

LeadTime

THE NEWSLETTER OF AEJMC'S NEWSPAPER DIVISION
MARCH 2006

MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD

Online discussion sparks debate

We haven't yet created a model for perfect newspaper journalism, alleviated Wall Street pressures on the industry, or crafted the ideal journalism curriculum – but we're getting there, we're getting there...

In November the division kicked off its "What's Next for Newspapers" online discussion



Wilson
Lowrey

with a question about declining audience interest in public affairs journalism: "Do you think there is a substantial disconnect between journalists and readers? If so, what do you think can be done to reconnect? And what are the implications for journalism education?"

We've had nearly 1,000 visits to this discussion and around 40 postings. These thoughtful responses are still on the site, available for reading.

Some have focused on reclaiming journalism's centrality to civic life:

"Are newspapers in trouble because the substantive product that they deliver to the marketplace of ideas is not much in demand? . . . Where in this brave new electronic world . . . will we ever be able to get together as a nation and talk?"

Some postings called attention to technological changes:

See extended excerpts
from the discussion
on pp. 4-5.

Join the discussion at
www.tcf.ua.edu/wnfn
*You don't need to login
to comment.*

"[My students] said they weren't seeking out news sites ('pull' technology). Instead, they were being attracted to articles through headlines 'pushed' to them on their ISPs' e-mail home pages . . ."

"Rather than dealing with only ordinary readers, newspapers can sell their stuff to other media that have channels but not enough stuff to fill them."

Others called on journalists to focus on traditional strengths:

"The form won't matter. The content will . . . the value of a local newspaper is still its advocacy for the people."

"Whatever the medium, the one thing that local news organizations have that cannot be 'commoditized' and widely available on the web is

real, hardscrabble-gathered, caringly and professionally scrutinized local news."

In mid-December I was contacted by John McManus. He and fellow media economics scholar Steve Lacy at Michigan State wanted to launch a discussion about Wall Street pressures, the recent staff cuts at the larger "destination" papers, and the implications for journalism education.

We've had a number of thoughtful responses. Here are just a few:

"The question then is whether we want to expand the concept of print media to include [online, newsletters, magazines], or do we want to cling to print media being only newspapers. If the former then I would suggest there may not be enrollment problems."

"Is there any appetite among journalism educators to help the public evaluate news quality in their community? Mike Wallace of "60 Minutes" has argued that public shame can be a powerful tool for change."

Some disagreed with the premise that problems at destination papers should alter our efforts as educators:

"I have students who work 20-30 hours a week on the paper with

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Division Call For Papers

The Newspaper Division of AEJMC invites faculty and students to submit research papers regarding newspaper topics for presentation at the association's annual meeting. Sessions will be devoted to theoretically based studies of newspapers or issues concerning the newspaper industry. Both qualitative and quantitative research in newspaper history, law, policy, effects, processes, use and ethics are welcome. Papers may not be longer than 25 pages, excluding tables, figures and references. Papers must be submitted electronically no later than 11:59 p.m. (EST) April 1.

The Newspaper Division offers an open competition in which student papers compete with faculty papers. However, student authors are encouraged to be considered for the MacDougall Student Paper Award, in which a \$200 prize and a plaque are given to the top student paper. Papers to be considered for the MacDougall Student Paper Award should be noted as such in the letter of submission. All authors of the paper must be students in order for the paper to be considered for this award. In addition, awards are given for the top three Newspaper Division papers. Winners receive a \$100 prize and a plaque. All papers submitted to the division are automatically considered for these awards. All submissions will be blind refereed by a panel of independent readers. Authors will be notified whether their paper has been accepted and will receive a copy of the reviewers' comments by May 15, 2006.

Papers are accepted on the understanding they have not been previously presented or published and are not under consideration by a scholarly journal or by another scholarly or trade organization. All entries should follow the AEJMC Electronic Call for Papers.

Submission of papers: The division again this year will use electronic submission of research. All papers must be submitted

electronically and no hardcopy will be accepted. Full instructions on submitting papers will be posted on the division Web site <http://aejmc.net/newspaper>, as will instructions for reviewers.

Questions may be directed to Research Chair Frank E. Fee Jr. at ffee@email.unc.edu or Research Co-Chair Daniel Shaver at dshaver@mail.ucf.edu.

Special Call for Newspaper Industry Research Papers

A special refereed paper session at the national convention sponsored by the Council of Affiliates and the Newspaper Division will focus on industry-related research. The competition offers \$300 to the top paper in this competition. The competition relates to a list of research ideas suggested by Earl J. Wilkinson of the International Newspaper Marketing Association. That list may be found at the Newspaper Division Web site at <http://aejmc.net/newspaper/news-research.html>. Papers are accepted on the understanding they have not been presented or published elsewhere and are not under consideration by a scholarly journal or by another scholarly or trade organization. All entries should follow the AEJMC Uniform Call for Papers.

Submission of papers: The Newspaper Division again this year will use electronic submission of research. All papers must be submitted electronically, and no hard copy will be accepted. Papers submitted to this research panel should be marked INMA Competition in the accompanying cover note. Full instructions for submitting papers will be posted on the Newspaper Division Web site <http://aejmc.net/newspaper/>, as will instructions for reviewers.

Questions may be directed to Research Chair Dr. Frank E. Fee Jr. at ffee@email.unc.edu or Research Co-Chair Dr. Daniel Shaver at dshaver@mail.ucf.edu.

Online discussion:

Continued from page 1

absolutely no compensation. Why do they do it? They want to make a difference in their world. If journalism was about making Jack Abramoff type money, we would probably be having an ethical discussion rather than an economic one right now."

In mid-February we started a conversation on the impact of citizen journalism: What is it exactly, can it aid the public service mission of journalism, what are the practical benefits and problems, and what are the implications for journalism education? I hope you'll share your thoughts on this or one of the other topics.

"What's Next for Newspapers" panel at '06 convention

We'll continue the online discussion through the semester, and at the San Francisco convention we'll hold a panel, driven by issues raised in the online discussion.

Panelists will include Mary Nesbitt, director of Medill's Readership Institute; UNC's Phil Meyer, author of "The Vanishing Newspaper"; Jan Schaffer, director of the University of Maryland's J-Lab; Andrew Devigal, former Poynter researcher and current new-media instructor and consultant; and Jerry Ceppos, former Knight Ridder Vice President.

The Community Journalism Interest Group is co-sponsoring the panel. Thanks to CJIG's program chair, Peggy Kuhr, for her indispensable help in pulling this together.

I hope you can be there. Participation from the audience will be key as we try to solve the problems of the world – or at least our little piece of it.

Division announces panels for San Francisco

By **Kathleen Woodruff Wickham**
Vice Head and Program Chair

Combine enticing topics, visual offerings and multiple themes and you have the lineup for the Newspaper Division panel presentations at the 2006 AEJMC convention in San Francisco. The result is a lineup that provides insight into the elements that make up the news and professional concerns regarding how the news is seen, perceived and taught.

The Newspaper Division received 28 panel proposals, and 17 were selected for consideration at the midwinter meeting in Savannah in December. Of those 17, seven were paired with other divisions and placed on the convention schedule.

A dominant theme at the midwinter meeting was Hurricane Katrina. The Newspaper Division paired with RTVJ, Critical and



Kathleen Woodruff Wickham

Cultural Studies, and Minorities in Communication to organize a mini-plenary on the topic. It is scheduled for 3:15 p.m., Wednesday, Aug.

2. Mark Dolan of the University of Mississippi is coordinating the panel, which has a working title of "Katrina as Curriculum: Considering Media Coverage of Race and Class in America."

Division Head Wilson Lowrey of the University of Alabama is taking his year-long online discussion of the future of newspaper to San Francisco with a panel discussion titled "What's Next for Newspapers?" set for 11:45 a.m., Thursday, Aug. 3. The panel is co-sponsored by the Community Journalism Interest Group.

Both of these panels are Professional Freedom & Responsibility panels. Three other PF&R panels are scheduled. Newspaper is teaming with the Civic and Citizen Journalism Interest Group to offer a panel on citizen/civic journalism at 1:30 p.m., Friday, Aug. 4; and with Media Ethics to offer a look at editorial cartoons at 5 p.m., Friday, Aug. 4; and with Visual

Communication to offer a panel on photographic coverage of Hurricane Katrina at 10 a.m., Saturday, Aug. 5.

Three teaching panels are on the program. Newspaper will collaborate with RTVJ to offer a panel on team-teaching convergence at 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, Aug. 2; with the Council of Affiliates for a panel on the Freedom of Information Act at age 40, scheduled for 3:15 p.m., Thursday, Aug. 3; and with public relations for a panel on either teaching abroad or taking students abroad on study trips. That panel is scheduled for 5 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 5.

The Newspaper Division also teamed with Mass Communication and Society to offer a poster research session at 5 p.m., Thursday, Aug. 3. The traditional paper research sessions are scheduled for 3:15 p.m., Friday, Aug. 4; 8:15 a.m., Saturday, Aug. 5; 10 a.m., Saturday, Aug. 5 and 11:45 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 5. The scholar-to-scholar session is scheduled for 1:30 p.m., Thursday, Aug. 3.

Kathleen Woodruff Wickham is an associate professor of journalism at the University of Mississippi.

The AEJMC Reporter: Year two

The Newspaper Division will organize production of the AEJMC Reporter, the convention newspaper, this year in San Francisco.

PF&R

Co-chair Erna Smith of San Francisco State University will be heading the effort.

Production may take place at the SFSU downtown

campus, but Erna is still exploring options.

Erna and her staff are interested in getting more ads from schools into the Reporter. If your school

is interested, contact Erna at ersmith@sfsu.edu.

The 2005 Reporter was a clear success. The paper and its companion Web site gave participants news about issues at the conference and provided valuable experience for 16 college



journalists.

Last year a number of professors dropped by to help. Contact Erna if you'd like to lend a hand!

- The Editors

Claussen to edit Journalism & Mass Communication Educator

Dane S. Claussen of Point Park University will replace Jeremy Cohen of Pennsylvania State University as editor of Journalism & Mass Communication Educator.

Claussen began phasing into the editorship in January to take responsibility for the journal in the spring. The Summer 2006 issue will be the first under his editorship.

Claussen, associate professor and director of graduate programs in Point Park's journalism and mass communication department, has been a member of Journalism & Mass Communication Educator's Editorial Board since July 2003 and has been a manuscripts editor since 2000.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR NEWSPAPERS? A SAMPLING FROM THE DISCUSSION

Join the discussion at www.tcf.ua.edu/wfn

JOHN RUSSIAL
OREGON

Changing destinations

Last week, I happened to see a couple of editions of The Inquirer, a “destination” paper I left about a dozen years ago when I became a professor. I recognized maybe a quarter of the



bylines. Some reporters no doubt retired, but many simply moved to other destinations. At one point, I saw quite a few in the Baltimore Sun, a paper that was about half the size of the Inquirer. The reporters left to follow a

strong editor.

Which papers are considered “destinations” can change, often because of who is hired (or fired) at the top, and destination companies can change, often based on how much money they are willing to invest in newsrooms or how quick they are to cut staff. Good reporters and editors can and will change jobs to find a better destination, and maybe that’s what we should tell our students. Be ready to leave, but choose carefully, and be ready to leave again to find a good job at a good paper.

What I really wish is for someone to tell investors that they are destroying the core of their asset when they support policies that turn destinations into exits.

SUSAN KEITH, RUTGERS

News delivery: Push, not pull

We may need to consider the differences between “pull” and “push” forms of news delivery and the barriers to newspaper readership.

Consider the recent adventures with the two newspapers my husband and I subscribe to:

When the carrier for No. 1 went on vacation, we missed the paper three days in a row. We called and complained each day -- to a customer service representative 1,000 miles away -- and asked for redelivery. We got it only twice. A month after newspaper No. 2 launched a Saturday edition, we were 2-for-4 on Saturday delivery. The sympathetic customer service agents gave us no hope for redelivery. Now, my husband works for newspaper No. 1, and I’m an ex-journalist, so we have a lot of motivation to keep our subscriptions. But I wonder if other news consumers are so turned off by “pull” product delivery mode.

Two things reinforce that notion.



First, each morning I see New York City subway cars and New Jersey Transit trains filled with people, especially young people, reading the city’s two free dailies . . . I saw the same thing in the summer of 2004 when I lived in Paris. None of these free newspapers is very substantive . . . But they are literally pushed into readers’ hands at no charge.

Second, when I surveyed my students recently about their news media use, I found that 75 percent had read a daily newspaper “yesterday” and 82 percent had read online news “yesterday.” These were journalism majors, so I wouldn’t expect their engagement to be indicative of that of the rest of the student body, but I was still surprised that the numbers were that high. I knew the free campus daily had to be partly responsible for the high newspaper percentage, so I asked what online news sites the students were reading. They said they weren’t seeking out news sites (“pull” technology). Instead, they were being attracted to articles through headlines “pushed” to them on their ISPs’ e-mail home pages or in Instant Messenger tickers.

BOB STEPNO, TENNESSEE

Citizen journalists: Get ‘em while they’re young

I like David Mindich’s suggestion that the battle for civic engagement should start young, and that one way could be to put a civics test to the SAT, encouraging more high school civics classes. How about a nationwide newspaper (and television) editorial blitz to pull that off? Or campaigns to make the local online newspaper the “start page” on every computer in a school system’s libraries?

Next step: Get young “citizen journalist” bloggers (including college J-students) down to city hall and out into the neighborhoods,



instead of trying to compete with O’Reilly and the rest commenting on national and international affairs. Newspapers should encourage local reporting by online amateurs, make some of them “stringers” for the paper, and insist that the professional staff reporters READ the local blogs -- to help find leads to stories that would benefit from the kind of training a journalism degree offers.

Another reason to start with high school: University students are temporary residents, living on campus, with little connection to the community’s civic life. If they started to focus on local government back in their hometowns, perhaps that interest would persist into college.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR NEWSPAPERS? A SAMPLING FROM THE DISCUSSION

Join the discussion at www.tcf.uu.edu/wnfn

TED PEASE, UTAH STATE

Newspaper trouble reflects diminished democracy

A fine and depressing [discussion leading] question. "Fine" in that it implies a centrality to journalism in public life and the health of free societies. "Depressing" in that the decline in newspaper circulation implies a decline in civic involvement and participatory democracy.



I'm afraid my first response is not all that concerned with newspapers, but rather with the level of engagement that a vibrant news media market implies. Newspapers may be obsolete vehicles for information flow--one respondent to a 1991 survey said that she would not want her child to go into the business because, "Being a newspaper reporter is like being a cowboy on a dinosaur ranch."

But the larger question is not whether newspapers are dying, but whether newspapers are canaries in the mineshaft of a truly engaged, committed participatory democracy. Are newspapers in trouble because

of the clunky, archaic characteristics of print and paper and paperkids on bicycles (do they still exist)? Or are newspapers in trouble because the substantive product that they deliver to the marketplace of ideas is not much in demand against the louder, flashier, sexier, less demanding stuff more easily available on TV, the Internet, and on cell phones?

More than a decade ago, TV critic Les Brown wondered about how all the new media channels might create a "paradox of democracy" in which individuals who could select whatever they wanted in the media marketplace (a paragon of democratic choice) might end up never talking to each other (the death of democratic discourse). Where in this brave new electronic world, he wondered, will we ever be able to get together as a nation and talk? Through newspapers? TV? Talk radio? Online? At the ballot box?

The question about the future of newspapers is a good one, but it may be too parochial. What about the future of an engaged democratic society?

GEORGE DANIELS, ALABAMA

Our courses need an 'economic reality check'

Though most of my professional life was spent in broadcast newsrooms, I know where a good deal of our broadcast news stories come from-- the work of newspapers. It's hard to imagine a world without them.

In the spring 2006 semester, I will be requiring use of RSS feeds (via the University portal) for one of my classes to see how it affects their current events knowledge. This is NOT good news for the local newspaper here-- as that's



50 fewer readers they'll have under 21. But, it requires newspapers, even through their NIE programs, to look at their product as information -- and not necessarily as the printed page of information.

I think we have to integrate an "economic reality check" about ALL the LEGACY MEDIA (newspapers, TV, radio) in all of our classes (skills and conceptual). Our media management course has all of a sudden become more important. But, the discussion of the commercial influence on the journalism profession can't be restricted to the management course.

AMY EISMAN
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Embrace change

I view this discussion from two perspectives, one as a former mainstream journalist, the other as a recent addition to academe. My professional life reflects the reality



of mainstream media in the past two decades; three of my former newspapers died (mostly afternoon papers in metro areas). I then went to the launch of

USA TODAY and eventually to USA WEEKEND. Finally, I spent 1 1/2 years at AOL.

From this perspective I see that we must embrace change, or the train goes by. I don't decry the falling circulations of print media; I just think we need to recapture the content for other distribution mechanisms. This means teaching different forms of storytelling.

What I learned from the Web is simple: Content creation costs. So let's fight to keep original, real reporting alive -- and financed! -- and figure out how to distribute it as efficiently and effectively as possible. My teaching perspective gives me further drive. My students get LOTS of information -- from hand-held devices, from free, targeted commuter newspapers, from podcasts -- you name it. Their energy and creativity is refreshing. As a journalist, I want to engage them in the discussion. I want to understand (and study) why they want so much first-person content. I want them to remain excited.

Bottom line for me: This is one of the most exciting times in journalism I can remember. Journalism students need perspective, and we need to continue to evolve our programs.

Newspaper division celebrates 40th anniversary

Editor's Note: The Newspaper Division celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. We can't think of anybody who knows more about the history of the division than long-time member and former division head Guido Stempel of Ohio University. We asked him to fill us in on how our division got started. He was nice enough to shoot back a detailed e-mail along with an apology for lapses in memory. No need to apologize, Guido! We appreciate all you could recall. Here's an edited portion of the e-mail.

The division got started at the 1965 AEJ convention at Syracuse. This was the year that AEJ reorganized into divisions, and the early divisions included History, Mass Com & Society, and Communication Theory and Methodology, plus a couple I'm not recalling. None of these were media but rather were areas that cut across media, but Curt [Northwestern's Curtis MacDougall] didn't see that side of it and felt there ought to be a Newspaper Division. He was incensed that there wasn't.

The rule then (and I think still today) was that to start a division, you had to

present a petition with signatures of 25 members to the Executive Committee. So Curt put out a sign-up sheet on a table at the entrance of the building where we had meetings, and I think he got the 25 signatures the day he put it out.

Curt was chair of the division for quite a while. Curt didn't have any use for research and there was none on the division's convention program. I was chair of the AEJ Research Committee in 1968-69 when the committee finally felt it had to react to this. I wrote Curt a letter telling him of the committee's concern. He wrote back and asked if I were trying to destroy the division. I wrote back to him and said, why would I want to do that when I am a member of the division. So at the 1969 AEJ convention at Berkeley, the Newspaper Division for the first time had research papers. I was one of the presenters, with a paper Paul Wagner and I had done on the pay at Guild newspapers. The only other thing I can add is that the *Newspaper Research Journal* started in 1979 with what I think was called a prototype issue.

Calling all former division heads!

The Newspaper Division turns 40 this year. Turns out we first offered a convention program in 1966. Research Chair Frank Fee, who never throws out anything, put Wilson Lowrey on the trail to this discovery when he unearthed an ancient division anniversary coffee mug. To commemorate the occasion (our first convention program, not Frank's archaeological find) we'd like to briefly acknowledge former division heads at the members meeting at the 2006 AEJMC Convention in San Francisco. The meeting will be held 6:45-8:15 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 3. If you're a former division head, we hope you can join us!