

## Media Ethics Division Annual Report 2003-2004

### 1. Current Officers

Chair Sandra L. Borden Western Michigan University <a href="mailto:sandra.borden@wmich.edu">sandra.borden@wmich.edu</a>	Vice Chair/Program Head Kristie Bunton University of St. Thomas <a href="mailto:kebunton@stthomas.edu">kebunton@stthomas.edu</a>
Secretary/Newsletter Editor Genelle Belmas Calif. State University, Long Beach <a href="mailto:bbelmas@csulb.edu">bbelmas@csulb.edu</a>	Research Chair Erik Ugland Marquette University <a href="mailto:erik.ugland@mu.edu">erik.ugland@mu.edu</a>
Professional Freedom & Responsibility Chair Wendy Barger University of St. Thomas <a href="mailto:wnbarger@stthomas.edu">wnbarger@stthomas.edu</a>	Teaching Standards Chair Patrick Plaisance Colorado State University <a href="mailto:patrick.plaisance@colostate.edu">patrick.plaisance@colostate.edu</a>
Past Chair David S. Allen University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee <a href="mailto:dsallen@uwm.edu">dsallen@uwm.edu</a>	Associate Newsletter Editor Bill Reader Ohio University <a href="mailto:reader@ohio.edu">reader@ohio.edu</a>
Webmaster Tom Bivins University of Oregon <a href="mailto:tbivins@ballmer.uoregon.edu">tbivins@ballmer.uoregon.edu</a>	

## General Information

3. Please provide an overall statement weighting the division or interest group's activities for this year in the Research, Teaching and PF&R areas.

This year, the Division's major goal was to increase the quantity and quality of research paper submissions. In 2002-2003, submissions were low, resulting in a 70% acceptance rate for faculty papers. Therefore, Research was the activity given the most emphasis this year. The division successfully undertook several initiatives (to be described in detail in later sections) to stimulate research relevant to the division's focus. Faculty submissions went up from 17 to 24 (a nearly 40% increase); graduate submissions more than doubled, from 5 to 11.

Despite the research emphasis, the division also made strides in the areas of Teaching and PF&R. The division's Media Ethics Teaching Workshop was moved to Saturday for the first time this year to increase participation; it also was reformatted to attract a broader audience. We also paired the panel resulting from the special paper competition on media literacy with a back-to-back teaching session on the same topic, solidifying the connections between teaching and research. We chose these sessions for AEJMC's special promotional efforts.

Finally, in the area of PF&R, at least 19 non-members (counting only panels and paper sessions for which MED is the lead sponsor) are participating in MED's program in Toronto. In addition, the division's mid-year meeting was held in conjunction with an interdisciplinary ethics conference, further cultivating relationships between members and non-members of AEJMC. We also added rigor to the process of selecting the winner of the award for research of professional relevance.

4. Please write a statement, to be co-authored by the outgoing and incoming Heads, addressing:

*What are your most important goals for the upcoming year?*

- ⊙ Continue and/or expand the relationship with the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics for interdisciplinary programming at the mid-year meeting.
- ⊙ A continued emphasis on bringing new voices and topics into our programming to reflect the variety of scholars working in the area of media ethics and to make sure that the division speaks beyond the narrow tradition of journalism ethics.
- ⊙ Sustain the gains we made this year in research submissions.
- ⊙ PF&R will receive sustained attention by the Division.

*What goals did your group set this year that you were unable to reach? Why?*

- ⊙ We had hoped that this year's presenters would reflect a higher number of graduate students. Last year, some of the best student papers were submitted to the Division's first mid-year meeting at South Florida, which might have explained the relatively low 40% student paper acceptance rate for the Kansas City convention. This year, the mid-year meeting was not as convenient or attractive to graduate students. As expected, our student convention submissions increased from last year. Yet our acceptance rate was even lower, at 27%. This could be partly due to the increased quality of faculty papers this year. In any case, Vice Chair Kris Buntun has started organizing a mentoring initiative to pair up senior scholars with junior scholars, which may help us continue improving the quality

of student submissions. In addition, the University of Hawai'i Carol Burnett Fund for Responsible Journalism, which already funds our student paper awards, has agreed to provide nominal travel support for all student presenters beginning this year. This is an incentive we can promote during next year's paper call.

- ⊙ We had hoped for more interdisciplinary collaborations between MED members and APPE members at our first mid-year meeting with APPE this year. Instead, the program encouraged MED members to mostly interact with MED members. This was the result of a short planning period (the members voted to hold the mid-year meeting with APPE at the Kansas City convention; APPE's submission deadline was Oct. 15) and failure to reach an accurate understanding with APPE leadership. APPE already has agreed to host MED's mid-year meeting in 2004. The call for papers is already out (available at [www.indiana.edu/~appe/program.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~appe/program.html)), including MED's call, which specifically encourages interdisciplinary collaborations on papers and panels.

*How may any or all of the Standing Committees help you to achieve your goals in the coming year?*

- ⊙ We think we could broaden the Division's research focus if people who have primary membership in other divisions would submit their ethics-related papers to MED. We would welcome any suggestions for encouraging other Division members to consider MED for their ethics papers.

#### **RESEARCH:**

5. *Number of faculty research paper submissions:* 24  
*Number of acceptances:* 14  
*Acceptance rate:* 58%

6. *Number of student research paper submissions:* 11  
*Number of acceptances:* 3  
*Acceptance rate:* 27%

*Total submissions:* 35  
*Total number of acceptances:* 17  
*Total acceptance rate:* 49%

7. *Overview of judging process (forms used are attached):* The Media Ethics Division received 35 paper submissions this year – 11 from graduate students and 24 from faculty. Each paper was blind-reviewed by three reviewers, all of whom were full-time faculty with some expertise in the field of media ethics. Each reviewer completed an evaluation form for each of the five papers he or she was asked to read. The evaluation form asked the reviewers to assess each paper's merits based on 13 criteria, using a 1-5 scale. Those scores were added together, giving each paper a score between 13 and 65. Z-scores were then calculated for each judge's evaluation of each paper. Z-scores were calculated by taking the author's cumulative score for the 13 criteria, subtracting that judge's mean score for those criteria, and dividing by the standard deviation between that judge's scores for those criteria. Those scores for each judge were then combined and averaged. That score was then converted into a t-score, which was calculated by taking the z-score, multiplying by 10 and adding 50.

Reviewers were also asked to give each paper an overall rating using a 1-5 scale (1 = poor, 2 = marginal, 3 = good, 4 = very good, 5 = excellent). Z-scores and t-scores were also calculated

for these criteria. The papers selected presentation in Toronto were chosen based on their cumulative z-scores – that is, the average of the two z-scores described above (one based on the 13 specific criteria and one based on the paper’s overall rating).

The evaluation sheet also asked each reviewer to rank-order (1-5) the papers he or she was asked to read. Although this information was collected, it was not ultimately used as a basis for selection.

Reviewers were also asked to provide an initial judgment about the paper’s relevance to working professionals. They were asked to give each paper a score of 1, 2 or 3, with 1 indicating the paper was “not relevant” to working professionals, 2 indicating it was “somewhat relevant” and 3 indicating it was “highly relevant.” Those scores were combined to create a cumulative professional-relevance score for each paper. Those papers with cumulative scores of 8 or 9 were evaluated more comprehensively by a separate three-member committee headed by the Division’s PF&R chair (all committee members read all seven eligible papers).

8. <i>Total # of judges for general competition:</i>	21
<i>Papers per judge:</i>	5
<i>Judges per paper:</i>	3

9. *Did your group conduct any other type of refereed competition?*

We conducted a special competition exploring the connections between ethics and media literacy to stimulate submissions to the Division, especially by AEJMC members who do not consider MED their AEJMC “home.” Authors were asked to designate on the title page whether they wanted their papers considered for the special call. The submissions were rated by reviewers on equal footing with all other papers submitted to the Division. Four were rated highly enough for acceptance and were scheduled for a special theme panel.

*Number of submissions: 5*

*Number of acceptances: 4*

10. *Please list your in-convention activities related to research.*

- ⊙ Three refereed paper sessions, including a special research panel session featuring the top submissions to the Division’s special call for papers on the connections between ethics and media literacy.
- ⊙ Five papers in the refereed scholar-to-scholar session on Aug. 5.
- ⊙ A research panel session on ad offensiveness across cultures co-sponsored with the Community College Journalism Association and a research mini-plenary panel session on U.S. and International Coverage of the Iraq War co-sponsored by International, Newspaper and Religion and Media.

11. *Please list your out-of-convention activities related to research.*

- ⊙ Mid-year meeting held for the first time in conjunction with the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics, an interdisciplinary group. The meeting was Feb. 26-28 in Cincinnati (copies of the relevant program pages were faxed with the demographic form.). MED held a members meeting and programmed two panels: “Public Diplomacy and Propaganda: Discerning the Differences” (panel organizer Patrick Plaisance, Colorado State) and “Have the Media Lost Their Way?” (panel organizers Lee Wilkins,

Missouri, and William Babcock, California State Long Beach). Both panels featured MED members and non-members from other disciplines or the profession. In addition, MED members organized two invited panels through APPE: "Media Ethics Teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Which Way(s) Forward?" (Ed Lambeth, Missouri) and "Good Works in Journalism" (David Boeyink, Indiana). MED members also submitted works to APPE's general competition. The following competitive panels and papers were accepted: "Critiquing the Conventions of the Craft" (Panel organizer Wendy Barger, St. Thomas); "Picturing Guilty Drunk Drivers in a Weekly Newspaper," Elizabeth Hansen, Eastern Kentucky; "Public Relations: A Unique Problem in Applied Professional Ethics," Sherry Baker, Brigham Young; and "The Propaganda War on Terrorism: An Analysis of the United States' 'Shared Values' Public-Diplomacy Campaign after September 11, 2001," Patrick Plaisance, Colorado State. APPE has agreed to host MED's mid-year meeting again Feb. 24-27, 2005, in San Antonio.

- ⊙ Supported the 2004 colloquium on media, ethics and politics held at the University of Missouri-Columbia, the fifth in the Colloquia 2000 Series aimed at stimulating collaborative scholarship on important issues in media ethics.
- ⊙ The Division entered into an agreement on a trial basis with the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* to provide a subscription as a benefit of MED membership. JMME and MED have collaborated on a number of research projects together, including the Colloquia 2000 Series, so this was a natural way of stimulating and disseminating media ethics research among our members. The partnership required a sizable dues increase, but so far the hike does not seem to have had a negative impact on membership.

12. Please describe briefly the research goals and activities of your division.

Goals:

- ⊙ Continue increasing the quantity and quality of research submissions, especially among graduate students.
- ⊙ Initiate an informal mentoring program between senior and junior scholars in the Division.
- ⊙ Continue emphasizing interdisciplinary research through our partnership with the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics.
- ⊙ Continue emphasizing research that speaks to the needs and concerns of working professionals, through our professional relevance award and the involvement of non-members in research panel sessions.

Activities and Accomplishments:

- ⊙ Increased faculty paper submissions nearly 40% and student submissions more than 50%.
- ⊙ Mid-year meeting with APPE in February.
- ⊙ Special paper competition on ethics and media literacy. In addition to stimulating interest in our call for papers, the competition generated a companion teaching panel and helped give our program a Canadian "accent" this year.
- ⊙ Increased program diversity by making a conscious effort to address ethical concerns in other media contexts besides journalism (e.g., public relations, advertising, cyberspace). We also had a strong international focus this year, appropriate to our Toronto location.
- ⊙ Added rigor to the process of selecting the Professional Relevance Award winner, as described earlier. In the past, this award was usually given to the top faculty paper with little consideration of the professional relevance aspect. This year, the Top Faculty Paper was awarded to Maggie Jones Patterson and Steve Urbanski, both of Duquesne University, for "What Jayson Blair and Janet Cooke Say About the Press and the Erosion of Public Trust." The Professional Relevance Award was given to Susan Keith of Rutgers

University for “The Last Line of Defense in Matters of Ethics? Copy Editors’ Ethics Role Conceptions.”

- ⊙ The Division administers and awards the Carol Burnett/University of Hawai’i/AEJMC Prize for Excellence in Ethics Research by a graduate student. The top two papers are recognized and receive a cash award from the Carol Burnett Fund for Responsible Journalism. This year’s winner is Jenn Burleson Mackay, University of Alabama, “The Media Ethics Necessity.” The runner-up is Bastiaan Vanacker, University of Minnesota, “Finding Global Values in Journalism Ethics: A Comparative Analysis of Five News Council Rulings.”
- ⊙ With funding from the Burnett Foundation, we were able to provide nominal travel support for the third student author accepted.
- ⊙ We ran newsletter articles encouraging interdisciplinary research and international research. The Division’s PF&R chair also wrote an article (in anticipation of the media literacy panels in Toronto) highlighting media literacy as a topic of scholarship, as well as teaching and activism.

## TEACHING:

13. *Please list your in-convention activities related to teaching and relate to the Teaching Standards Committee’s focuses.*

- ⊙ We are offering our teaching workshop for the first time during the regular convention schedule (on Saturday afternoon). We also are experimenting this year with a new format organized around an overarching theme (in this case, the ethical perils of infotainment) that is attractive to people who have been teaching media ethics for a while, as well as to novices. However, in recognition of the important pedagogical role this workshop has played in the field for beginning ethics teachers, we also are including as part of the workshop a “teaching boot camp” offering guidance on using case studies and other basic strategies for teaching ethics. The new schedule and format will be evaluated after the workshop is conducted. The workshop pertains to all of the Teaching Standards Committee’s focuses (curriculum, course content and teaching methods, leadership, and assessment). The schedule is attached.
- ⊙ We are lead sponsors of three teaching panel sessions during the conference: “Ethics and the Journalism Educator: What Students Need to Know in the Age of the Bottom Line” (curriculum); “Ethics Courses: What’s Their Real Value?” (leadership); and “A Nationwide Endeavor: Tackling Media Literacy in Canada” (curriculum and leadership), a session given extra visibility by back-to-back scheduling with a special research paper panel on links between ethics and media literacy.

11. *Please list your out-of-convention activities related to teaching.*

- ⊙ This past year, the newsletter has contained several articles that pertain to the Standing Committee’s focus on course content and methods. In the Winter newsletter, Lee Anne Peck contributed an article outlining an exercise on lying that uses clips from soap operas. Patrick Plaisance wrote an excellent article in the Fall issue about dealing in class with the death of objectivity. In the upcoming Summer newsletter, Genelle Belmas will have an article discussing the recent film “Shattered Glass,” which is about Stephen Glass’ fall from grace at the *New Republic*.
- ⊙ The newsletter also contained a number of articles that could be fruitful classroom discussion starters pertinent to the Standing Committee’s focus on curriculum. Of

particular note is William Babcock's article in the Fall issue "Covering politics in the age of 'Ahnoold,'" where he discusses the media's roles and responsibilities covering celebrities who seek political office, as well as Erik Uglund's article in the same issue about the role of the new *New York Times* ombudsman and the challenges that person faces.

15. *Please describe briefly the teaching goals and activities of your division.*

Goals:

- ⊙ To continue offering reliable pedagogical guidance for teaching media ethics, most specifically via the annual teaching workshop.
- ⊙ To encourage continuing development among teachers of ethics via teaching panel sessions and newsletter articles that reflect current trends in mass communication education and topics of current concern for practicing professionals.
- ⊙ To continue diversifying programming so that teaching concerns are directed toward those who teach all kinds of media ethics, not just journalism ethics (an example is the teaching panel session at the convention on the value of ethics courses, co-sponsored by the Public Relations Division).

Accomplishments and Activities:

- ⊙ Successfully managing the programming logistics involved in trying out the teaching workshop in a new, in-convention slot with a new format.
- ⊙ Connecting teaching strongly with research by pairing a teaching panel session on media literacy with the research paper session featuring the top-rated submissions to our special call for papers on ethics and media literacy.

**PF&R:**

16. *Please list your in-convention activities related to PF&R.*

- ⊙ The Division planned and is lead sponsor of two sessions during the convention. "Public Relations and the Problem of Positioning Companies in Foreign Nations: Conflicting Loyalties?" relates to the PF&R Committee's ethics area. "A Conflict of Laws: American Media Coverage of Canadian Crimes" relates both to ethics and freedom of expression.
- ⊙ The Division planned and is secondary sponsor of "Religious Perspectives on Public Policy News Coverage: No-No or 21<sup>st</sup> Century Necessity?" (racial, gender and cultural inclusiveness; media criticism)
- ⊙ The Division is secondary sponsor and provided names for one or more panelists for the following PF&R sessions during the convention: "Online Journalism Ethics: New Bottle for Old Wine?" (ethics and media criticism); and "Critical Perspectives on Media Convergence" (media criticism).
- ⊙ The Division gave separate program recognition for the first time to the paper submission deemed to be of most relevance to working professionals.
- ⊙ Although the Division's two media literacy panels are classified as Research and Teaching, the media literacy movement has a strong public intellectual component that relates both to the media criticism and public service areas. Our media literacy focus also had the benefit of attracting several non-members to our program.

*List of non-member invited convention speakers:*

David Waller, University of Technology Sydney  
Ryan Taylor, UK Advertising Standards Authority  
Barry Duncan, Association for Media Literacy  
Jane Tallim, Media Awareness Network  
Melanie Cishecki, MediaWatch  
Paul Bains, Media Democracy Day  
Carly Stasko, Toronto Media Collective  
Glenn Ritt, CapeCorps  
Margaret Sullivan, *The Buffalo News*  
Gary Myers, Morgan & Myers, Milwaukee  
John Paluszek, Ketchum USA  
Sylvia Stead, *The Toronto Globe & Mail*  
Angela Paradise, University of Massachusetts  
Andrea Bergstrom, University of Massachusetts  
Christie Blatchford, *The Toronto Globe & Mail*  
Paul Schabas, Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP, Toronto  
Bill Payer, WKBW-TV, Buffalo  
Steven Williams, author  
Ines Anselma, CLAP Eventi & Comunicazione, Conegliano, Italy

17. *Please list your out-of-convention activities related to PF&R.*

- ⊙ The two panels MED scheduled at the mid-winter meeting with APPE emphasized media criticism.
- ⊙ Our new connection with APPE will increase ties between MED members and ethics scholars from other disciplines (public service).
- ⊙ MED's webmaster, Tom Bivins, has set up a media ethics experts link on the Division's website that will list MED members who are willing to comment about media performance for interviews, community workshops, lectures, etc. This is an important public service provided by people who are arguably in the best position to speak knowledgeably about the media's ethical strengths and weaknesses.
- ⊙ Newsletter articles with relevance to PF&R included Erik Ugland's "Success uncertain for new *Times* ombudsman" in the fall issue (media criticism and accountability); Bill Babcock's "Covering politics in the age of 'Ahnold'" in the same issue (media criticism and ethics); and William A. Mulligan's "Media withholds info for social responsibility" in the winter issue (ethics).

18. *Please describe briefly PF&R goals and activities of your division.*

Goals:

- ⊙ Continue building bridges between media ethics scholars and scholars from other disciplines.
- ⊙ Continue building bridges between media ethics scholars and working professionals.
- ⊙ Encourage a higher level of public service among our members as informed commentators on media performance.

Accomplishments and Activities:

- ⊙ By adding rigor to the process of giving the Professional Relevance Award, we were able to give more meaningful, visible recognition to scholarship with potential impact on media professions.
- ⊙ We were able to attract a large number of non-members to our program, including several

non-U.S. scholars, activists and media professionals from Canada and other parts of the world.

- ⊙ The Division has initiated a web resource for the media, schools and community organizations to tap into MED members' expertise on media ethics.

19. *Please attach relevant documentation.*

The following are attached as Word files:

- ⊙ The three newsletter issues published so far this year (Please note that this is the third year that MED has published an online newsletter. The summer issue has not yet been posted.)
- ⊙ MED's paper call.
- ⊙ The review form for the general paper competition.
- ⊙ The review form for the professional relevance award.
- ⊙ The Teaching Workshop schedule.
- ⊙ MED's convention program.