place of actual words."

It has become so natural, LaPoe said, that people don't realize they are using them.

Crick holds that acronyms are not appropriate in formal mediums, such as school papers, unless to signal other medium. Even though social media acronyms are becoming more "standardized," formal mediums are not their "home," he says.

What prompts people to use social media acronyms?

"I used to think that business was a cause, but now I believe it is a result of a completely different social mindset," Burcher said.

"Compression itself has a specific function," Crick added.

People do not use social acronyms to replace other words, he said, but rather to create identification and discreate differences.

Furthermore, humans today like things done quickly, Burcher said. "The less time we have to spend on any one

task, the better."

Incorporating social media acronyms in everyday life has its advantages and disadvantages.

"These acronyms certainly save time, but I am concerned we will eventually lose our ability to think in any other way — thus diminishing our intelligence as a society," Burcher said. "We will lose our ability to spell words and express ourselves and our ideas fully."

Spelling is important for credibility, LaPoe said. "Sometimes it's good to just stop and think about things."

However, the where and