

spig news

Newsletter of AEJMC's Small Programs Interest Group

Fall 2010

SPIG plans an online journal Vivian Martin and Mitzi Lewis will build prototype

By Vivian B. Martin

THE Small Programs Interest Group is embarking on its most ambitious project to date: an online journal focused on teaching journalism and mass communication.

The committee I am co-chairing with Mitzi Lewis (Midwestern State University) has already started putting in place various elements

Head notes

Kindrid spirits

By Ginger Carter Miller

The task of writing my first column as head of the Small Programs Interest Group has proved a lot more challenging than I expected. To be sure, I've been involved in SPIG since the late 1990s, and I've worked on many committees and many projects on behalf of our fair group. During that time, I've also been head of the Mass Comm & Society Division and the Entertainment Studies Interest

See **MILLER**, page 5

Inside this issue

David Weinstock, page 3

Journal survey, page 9

Teach blogging, page 11

of the prototype SPIG members authorized during our group's business meeting in Denver.

The new venture started as

a casual suggestion during one of those lively conversations for which our listserv has become known. The suggestion, a half-formed idea about perhaps having a wiki, blog or other venue to further develop ideas on the listserv, drew supporters, and within days I was chairing an ad hoc committee of SPIG members

See **JOURNAL**, page 4

College media need passion, easing of debt

By Kay Colley

Teacher of the Year Brian Steffen sees two major problems with journalism education today that are negatively impacting college media: the students' lack of passion and overwhelming debt burden.

That was the assessment he gave of current college media trends at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication convention in Denver during his speech "Assessing the State of College Media Today."

See **PASSION**, page 2



Honor for Steffen

Professor Brian Steffen of Simpson College in Iowa shows the "Teacher of the Year" plaque presented to him at the SPIG luncheon in Denver. See story, page 10.

PASSION, from page 1

Steffen, professor and chair of Media and Communication Studies at Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa, came to Simpson in 1989 with a love of journalism. Now, he sees communication majors who aren't really interested in doing journalism.

"I think that has a big impact on college media and college journalism," he said. "I think an even more fundamental problem is a lack of 'fire in the belly' for getting and reporting news."

Steffen sees this as a multi-level problem — industry decline and macro-level issues.

"The quality of high school journalism is not what it once was," he said.

Steffen bases his assessment on purely anecdotal evidence, but he reminisced about how his high school journalism teacher, whom he met at 16, pointed him in the right direction and acted as a good role model.

"This is something I've felt passionate about for a very long time," he said. "Today, I don't see that passion."

Steffen said that with high schools strapped for cash and high school teachers overwhelmed, the pipeline for future journalists is constricted at the source.

He sees a solution that harkens back to the early days of higher education, when colleges and universities worked with primary and secondary schools in the business of education.

"What is your relationship with teachers at local high schools?" Steffen asked. "How can you reach out to other organizations (such as)

teacher associations and student media at high schools?"

Steffen said that these relationships and other outreach efforts to schools and professional journalism organizations will be key to feeding the pipeline for college media.

The second major problem impacting journalism education is a staggering student debt load, said Steffen. "People don't see things the same in who should pay for this public good [a higher education]."

In Iowa, he said, students leave with a four-year degree and \$29,000

"I think an even more fundamental problem is a lack of 'fire in the belly' for getting and reporting news."

-- Brian Steffen, Simpson

of debt per capita.

"This isn't a problem at all institutions," he said.

In 2008, 67 percent of students graduating from four-year colleges and universities had student loan debt, according to the Project on Student Debt. That is an increase from the 27 percent of students who graduated from four-year colleges and universities with student debt in 2004. The average debt level for 2008 was \$23,200.

The "Issues Facing Campus Media" session, co-sponsored by the AEJMC Council of Affiliates and College Media Advisers, also included research presentations from Yanick Rice Lamb, Ingrid Sturgis and David Wendelken.

Lamb, an associate professor of print and online journalism, and Sturgis, an assistant professor of new media, both from Howard University's John H. Johnson School of Communications, reviewed online campus newspapers in their paper, "Rising to the Top: Determinants of Success among Online Campus Newspapers." The paper used the top 10 daily rankings of the College Publisher Network to determine online practices used by college media to see if the use of online tools and techniques mirror professional industry standards.

According to the study, college media lag behind professional news organizations in their use of online tools and techniques.

"Student journalists must also enhance their websites to match the following of the printed version among students as well as alumni," Lamb and Sturgis said in their paper. "There was too much

shovelware," Lamb said during the presentation.

Lamb said the lessons learned from the study were to:

- Take better advantage of technology, particularly social media
- Improve the quality of video and audio on website
- End shovelware
- Focus on a good story

"We need to remind the students to not let the bells and whistles of technology get in the way of the story," she said.

Wendelken, an associate professor at James Madison University, presented his research, titled "What

See **PASSION**, page 8

SPIG profile

David Weinstock raised dairy goats, won 4-H award

What is your current primary job title and employer. What subjects to do you teach?

My employer is University of Texas at Tyler; I am an assistant professor (tenure stream) in the Communications Department in the Journalism program. There are two tenure/tenure stream faculty in the program (counting me) and two full-time lecturers, one of whom was named student newspaper Adviser of the Year two years ago by the Texas Interscholastic Press Association. The Associated Press Managing Editors (APME) named the student newspaper "Campus Newspaper of the Year (non-dailies)" in 2008 and 2009.

Tell me an interesting fact about you.

I grew up on a dairy goat farm in southeastern Pennsylvania near Valley Forge. I lived in a house that was built in 1743. Our barn was used to house severely wounded Continental Army soldiers too ill to winter in Valley Forge with the rest of Gen. George Washington's troops.

I was an active 4-H member, showing dairy goats (Toggenbergs) and dairy cattle (Jerseys). In 1971, I won the Pennsylvania state 4-H Forestry project award. These activities eventually lead me to a career first in agricultural legislative PR and later in agricultural journalism.

What was your first job?

When I was 14 years old, I worked as a maintenance crew laborer and then as a member of the kitchen crew at a Jewish girls camp in southeastern Pennsylvania. I worked for the camp for two years before my 4-H activities took over my summers. The money I earned in this first job seeded the savings account that would become my college fund.

Tell me about your education.

"While New Hampshire's license plates feature the 'Live Free or Die' slogan, Texans live their lives like that."

I graduated from Phoenixville Area High School, Phoenixville, PA, in 1971. I earned a B.A. in advertising from Penn State University in 1978 and a Ph.D. from Michigan State University's Mass Media Ph.D. program in 2001, in an interdisciplinary program in journalism and telecommunication.

What was your dissertation topic and what is your current research focus?

My dissertation evaluated four online news site interfaces using various forms of news delivery (text only, text with photos, text with video and text with photos, video and audio). Using news recall, the project determined the more channels used to deliver (non-redundant) news messages delivered higher recall than those

with fewer channels. My current research focus deal with examining how much news recall is possible when young adult news readers engage in media multitasking.

What do you like about your job and your workplace?

Texas is a very nice place to live. Lately, it occurs to me that while New Hampshire's license plates feature the "Live Free or Die" slogan, Texans live their lives like that. UT-Tyler is a university loaded with dedicated teachers who are equally dedicated to research. It has a relatively small student body (6,800) but the students come very well prepared, intellectually, to study in a very rigorous communication/

journalism program. My colleagues are exceptionally nice. The department is small (eight, plus a department administrative assistant).

Tell me something about your personal life.

I am the eldest of 10 siblings. My youngest brother, Jeremiah, who is 20 years younger than me, began a tenure-stream job at St. Louis University on its psychology faculty. Both my sons are in the film industry. My eldest (27) recently used his connections in the industry to land his younger brother a summer job as a production assistant on a film being shot in the Detroit, MI, area that stars Demi Moore and Miley Cyrus.

See **PROFILE**, page 8

JOURNAL, from page 1 who worked quickly during the months before the summer convention to see what might be feasible.

With lots of input from the committee members, Lewis developed an instrument for SurveyMonkey, which let the committee know there was interest in pursuing the idea.

In addition to Lewis and me, the committee included: Margo Wilson (California University of Pennsylvania); John Zibluk (Arkansas State University); Carol Dykers (Salem College); Kim Pearson (The College of New Jersey); Elizabeth Birge (William Patterson University); Lorna Cobb (Winston-Salem State University); with the SPIG Executive Board, particularly then-Senior Vice Head Ginger Carter Miller (Georgia College & State University) and Vice Head Susan Lewis (Abilene Christian University) in the loop.

During the SPIG business meeting, the committee shared the survey results and ideas about possible formats for the journal. The members unanimously endorsed the idea for a prototype of an online journal. SPIG will decide whether to commit to regular publication at the annual meeting in St. Louis. The journal is not intended to replace the SPIG Newsletter, which reports on SPIG-specific activities and concerns.

Looking out into the interested and encouraging faces of members

at our meeting in Denver, it was clear that the proposal resonates with members on many levels. Several noted that SPIG could really make the niche its own, as there isn't much competition in this area. While *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* does address pedagogical issues, it is restricted in terms of publication frequency and content. Standing before the meeting in my role as Head it was exciting to see

We've interpreted our charge as putting together a project that is ready to launch, complete with recommendations for editorial policies and publishing platform, in a year.

To get there and figure out how to make the most of the medium, we're putting pieces of the journal through experiments as we go along, eventually integrating what works. Some of the projects under development or being discussed include:

A blog, a private wiki and a crowdsourced peer review are among the featured being considered

-- **A BLOG** with a core group of contributors blogging on teaching and related issues this fall as a way to see what kind of ideas we might take forward. John Zibluk and Margo Wilson are developing the blog. We'll put out a call for regular bloggers soon.

-- **A PRIVATE WIKI** as a way for the committee to create threads around the various parts of the project. Mitzi Lewis has set up the wiki, which has pages for topics such as editorial policies, platform investigations, crowdsourcing, ideas for articles, and a page for links to exemplars we are studying. Importantly, we're testing our use of the wiki and get a feel for its use in bigger projects for the journal. It will also help us explore how we might integrate syllabi and other resources. During the SPIG business meeting Kim Pearson urged us to create private space where our members can brainstorm and post partially developed ideas that don't have to be polished or "right." We plan to

So the work begins.

Just as I was thinking I'd slack off a bit after finishing up my term as Head, incoming Head Ginger Carter Miller asked me to team up with Mitzi Lewis to co-chair the creation of the prototype. Members at the SPIG business meeting approved the committee and the co-chairs. It's great to be working with Lewis, whose technical acumen and support was crucial to our moving forward during the summer, the SPIG executive board, and all of you we hope will get involved with this project.

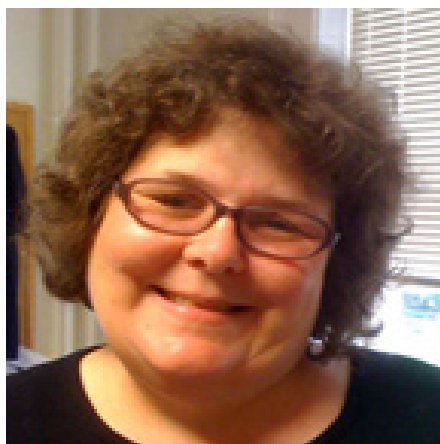
See **JOURNAL**, page 5

MILLER, from page 1

Group during my membership of AEJMC. I've done this before.

But for me, being head of SPIG is my most important endeavor in my AEJMC membership career. Being in the leadership team of SPIG has been my dream for many years. The reason is simple: For most of my 22-year academic career (which includes AEJMC membership since 1992), I have taught, advised, grown and thrived in a small program department. I have encountered the agony of chairing the tenure and promotion committee in an English department that didn't quite "get" what we did in Journalism; I've endured the "amicable divorce" from that department as we became a freestanding program and then, a department. And I've enjoyed the success my colleagues and I have had on our own. I gained tenure and promotion all the way to full professor in this environment. This is where I plan to retire.

In short, I get what we do in SPIG because for 15 years, I have



DR. MILLER

lived what we do in SPIG. You, our devoted members, who continue to carry the heavy teaching and advising loads of smaller colleges and universities, making do with fewer funds, more limited faculty development opportunities, and, frequently, far too many students for the faculty we've employed – you get it, too.

We're all kindred spirits here in SPIG. That is one of the keys to our success. I felt that more than ever at our business meeting in Denver when our past

head, the magnificent Dr. Vivian Martin of Central Connecticut State, introduced the things we accomplished over the past year. And I felt your enthusiasm as I outlined my hopes and priorities – dare I say goals? – for this year.

So first things first: Thank you, Vivian Martin, for all you did and continue to do for us in SPIG. You have given me tough shoes to fill.

So where are we headed? To St. Louis, for starters. Next summer our 99th national convention will be held in there, and our vice heads, Susan Lewis of Abilene Christian, and Dave Weinstock of University of Texas at Tyler, are busily working to put together our programming contribution for next year. Having done that job last year with Susan and Vivian, I know it's a tough job. My goal this year is to create new, innovative sessions that involve new alliances for SPIG. I'd like to see us collaborate with larger divisions, in addition to our dear friends we work with every year. The deadline for submitting proposals is nearing,

See **MILLER** page 6

JOURNAL, from page 4

integrate this suggestion in some way, whether through the wiki or an e-mail group.

-- **A CROWDSOURCED PEER REVIEW** of an article, possibly in the spring, as a way to see what it might bring to our journal. We hope to get the research co-chairs involved with a crowdsourced peer review or research project. Already we're having an interesting conversation -- "Anyone want to blow up Journalism 101?" -- as we explore research projects or articles that SPIG members as the "crowd" might help develop.

The undertaking has many pieces and is a great professional development and scholarly opportunity for members to join. The Scholarship of Learning and Teaching is quite undeveloped in our field. Maybe it will take a group like SPIG, whose members necessarily spend a lot of time thinking about teaching, to build a venue for ongoing discussion, research and writing about teaching journalism and mass communication.

Ginger Carter Miller, our new Head, has taken to describing us as the "Think Big" group. The

current project is definitely big; the successful online journal will need a lot of organization, commitment, and spirit from SPIG members. If you see an area where you might participate or are looking for suggestions of what you might do, get in touch with Mitzi Lewis (mary.lewis@mwsu.edu) and Vivian Martin (martinv@ccsu.edu).

Dr. Martin is an associate professor of English and coordinator of the Journalism Program at Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, CT.

MILLER, from page 5

and any SPIG member can suggest a panel topic for the conference. If you have ideas, please contact Dave or Susan, whose e-mail addresses are on the SPIG web site (<http://finearts.mwsu.edu/masscomm/spig/>).

Perhaps SPIG's biggest endeavor this year is the beginning of our online journal with a companion blog and wiki. This project, headed by Vivian and (the newly minted Dr.) Mitzi Lewis of Midwestern State University, is making giant strides daily. I am afraid I'll leave people out if I begin to mention names, but I'm certain elsewhere in this newsletter there's an article that mentions key players. The purpose, though, is clear: We want a place to discuss, expound and dissect the pedagogical issues that we find essential to our daily professoriate. Yes, there are major journals available to us, but given our time constraints and sometimes specialized classroom involvement, we have a need of "a place of our own."

We who discussed the journal/blog/wiki this summer also agree that this publication could be a major boost for SPIG membership. We in SPIG know how great our group is. We have experienced it on the listserv when we've had a teaching need, a question, a pet peeve, a vent. But outside our group, are we well known?

We found out in our five-year

review with Kim Bissell and the Council of Divisions Officers that we are indeed on the radar of the AEJMC leadership. Our efforts in programming – especially our Hot Topics Panel – are seen as innovative. Our teaching panels fill a niche that is so often missed at the meeting. We are, after all, PROFESSORS. We all need teaching tips, no matter where we happen to be professing. And we need

“We want a place to discuss, expound and dissect the pedagogical issues that we find essential to our daily professoriate.”

the opportunity to show our scholarship of application, because often, that is the mode of research. I know the alliance with CCJA and Scholastic on GIFT has been remarkable for SPIG. I've learned so much from the 11 years of that wonderful mini-plenary session.

And the things COD wants us to do are already on SPIG's agenda. The journal, most certainly, will be an important addition. It will help us to continue to grow and become more recognized as more than "small."

Those at the business meeting and on the listserv recently know that I have been calling us the "Small Programs Big Ideas Interest

Group." This coincides with a second project we're involved in right now, a membership campaign.

As a professor of public relations, I've felt for several years that we in SPIG needed to take a step back and commission an outside membership campaign, perhaps from a member university. I am thrilled that we now have that membership examination going on, thanks to two teams from my own PR campaigns class. While it's KILLING me not to look at any of their data (and I promise, I haven't) I hope these students will give us some insight into what SPIG needs. And I'm thrilled that so many members of SPIG, both long time and new, are on the focus group committee to help guide this project.

We'll have an entire complement of ideas, logos, and suggestions to sort through come the end of the semester, and I hope this will allow us to really make a splash in St. Louis. A splash, frankly, that is long overdue.

It's going to be a great year, thanks to you. I thank you for this opportunity, and I look forward to working with you. Please email me at ginger.carter@gcsu.edu if there's something on your mind. Or drop a note on the listserv.

I'm listening.

Ginger Carter Miller, Ph.D.

Dr. Miller is a professor in the Department of Mass Communication at Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville, GA.

Panel sees an ‘ethics gap’ fostered by the Internet

By Carrie Buchanan

Has the Internet, with its new social networking tools, fostered a “generational ethics gap” between new and veteran journalists, or between journalism students and professors?

Are students who copy and paste things from the Internet into their stories and other assignments perfectly aware that this is plagiarism, or do they simply not care?

What about using someone’s Facebook photo in a news story without permission? Do young journalists understand the ethical issues involved?

A panel moderated by Margo Wilson of California University of Pennsylvania explored these and other questions arising from social networking and other “new realities” in journalism at AEJMC’s annual conference in Denver. The Small Programs Interest Group sponsored the Friday afternoon discussion.

Cecilia Friend of Utica College said the rush to publish engendered by online journalism has led to cases such as the out-of-context video released last summer of U.S. Department of Agriculture staffer Shirley Sherrod that led all-too-quickly to her resignation.

“He who has the most clicks when he dies, wins” is the ethos that rules that type of journalism, Friend said. “The pressure on reporters is fierce” to publish stories before they’re properly verified.

Others on the panel told of students learning through experience what is questionable and what is not, and that, as new media evolve so quickly, there are no guidelines in place. Chris

SPIG Q&A

Roberts of the University of Alabama told of a student working in the music industry in Nashville who was asked by his employer to go onto a blog and enter a comment saying he liked a particular new artist – one in which the employer had a financial interest.

“Did I do wrong?” the student asked Roberts after doing as he was asked, and later thinking he’d made a mistake. His question led to a fruitful class discussion, Roberts said. But in that discussion, one of the other

“Ethics needs to be taught from the beginning” in journalism.

-- Chris Roberts, Alabama

students suggested, “It’s okay, it’s just the Internet.”

This reflects a view held by many young people, said Roberts. They have been taught that the Internet isn’t always credible or reliable. Perhaps, they conclude, “it’s okay to deceive others on the Internet because others are going to deceive you.”

This is why “ethics needs to be taught from the beginning” in journalism, said Roberts, co-author, with Jay Black, of “Doing Ethics in Media,” which will be published in February 2011 from Routledge.

Lorna Cobb of Winston-Salem State University did a survey of black student journalists about conflict of interest situations they might find themselves in when covering

historically black sororities or fraternities. She said, for example, that she asked them how they as editor of a student publication would deal with a financial scandal involving a historically black Greek letter organization. While most students answering the survey said they would print the story, a handful said they would resign as editor because even making that decision would be a conflict for them personally.

“I have a lot of faith in the ethics of students,” said Jack Kennedy, president of the Journalism Education Association, who taught high school journalism for many years. “Truth is slippery and high-school students understand that.”

For example, the Shirley Sherrod case will be a “centerpiece for discussion” in classrooms around the nation, Kennedy predicted, because of the lessons it teaches about rushing to publish and quoting things out of context.

Donna Bertazzoni of Hood College brought up the case of a TV station trying to cover the accidental death of a politician’s son. The editors pulled a photo off the young man’s Facebook site that showed him holding a beer can. In a survey of professional and student journalists, Bertazzoni learned that young, inexperienced editors – who didn’t realize this would forever imprint in the minds of readers that this young man had a drinking problem – were responsible for running the photo. It raised a huge public uproar.

Younger journalists tend not to fear invasions of privacy like this arising

See **ETHICS GAP** page 13

PASSION, from page 2

Skills Do Media Professionals Expect from College Media Students.”

Wendelken said he undertook the research to help convince his own students of the importance of learning multimedia skills in addition to writing.

“I found that they are very reluctant to try things that are outside of their comfort zone,” he explained. “When I’m talking to people at professional media organizations, they’re saying we get plenty of people who have strong resumes as good writers, but that all other things being equal, somebody comes in who can do video or who knows search engine optimization and has some other new media skills that add value, that person is going to be picked over somebody who just has strong clips.”

Sturgis, assistant professor of new media at Howard University, discussed the results of a preliminary study regarding the use of College Publisher as a content management system for college media websites.

Randy E. Miller, discussant for the panel session, suggested that Sturgis complete her study by attending the

Steffen’s lessons learned

- The myth of the digital native -- The belief that today’s young people, because they’ve grown up with digital technologies, are necessarily expert at using these technologies creatively and effectively. Many of us regard that as a myth because, in fact, many students seem rather inept at using these technologies as anything other than playthings. We still need to teach them the skills of media literacy.
- Students must be kept on topic.
- They must do some reporting. They can’t simply repeat what another source as already reported. They must add to the conversation.
- Their resistance to Twitter must be broken down.
- Persuading them to continue using social media for professional purposes after the semester is over.

College Media Advisers convention.

Session attendees, including CMA president Sally Renaud and Student Press Law Center executive director Frank LoMonte, joined in the discussion, stressing the importance of continued research into college student media.

According to some of the attendees, student media work is perceived as “the minor leagues” by journalism

faculty and administrators.

Teacher of the year Steffen disagrees: “I’ve always thought it’s just about the most important work we can do,” he said.

Kay Colley is an assistant professor and director of student media in the Department of Communications at Texas Wesleyan University, Fort Worth, TX.

PROFILE, from page 3

What other significant achievements have you had?

I caught a 3.5-pound smallmouth bass on 4-pound test line and an ultra-light rod once. I also drove for five years without getting a single traffic citation. And I have raised a level 85 character on Everquest.

What are your personal or professional goals now?

To make tenure and to find the love of a good woman.

What leadership roles have

you had in the AEJMC and the Small Programs Interest Group?

Co-chaired SPIG’s PF&R group for two years with Mike Longinow.

What goal do you have for SPIG?

To make it more inclusive. I’d like for us to open our doors to advertising and photojournalism educators, especially now that we are teaching multimedia in our classrooms.

If you had to describe yourself, what words would you use?

Isn’t this publication G-rated?

spig news is edited and paginated using MS Word and InDesign CS3 by **Dr. Richard Hendrickson**, a Los Angeles-based associate professor for Cleveland’s John Carroll University. You may call him at 323-806-1427, or send e-mail to newsprof@mac.com.

33 answered SPIG's online journal survey

(See story, page 1)

Thirty-three people responded to the SPIG online journal survey, which amounts to about 1/3 of our membership. Here are the results:

1. 76% (or about 3 out of 4) respondents think that a SPIG online journal is extremely important or somewhat important. 15% are neutral and 9% feel that it is somewhat unimportant or not important.

2. 94% would like to see the journal fulfill a teaching orientation, two-thirds would like to see an academic/peer-reviewed purpose fulfilled, and slightly over one-quarter would like to see a social function fulfilled.

3. When asked to rank potential target audiences, SPIG members were ranked primary, other mass communication educators came in second, advisors third, and graduate students fourth. Other potential audiences mentioned in the comments section included university teachers at large, "deans and their ilk," industry professionals/working practitioners (3), J-educators in non-mass communication programs, other educators, undergraduates, tenure committees, and the public.

4. Just over two-thirds of respondents felt that the most useful platform for this project would be an online journal and the remaining one third was equally split between a blog and a wiki. One respondent commented that these options weren't necessarily mutually exclusive and another suggested that the form of the product was not as important as the means used to alert members or prospective readers about highlights of each new issue – some people may not actively go to a site to look for new information while they might respond to an email or other type of alert. Interactivity would be considered an advantage. Having something that everyone could edit was suggested with main editors to oversee the project. Another idea was starting smaller before creating a full online journal, perhaps with a "moderated" blog or partially moderated (peer-reviewed) blog so amount of interest and participation could be judged as well as developing a base of steady contributors. A concern was expressed that people would be too busy to keep contributing to a blog or wiki and one person wondered why this was needed in the first place.

5. The top editorial structure choice was different editors for different areas, appointed, receiving almost 1/3 of the responses. The rest of the responses were split almost equally at about 1/6: everyone can contribute-no moderation; different editors for different areas, elected, team editing responsibilities, elected, and team editing responsibilities, appointed.

6. About 4 out of 5 respondents felt access should be public and about 1 out of 5 Journal elements received the following responses, with the most popular responses listed first:

- a. Syllabi/teaching resource bank (97%)
- b. Teach practice reflection (91%)
- c. Academic research, related to mass communication pedagogy (82%)
- d. Useful links area (82%)
- e. Ongoing news/blog page (64%)
- f. Multimedia content (61%)
- g. Creative work area (39%)
- h. Academic research, related to mass communication (30%)

7. About 9 out of 10 people felt we should start out on our own with the potential to invite another group later and the remaining 1 out of 10 felt we should start out by partnering with a group. Suggestions for partnerships included community college, Community College Journalism Association, newspaper, internships, journalism advisors, JEA. One person suggested that a small group shouldn't have to bite off a big task and wondered if there was some type of AEJMC capability that the project could piggy-back on. Another suggested starting out by taking ownership and then seeing where it goes. Another noted the opportunity to solidify the SPIG brand with this effort and suggested opening up contributions to non-SPIG members – possibly building our membership and/or resulting in a name change of the group, such as Teaching Interest Group.

8. Most of the respondents (85%) have been teaching 11 years or more.

9. The largest teaching area is journalism (64%), followed by mass communication generalist (24%), PR/Advertising (6%), and other (6%). No one selected telecom. One person noted that he/she teaches journalism and PR, which was not a selection.

SPIG veteran accepts group's 2010 teaching award

By James Simon

Brian Steffen was quick to share credit with his many long-time colleagues in SPIG when he received the group's Teacher of the Year award at the AEJMC conference in Denver.

"This is an incredible honor. I am incredibly touched," Steffen said at an awards luncheon held Friday, Aug. 6, 2010. "When I was notified in May, I was half expecting the next call to say, 'Just a joke.'"

"This group has meant more to me over the years that you will ever know," he said. "I've learned a lot about teaching. I've learned a lot about mentoring and the value of what we do."

One judge noted that Steffen has been "a stalwart supporter of SPIG for years. He's a tremendous leader in the student media field, and he's a helpful and thoughtful colleague, which his nominators and the judges clearly recognized. This was much deserved."

A colleague at Simpson nominated Steffen, saying: "Brian's vision for a multi-platform media program at Simpson and his success in its implementation is the reason that I left a decade-long career as a television news anchor to teach at Simpson. Transitioning to any new career can be a bit bumpy and at times I have more questions than answers. Brian has helped me with patience and insight. He has challenged me with increasingly difficult assignments, inspiring me to work harder."

In his acceptance speech, Steffen thanked his long-time friends in SPIG, some of whom he has known for more than 13 years. He referred to some of his students as "some of the greatest kids in the world."

Steffen recalled that a day earlier, at the SPIG business meeting, one member came in from another division meeting and said, "I am so glad to be here." Steffen replied, "I couldn't agree more."

The Steffen File

- Journalism professor at Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa since 1989. Named department chair in 1999. Recipient, Simpson's Distinguished Teaching Award in 2002 and 2008 – both times winning in his first year of eligibility for the award.
- Guided a massive revision of Simpson departmental curriculum, leading to creation of Department of Communication & Media Studies in 2008.
- Served as chair of Small Programs Interest Group in 2001-2002. Also served as SPIG secretary-treasurer, research chair, membership chair, listserv administrator, and vice chair. Served as both the president and the executive director of the Iowa College Media Association and as a member on both the Student Press Law Center Advisory Council and the Associated Collegiate Press Advisory Council.
- Served as executive director of the Iowa College Media Association. Led efforts to establish greater ties between Iowa journalism educators and newspaper professionals through the creation of the Iowa Newspaper Foundation Student Journalism Committee.
- One-time desk editor for the Associated Press in Des Moines, the associate editor, Ames (Iowa) Daily Tribune and editor of the Adel (Iowa) Dallas County News.
- Ph.D., University of Iowa in Iowa City. M.S., B.S., Iowa State University in Ames.
- Research interests include defamation law in general and specifically as it pertains to private plaintiffs, including the free-speech and free-press rights of students.

Teaching students to become bloggers

By Mitzi Lewis

Old news is not the news – no rehashing allowed. This was a recurring theme of “The Invisible Line Between Blogging and Reporting” panel on Aug. 5 at the AEJMC 94th Annual Conference in Denver.

Brian Steffen of Simpson College, a self-declared “ink-in-the-veins kind of guy,” said a big part of teaching blogging and other social media tools is an existential shift for faculty. Learning to blog is a shift for many students, too. Even though they are digital natives, students don’t necessarily know how to use digital tools effectively.

Steffen has an answer. Starting from day one, his students participate in a class blog and Twitter. He gives students guides to help get them started and he requires them to follow news blogs. They gain experience in blogging and using the technology. Students also learn the rhetoric and culture of blogging, and the nature of the news business.

Vivian Martin of Central Connecticut State said blogging is a good way to introduce students to online work. Students write, do research on the Web and provide links for their readers.

“You have to work it to get it,” said Martin. This applies to professors and students. She relies on creating an atmosphere of play and experimentation and then watches the students “take off.”

SPIG PANEL

Martin said she tells students “the people who are pioneers didn’t have a book – you have to take responsibility for your own learning.” Panelists and participants nodded in agreement.

John Capouya of The University of Tampa shared insights on using blogs to promote books. “You have to brand your book,” he said. An editor told him to be shameless about it. Capouya said other methods of promoting books have failed. Blogging about a passionate

“The people who are pioneers didn’t have a book -- you have to take responsibility for your own learning.”

-- Vivian Martin, Central Connecticut

interest is what can get a writer noticed and build readership. “This is the way to do it,” he said. “In fact, it’s not even an option anymore.”

Blogging about nonfiction seems to be easier than doing so for fiction. Two successful examples are “Savvy Auntie” and “The Pioneer Woman Cooks.” A thriving blog can lead to publishing a book: “Waiter Rant: Thanks for the Tip--Confessions of a Cynical Waiter,” “Julie and Julia: My Year of Cooking Dangerously,” and “Sh*t My Dad Says” all started as blogs.

Toni Albertson of Mt. San Antonio

College spoke about working with 25 to 30 student bloggers as a student newspaper advisor. She said she tells students “everyone has a passion about something.” Albertson helps them find it.

Student bloggers must sign a contract and attend a blogging session to get started. They update five times a week, meet weekly, and can receive three units of credit for their efforts.

A student public relations team helps brainstorm ways to promote the blogs on campus. As a result, Albertson says the blogs have

become very popular on campus.

In a question and answer session, the panelists were asked if any of them had experienced problems with getting students to go public with their writing. “Yes, this is live without a net,” said Steffen, explaining

that students are concerned about their privacy.

Martin said it had been suggested that she was violating the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) by requiring students to blog publicly. She quickly refuted the allegation by explaining the blogs are not graded publicly and blogging skills are essential for mass communication professionals.

Dr. Lewis is an assistant professor of Mass Communication at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, TX.

Vivian's 'farewell' message (But she isn't going away)

Dear Members:

Serving as SPIG Head for the past year has caused me to appreciate the group's special identity even more. On the surface the many different types of schools where we teach— liberal arts colleges, schools with religious missions, unionized or nonunionized public universities— might make some wonder what we have in common. But as we have come to understand, our respective institutions focus on teaching and the relatively small size of our programs give us a foundation on which to build support and activities we can't find anywhere else at AEJMC.

The good news we bring from the conference in Denver is that the higher-ups in AEJMC have come to understand that, too. Moreover, as they told us during an assessment interview held prior to the start of the conference, SPIG may be underselling itself. After reading our annual reports, newsletters, and other materials, Kim Bissell, outgoing chair of the Council of Divisions, said she was "blown away" by what we have accomplished alongside our teaching loads and other commitments. She and the other interviewers said our heavy teaching loads and service gives us the kind of expertise that graduate students and many others within SPIG would/should seek out if they knew about it.

Finishing my year as SPIG Head, I found the assessment especially reaffirming and sweet. Along with me at the assessment were incoming Head Ginger Carter Miller and Senior Vice Head Susan Lewis, and for further reinforcement, John Jenks and Margo Wilson, two former SPIG Heads. Most groups send just one person to these meetings; we joked about our group of five as a posse. But in many ways the presence of five of us further conveyed the mentoring and continuity that has made SPIG strong.

It was an amazing convention. We had seven panels, including the Hot Topics panel on covering the BP disaster, which drew an audience of nearly 70 people despite competition from other interesting panels on industry issues. David Blow and Terry Dalton pulled off an amazing feat: informative, compelling and

timely conversation. These are very smooth guys. Another major success story was the pre-conference on Best Practices in Teaching Convergent Media. Michael Longinow and David Weinstock put together a program that drew 35 attendees. From a Scholar-to-Scholar poster session where people actually stood around talking about the work to the luncheon where we honored Brian Steffen, the Teacher of the Year winner, SPIG events were well-attended and enjoyable.

Of course, you know what this means... We're on to bigger and better things.

You'll be hearing about the online journal on teaching JMC, particularly in a small program setting, a membership drive (though our current number of 108 members is nothing to dismiss), the Scholarship of Application contest, and other efforts to develop SPIG. My successor, Ginger Carter Miller, and her officers have energy, capability, and a love for SPIG. All is well.

Although my term as Head is ending, I won't disappear. Mitzi Lewis and I will lead the committee charged with creating the beta version of the online journal. I thought I'd be slipping out the door by the end of the convention, but Ginger won't let me do it.

Former SPIG heads don't stay away for long, which is another one of the group's strengths.

At the social, which we held at Katie Mullen's Pub, former SPIG Head John Jenks told me he and Jim Sernoe, another former head, had started a tradition whereby past heads treated the outgoing one to a shot of tequila. As someone whose preferred drinks come with umbrellas, this was a lot for me to step up to. I ended up having a shot (Is it called that if you sip?). My guess is Ginger won't need much encouragement when it is her turn. In the meantime, I wish her and SPIG the best for the coming year.

Vivian

Vivian Martin, Ph.D., is director of the Journalism program at Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, CT. You may reach her by calling 860-832-2776 or writing to martinv@ccsu.edu.

Seeing the value of SPIG

COMMENTARY

By Jim Sernoe

After attending at least 3,498 SPIG meetings and events since 1996, I don't think I've ever wanted to get to a SPIG meeting as quickly as I wanted to get to this year's membership meeting in Denver.

It's not that anything exciting or extraordinary was going to happen – in fact, it was just another SPIG meeting.

And that was the appeal.

After winning an award for a teaching competition sponsored by another division, I was invited to its meeting to accept the award. I told my friends in SPIG that I couldn't attend our meeting this year due to the time conflict with this other division's meeting, but when that meeting ended relatively early, I didn't hesitate to come to SPIG's meeting for the last 20 minutes or so.

It's not that those in the other division did anything wrong. But that meeting reaffirmed how important SPIG is, and has been, to me.

The meeting (of the other group) started, and there were no introductions; no effort was extended to make newbies feel welcome; there was very little humor; and then we were done.

Maybe that's how most other divisions operate, and maybe I'm just spoiled by our routines in SPIG.

At SPIG meetings and events, we introduce ourselves. Rookies are welcomed and encouraged. Old-timers like me are welcomed and encouraged. We focus on what's important to us, we share survival tips, everyone's opinion matters, and the idea of insiders/outsideers is non-existent. We all know that a sense of humor gets us through some of the ridiculous situations we encounter.

I'm not trying to trash anyone or diminish the work of other divisions. At the same time, I felt compelled to get to what was left of the SPIG meeting, because I needed to be with the people I've come to know and respect over the years, the people who share the same goals and problems.

I've written several rah-rah-SPIG columns before, and I've meant every word. But the events in Denver reaffirmed how important SPIG is.

Dr. Sernoe is chair of the Mass Communications Department at Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls, TX.

SPIG NEWS BRIEFS

Distinguished teacher: Richard D. Hendrickson, Ph.D., associate professor in the Tim Russert Department of Communication and Theatre Arts at John Carroll University, received the 2010 Distinguished Teaching in Journalism Award of the Society of Professional Journalists Oct. 4 at the SPJ national convention in Las Vegas.

Hendrickson spent 40 years as a reporter and editor in New York and Ohio before joining the faculty at the Jesuit university in Cleveland in 2001. Last year he and his wife, Carol, moved to Los Angeles and he now teaches John Carroll students in a hybrid/online format using ProfCast software and the Blackboard environment. A past president of the Cleveland SPJ chapter, he is now a member of the board of the Los Angeles chapter. He is also newsletter editor for AEJMC's Small Programs Interest Group.

Dominican search: Dominican University in Chicago has announced a search for a tenure track assistant professor for its Department of Communication Arts and Sciences. Applicants should be able to teach courses in new media applications and criticism, persuasion and quantitative research methods. Responsibilities will include three courses a semester and student advising. Courses in the first year could include: convergent journalism, television culture, communication theory, persuasion and introduction to public speaking.

Candidates with documented teaching excellence, an active research agenda and Ph.D. in hand by fall 2011 are preferred. ABD will be considered. Apply online at <https://jobs.dom.edu>.

ETHICS GAP, from page 7

from social networking, Bertazzoni said. Some have to learn from experience, or from the bad experiences of others that they hear about, as in the case of the TV station publishing the beer-can photo.

The rise of social media and citizen journalism mean that as journalism educators, "we have a much bigger job" than in the past," said audience member Jill Van Wylie of Drake University. "We need to teach ethics to non-journalism students."

Dr. Buchanan is an assistant professor in the Tim Russert Department of Communication and Theatre Arts at John Carroll University in Cleveland.

SPIG Officers, 2010-2011

Head - **Ginger Carter Miller**, Georgia College & State

Vice Heads - **Susan Lewis**, Abilene Christian, and **David Weinstock**, Texas at Tyler

Teaching Co-chairs - **Pam Parry**, Belmont, and **Mitzi Lewis**, Midwestern State

PF & R Co-chairs: **Michael Longinow**, Biola, and **Brian Steffen**, Simpson

Research Co-chairs - **John Jenks**, Dominican, and **Kay Colley**, Texas Wesleyan

Membership - **Ginger Carter Miller** (interim)

Webmaster - **Mitzi Lewis**, Midwestern

Newsletter Editor - **Richard D. Hendrickson**, John Carroll

Secretary - **Cindy Simoneau**, Southern Connecticut State

Liaison to Commission on Status of Women - **Cindy Simoneau**, Southern Connecticut State

Liaison to Commission on the Status of Minorities - **Lona Cobb**, Winston-Salem State

GIFT Representative - **Teresa Heinz Housel**, Hope

Hot Topics Coordinator - **Cheryl Bacon**, Abilene Christian (and volunteers as needed)