

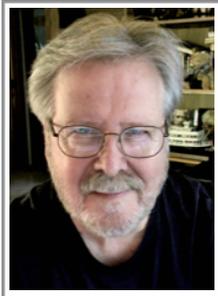


med newsletter

MEDIA ETHICS DIVISION FALL 2018 • VOLUME 22, NO. 1

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

BY TOM BIVINS, NEWSLETTER EDITOR



When I first began my career as an assistant professor many years ago, my plans had been to concentrate on broadcast production, which, prior to and during my doctoral program, had made up the bulk of my professional experience. Somewhere along the way, based on tangential experiences in corporate public relations and military public affairs, I was asked to teach classes in that subject. To my surprise, I liked it, which led to my early research in public relations ethics, which eventually led to my being hired to head the public relations sequence here at Oregon, which I did for 12 years until I became The John L. Hulteng Chair in Media Ethics. Although I've broadened my base to include journalism, advertising, and pretty much all things media, my first love remains the persuasive arts, especially public relations. That's why I was eager to get on board with our new division chair's suggestion that we start theming our issues, with the first being Public Relations.

This is the first issue devoted to a theme, and we will be announcing them for the rest of the year soon, along with publication deadlines and personal pleas for your help.

Deborah Silverman (SUNY Bullafo State) gets this issue focused with a look at how we can shape ethical behavior in both the workplace and the classroom. Our hope is that with each new issue, others will be willing to contribute their take the theme. Of course, all articles on any subject of interest to MED members are still welcome, as well as announcements, recent research ideas you'd like to share, or pretty much anything that moves you. We are also playing with other ideas, including podcasting (the History division got the jump on us I'm afraid). Erin Schauster will be sending out a survey soon to plumb your thoughts. After all, it's your newsletter and your division. Welcome back!



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YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE

BY ERIN SCHAUSTER, DIVISION HEAD



I learned a Norwegian word today. *Gruglede*. Pronounced gruh-gleh-deh. It's a combinations of the words *grue* (meaning dread, not look forward to) and *glede* (meaning happy, look forward to).

Gruglede is a unique emotion occurring for an upcoming event you're looking forward to with a mix of nervous excitement. That pretty

much sums up how I feel before each AEJMC. My mind begins to spin as I second guess decisions we made throughout the year in preparation for the conference. Did we program the right mix of panel sessions? Will our referred sessions be well attended? Should we have held a poster session this year? Or maybe an offsite tour?

But any tinge of anxiety that I had is quickly replaced with excitement as I attend research talks, panel sessions, connect with old friends, meet new ones, and watch the programming unfold with lively participation and enthusiasm.

And you make it possible. While the MED officers are hard at work writing paper calls, assigning reviewers, identifying co-sponsorships for panel sessions, recruiting moderators and discussants, selecting award recipients, keeping the teaching website up to date, and publishing newsletter and social content to keep you informed, you're hard at work as well. Our members are writing and sub-

mitting research papers, proposing panel sessions, reviewing papers, serving as moderators and discussants, and contributing to discussions at the business meeting that help us prepare for the next year. You make AEJMC successful. And I'd like to sincerely thank you, current and former members and current and former officers, for your contribution. You put the *glede* in *gruglede*.

As we look forward to AEJMC 2019 in Toronto, there's a new program I'd like to put on your radar.

In response to our business meeting discussion, we'll have a new paper call for graduate students. At AEJMC Toronto, in addition to accepting full papers for the Carol Burnett Award, we'll be accepting works-in-progress from graduate students. This opportunity is intended to encourage more submissions from graduate students and to provide them with in-depth reviews and feedback from senior scholars. If you're a graduate student interested in submitting your work-in-progress, look out for the paper calls that will be published later this year. You can also contact MED's research chair, Katy Culver at kbculver@wisc.edu.

Also, don't forget that we now offer a mentorship program that's currently in its second year. If you have questions about how it works or how to participate, or perhaps you have feedback you'd like to share, please contact Chad Painter at cpainter1@dayton.edu.

And, of course, you can always contact me at erin.schauster@colorado.edu with programming or division-related questions or comments.

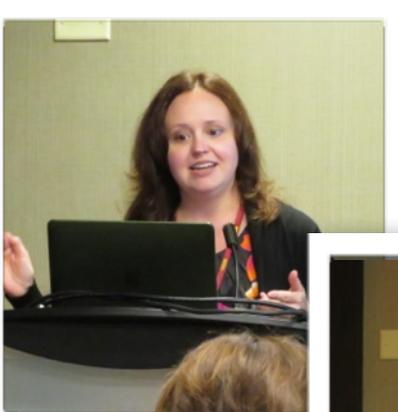
Thank you again for your contribution to MED. I'm looking forward to working with you this academic year.



AT AEJMC



Deborah Dwyer (left) and Lindsay Palmer (above) discuss fake news and the media response.



Erik Ugland (left) and Kati Berg (above) wax eloquent on how best to deal with "weed", both in PR and advertising.



SHAPING ETHICAL BEHAVIOR IN THE PR WORKPLACE AND CLASSROOM

BY DR. DEBORAH SILVERMAN, APR, FELLOW PRSA CHAIR AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF COMMUNICATION, SUNY BUFFALO STATE



September is one of my favorite months, as the Public Relations Society of America's Ethics Month. When I chaired PRSA's Board of Ethics and Professional Standards, it was the month when we organized a number of activities to underscore PRSA's commitment to ethics: webinars, articles in PRSA publications, tweet chats, even a Google Hangout

or two, on ethics "topics in the news." I was pleasantly surprised that relatively few instances of unethical behavior came to the attention of BEPS; I later realized in conversations with public relations professionals that most of them were keenly aware of the need to be ethical on the job. Some even cited the [PRSA Code of Ethics](#), long regarded as the lodestar for public relations ethics codes.

Locally, PRSA chapters host panel discussions or individual speakers for Ethics Month. For example, last year I was a presenter for one chapter's "Communication in the Age of 'Fake News'" panel. At other times during the year, PRSA and the Public Relations Student Society of America offer ethics workshops at conferences for professionals and students; I have spoken at many such workshops around the country over the past decade. Attendance varies at these workshops because PR ethics isn't perceived as a "sexy topic" (or so I've been told) – but the audiences are earnest, serious, and eager to discuss ethics issues pertaining to the perceptions of public relations professionals. Students have asked me about possible ethical problems on their internships; professionals have expressed concerns about assignments that seem unethical.

These conversations are frequently lively, sparked by discussions of ethics case studies based on real-life situations. Whether the setting is a public relations classroom or a PRSA or PRSSA conference session, the cases, preceded by a review of the PRSA Code of Ethics, are key. I then break the audience into small groups of three or four people to read the case, discuss it for about 10 minutes, and then regroup as a whole. Frequently, one small group will discern nuances that other groups have missed.

These case studies play an integral part in the ethics units in the public relations curricula of colleges across the United States, as I learned from my research study, with Dr. Karla Gower and Elmie Nekmat, "[Assessing the State of Public Relations Ethics Education](#)," several years ago. We asked public relations faculty members how they incorporate ethics into their curriculum. The majority said they infuse ethics units into every public relations course. A few indicated that they offer a stand-alone ethics

course, which is recommended as a new required course in the undergraduate PR curriculum in the Commission on Public Relations Education's 2017 report on undergraduate education in public relations, [Fast Forward: Foundations and Future State. Educators and Practitioners](#). I was honored to serve on the ethics subcommittee that proposed this new requirement – an acknowledgement of the seminal role of ethical behavior in the public relations workplace. Our subcommittee is now developing recommendations for sample student learning objectives, core competencies, and syllabi.

Like public relations educators, senior public relations agency leaders acknowledge the importance of ethical behavior in the public relations workplace, the focus of one of my current research projects. Some pointed with pride to special in-house ethics training programs that their employees must complete annually. Others mentioned mentorship programs in which senior leaders are paired with entry-level employees, available to answer questions about potential unethical behavior. But more than anything else, the agency leaders emphasized that agency leaders shape ethical behavior. As one interviewee noted, "We have to model the behavior we want to see in others." Another observed, "The message has to come from the top—not just the message but the practice and the example. Otherwise it's a form of hypocrisy that everyone can see through. There's nothing stronger than an example. That's what we remember. You know, theories and practices and charts and PowerPoints are good for awhile, but an example – you remember." 



Discussing ethics at the Public Relations Student Society of America 2012 national conference in San Francisco – left to right: BEPS member Dr. Francis McDonald, BEPS chair Dr. Deborah Silverman, PRSA 2012 Chair Gerry Corbett, and Kevin Saghy of the Chicago Cubs, former national PRSSA president.

COVERING SPORTS SCANDALS

BY NICOLE KRAFT, PF&R CHAIR



It was the emails that got me. In a story entitled, “Zach Smith Ordered Sex Toys to Ohio State Offices, Had Sex With Staffer, Took Nude Photos at White House,” sports writer Brett McMurphy chronicled how former Ohio State assistant football coach Zach Smith did, well, what the headline indicated.

It was the Aug. 17 edition of an ongoing story McMurphy broke about domestic violence allegations against Smith by his ex-wife, Courtney. The series launched in early August and tore through Ohio State with every publishing.

Football coach Urban Meyer was put on leave. The athletic department was in turmoil. The national media was barking daily at the administration for who knew what and when, and why they did what they did—or didn’t do anything.

I am not here to defend or bury Ohio State. The Smiths’ story and how it was handled will continue to reverberate through our dorms and classrooms, and around our athletics department, for years to come.

But those emails.

When does the pursuit of a story cross the line from journalism to salacious gossip. When does objectivity reporting become subjective persecution.

I argue the Aug. 17 article crossed the line.

The article started off with sound enough news value: “Documents and receipts Stadium has obtained show Zach Smith ordered more than \$2,200 in sex toys, male apparel and photography equipment and had the items delivered to him at Ohio State’s Woody Hayes Athletic Center in 2015.”

We then moved from PG into R-rated: “Courtney Smith said Zach Smith took multiple photos of his penis inside the Ohio State coaches’ offices, inside the White House when the Buckeyes visited in 2015 and also photographed himself in the coaches’ offices receiving oral sex and having sex with a OSU staffer.”

But we moved soundly past the family hour with a description of the items delivered to Smith the at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center between February and May 2015. Kids, now is when you may want to stop reading.

Here we go: “A men’s spider enhancer thong triple c—ring, body wear CS2 metallic erotic c—strap gold and snake skin, Wildman T ball lifter red, Candyman men’s jock suspenders, PetitQ open slit bikini brief and studio pro product table top photography lighting kit.”

Oh, but McMurphy was not done. He next headed straight over the ethical cliff.

The article included screen captures of the sex toys—so we had a clear image of that which deserved to be private—quite likely provided by Mrs. Smith’s access to the family Amazon account.

I will never get out of my mind the images of the Candyland Men’s Jock Suspenders, White, in X-Large—just \$19!

Was it smart to order sex toys off a site your angry, soon-to-be ex-wife can find? No. Is it a good idea to have them delivered to your office? Probably not. But does someone lose their rights to privacy by making poor life decisions? Is it a journalists’ right or responsibility to expose a marriage from the inside out?

The news value of Zach Smith’s actions and the stain he brought to Ohio State cannot be denied. But ethically, there are guidelines journalists must follow to ensure we do not become manipulators of the story, and McMurphy seems to have lost sight of them.

Let’s consider the parts of the SPJ Code of Ethics that applies and could/should have been easily referenced:

- Balance the public’s need for information against potential harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance or undue intrusiveness.
- Show compassion for those who may be affected by news coverage.
 - Recognize that legal access to information differs from an ethical justification to publish or broadcast. And here is my favorite:
 - Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity, even if others do.

I invited McMurphy to come to Ohio State to explain to our students how such decisions were made, but he declined, citing safety concerns that, based on Twitter, were logical.

Without his insights, I have no words to explain to my students the motivation behind this story or what made those item images worthy of being news.

What I do have is a perfect scenario to help them evaluate how ethics are poorly applied.



FIVE QUESTIONS WITH... KATI BERG

BY RHEMA ZLATEN, MEMBER GRADUATE STUDENT COMMITTEE



I had the privilege of chatting with longtime MED member Professor Kati Tusinski Berg, a lively PR-focused ethics scholar and teacher out of Marquette University. Berg completed her B.A. and M.A. in communication at Saint Louis University. Then she worked professionally as an associate for Public Relations Services in Eugene, OR

and also completed her Ph.D. in Communication and Society from the University of Oregon. Berg is now an associate professor and chair of the department of strategic communication at Marquette University, where she has taught since 2006.

Berg's areas of research and teaching specializations include advocacy public relations, ethics, lobbying, corporate responsibility and social media. She teaches a range of public relations subjects, from Principles of Public Relations to Communication as Ethical Practice (graduate seminar), Issues in Corporate Communication and Corporate Social Responsibility. She has written for many journals and books, and she is most proud of the work that she has done in CSR, research "that has moved from descriptive research to critically analyzing the role of corporations in society with the latest piece in JME on the ethics of Coca-Cola's PR practices," Berg said.

She has also received three Page Legacy Scholar grants over the last seven years, and she is currently working as a Co-PI with Dr. Kim Sheehan of the University of Oregon on a project titled "Is Mission Driven More Motivating than Profit Driven? An Examination of Bike Sharing Programs" with the latest of those grants. Berg answered questions for me about how ethical frameworks help form her research, how her professional experiences have shaped how she teaches ethics, tips for

integrating media ethics principles into coursework, her MED involvement, and what she envisions for the future of PR ethics research.

How have you incorporated ethical concepts, theories or principles into your research?

Ethics has always been at the center of my research going way back to my thesis research in 2002 (wow...that's a long time). My dissertation research focused on the ethics of lobbying using the TARES test and my most recent work uses Habermas's theories of communicative action and Principle U to propose a new direction for evaluating public relations ethics.

How have your professional experiences shaped your research and teaching of media ethics?

When I was a graduate assistant at Saint Louis University I mostly did media relations work for the university hospital and health sciences center. I clearly remember thinking that PR had to be more than getting our doctor on the local news before the competing university hospital. This realization that PR should be and is more than media relations prompted me to critically analyze the role of PR in society, particularly the ethics of persuasion.



Kati Berg

What are some tips you have for teaching media ethics principles, from public relations classes to standalone media ethics courses?

I work really hard to integrate ethics into every lecture in PR principles and PR strategies because it cannot be a one-day, one-chapter discussion. Ethics must be the cornerstone of the practice from the beginning. I think it is important to try to breakdown the theories in a way that students can easily see the application in current situations.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

How did you get involved with the Media Ethics Division?

One of the graduate students at the University of Oregon, Wendy Wyatt, was a member of the media ethics division, so she encouraged me to attend a business meeting and I've been hooked ever since. We still connect at MED events at AEJMC. My dissertation adviser, Dr. Tom Bivins, was and still is an active member of the division, so he also influenced my involvement. I was also lucky enough to participate in an ethics colloquium early in my career at Oregon where I had the opportunity to meet, learn from and collaborate with ethics scholars who were also very active members in MED. Honestly, the MED has been the most welcoming and supportive group of people I have come in contact with during my academic career. I am so blessed to have it in my life.

What do you see as the most important current research needs facing PR ethics?

I'd like to see more research on how ethical dilemmas are hashed out in the workplace. Who is in the discussion? What obligations are discussed? How are competing loyalties leveraged when push comes to shove? The idea of two-way symmetrical communication as the most ethical model of public relations makes sense in theory but in practice the balance does not always make sense for organizations. So then how do we strive for ethical communication? There must be transparency, trust and integrity in all communication.



NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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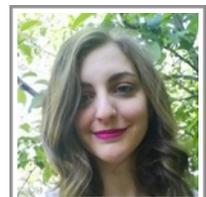


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AND THE WINNERS ARE...

The annual MED business meeting at AEJMC was literally full of surprises, and awards. Pictured here are the outstanding MED members being recognized for their hard work.



Virginia Harrison (left) won the Carol Burnett Award and top MED student paper (presented by Ann Auman (center) and Marlene Neill (right))



Lee Wilkins receives the MED Outstanding Service Award.



The winners for the top MED faculty paper, Elizabeth Bent (left) and Kimberly Kelling (not pictured, Ryan Thomas).



Deborah Dwyer (left) placed second in the AEJMC division for student paper.



Lindsey Palmer won the Professional Relevance Award for her paper, "Ethically Listening to Different Perspectives: News Fixers' Thoughts on the Dangers They Face in the Field."



Nicole Kraft (left) receives the MED Teaching Award from Jan Leach.



MED'S SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE

BY YAYU FENG, GRAD STUDENT COMMITTEE

The MED twitter account (@AEJMCethics) started to tweet two weeks before the 2018 AEJMC conference. It connected with some other media ethics organizations, MED officials, and other AEJMC division and group accounts. Before the conference, it promoted the latest MED newsletter content, including division news, the mentorship program feedback, the 9th edition of Media Ethics: Issues and Cases, the Poynter KSU media ethics workshop, and more. It's also posted previews for the conference, interacting with panelists and presenters.

During the conference, it shared news and quotes from division members, posted reminders of MED sessions, and shared photos of MED members at the conference. At the conference, Katy Culver, the social media officer then, was giving out swags and prizes from Poynter for people who posted with @AEJMCethics, encouraging people to engage with the account. At the end of the conference, the account had 82 tweets in total and 53 followers, it has 130 likes and 32 RTs for its original tweets, and many likes for its retweets with comments as well.

After the conference, the account is continuing to post information about conference calls, various ethics centers' events, interesting workshops, news about division members, and ethics-related news. Most recently, it co-hosted a twitter chat with AEJMC PR division, in honor of #EthicsMonth. The theme of this chat was ethics education, and topics include honesty, transparency, and ethics assignments and mentoring. The account did up-front promotion for the event, and interacted with participants and hosts through replying and retweeting during the event.

Currently, the account has 84 followers and 209 tweets. Going forward, the account will continue to update on a daily basis, tweeting and retweeting ethics-related articles and news, with postings from the MED newsletter and MED members, and interaction with followers and other organizations. <https://twitter.com/AEJMCethics>.

MEDIA ETHICS DIVISION CO-SPONSORS TWITTER CHAT FOR ETHICS MONTH

BY MARLENE NEILL, VICE HEAD & PROGRAMMING CHAIR

The Media Ethics Division joined with the Public Relations Division of AEJMC and the PRSA Educators Academy to sponsor a joint Twitter Chat on Sept. 18 titled "Preparing Students for Ethical Careers in Journalism & Public Relations."

Panelists included Drs. Kati Berg, associate professor at Marquette University; Katie Place, associate professor at Quinnipiac University and Diana Sisson, assistant professor at Auburn University. Other Media Ethics Division members participating included Marlene Neill as moderator and Lindsay Palmer communicated using our division's Twitter account during the chat.

The Twitter chat had high engagement with 275 original tweets, 143 contributors and 247 re-tweets in just one hour.



Please join us in congratulating MED member **Lindsay Palmer** (Wisconsin-Madison), who is the co-recipient of this year's Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver Outstanding Woman Junior Scholar Award. Sponsored by the Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver Center for the Advancement of Women in Communication at Florida International University and the AEJMC Commission on the Status of Women, this award is designed to honor junior faculty researchers and encourage them as they pursue their research agendas in the academy.

THE ARTHUR W. PAGE CENTER SELECTS MED MEMBER FOR NEW PROGRAM

MED Vice Head, Marlene Neill has been selected as one of two Scholars to receive the Page Center's first research fellowship. Neill will conduct projects over the next two years that will conclude with a white papers in addition to academic publications. **Congratulations Marlene!**



PLAN IN PROGRESS FOR MED RESEARCH CALLS

BY KATHLEEN BARTZEN CULVER, MED RESEARCH CHAIR

While many of you who presented terrific papers in MED research panels at AEJMC 2018 are likely hard at work on tuning them up for journal submissions, the Division is hard at work on our 2019 calls.

This year, we will be doing three calls:

- Open call soliciting faculty and graduate student papers related to ethics. We value the broadest possible range of theoretical, methodological and pedagogical scholarship, considering ethics across a range of media contexts.
- Special call seeking contributions focused on ethics and teaching. This call will encourage submissions exploring pedagogical issues related to media ethics.
- Special call for graduate students to submit works-in-progress. Arising from ideas generated during the MED business meeting at the August conference, this call is designed to encourage students to consider submission of papers in progress, with the goal of advancing their work with feedback from more advanced scholars.

The Division is proud to offer special recognition in three ways:

- Carol Burnett Award: MED joins the University of Hawaii, the Carol Burnett Fund for Responsible Journalism and Kappa Tau Alpha to sponsor this special paper competition for graduate students. The top student paper and runner up receive special recognition and a monetary prize. Students who submit to the open call are automatically entered into the Burnett competition.
- Professional Relevance Award: We give special recognition to a paper that is most relevant to media professions.
- Top Faculty Paper Award: MED recognizes the strongest faculty contribution to the open or special call with this award, given at the Division's business meeting.

Look for full information on the paper calls in the AEJMC newsletter in January, as well as on the MED mailing list, [Facebook group](#) and [Twitter account](#). We're looking forward to strong submissions that advance our understanding of ethics in media contexts. If you have any questions or ideas about framing and promoting our paper calls, please feel free to [email me](#).



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