



med newsletter



MEDIA ETHICS DIVISION

FALL 2019 • VOLUME 23, NO. 1

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

BY TOM BIVINS, NEWSLETTER EDITOR



I thought summer would never end, but it did, with the usual cooler temps, and, of course, rain. The Northwest is like that. Classes here don't begin until the day after Rosh Hashanah (October first). Nonetheless, we experience the same pre-school year rush to clean up our syllabi, start the inevitable round of administrative meetings and retreats, and scramble to add new teaching materials to our already packed course calendars (last year's case studies are already dusty). Which brings up an interesting question: are "old"

media ethics case studies truly outdated, or are they simply beyond the historical consciousness of our students?

As both a historian and an ethicist, it strikes me that history itself is a case study. Case studies, by their very nature, are historical artifacts, even if they just happened yesterday, or this morning. However, I've heard (and read) that some teachers feel that the struggle to keep relevant includes culling out-of-date case studies—not because they don't still have a lesson to teach, but because they happened prior to the student's own history. It's a bit of a running joke that today's students don't want to hear about anything older than last week. And, certainly any teacher worth their salt will spend numerous hours updating course content each year in order to bring a more current relevance to their subject. Yet, isn't there still value in exploring the moral mistakes of (CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

Table of Contents

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR1

ETHICS FIRST.... 2

Division Head Marlene Neill wants us to keep ethics always on our minds.

STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS ON NEWS 3

Nicole Kraft wants to know what should and shouldn't be covered.

BANNED BOOKS WEEK... 4

Paulette Kilmer tells how to fight for the free speech of books.

POYNTER-KSU WORKSHOP... 5-6

Jan Leach reports back on another successful event.

A NOTE FROM THE OTHER EDITOR... 7

JME editor Patrick Plaisance asks for your ideas.

NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS... 8-11

Who's who on the MED team, MED award winners, and snaps from the AEJMC conference.

med newsletter

Division Chair: **Marlene Neill**

Vice Head/Programming Chair: **Kathleen Bartzen Culver**

Newsletter Design & Editor: **Tom Bivins**

MED newsletter is published quarterly by the Media Ethics Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Direct questions to tbivins@uoregon.edu



the past and perhaps take note that the bases of those mistakes remain current, and relevant, today?

I still use the Arthur Case from the early 1990s as a major component of my class. Students must dissect the case using an lengthy ethics worksheet I developed many years ago to ensure they cover every angle of this seemingly simple, yet complex case study. They must also be aware of the historical nature and the cultural environment of that period. Attention to detail is the all-important component of analyzing any moral dilemma, and this case presents a mountain of detail to be explored. The lesson, of course, is about the media's privi-

lege to violate a subject's privacy—certainly a current concern grown outsized by the digital age we inhabit. In a way, the Arthur Ashe case is both simple and complex, and wrapped in moral issues that ring true even today. Some say this case study is too old to use, yet, to my students, it's as fresh as today's news. They've mostly never heard of Ashe or barely even know what *USA Today* is (or was). The only element that makes the case different is that they must consider the historical context. That alone is a valuable lesson in a modern world that is seems to be constantly repeating its past mistakes.



KEEPING ETHICS TOP OF MIND

BY MARLINE NEILL, DIVISION HEAD



Like many of our members, I enjoyed the variety of sessions focusing on media ethics at the AEJMC conference in Toronto, especially our debate on anonymous sources with the Law & Policy Division featuring Lee Wilkins, Fred Vultee, Genelle Belmas, special guest Tom Divine from the Government Ac-

countability Project, and moderated by Kathy Fitzpatrick; as well as the teaching panel with Chad Painter, Lindsay Palmer and Ginny Whitehouse. I need to track down those PBS videos on philosophy that Chad mentioned for my class this semester.

I hope all who attended picked up some fresh ideas for your research and teaching. It also was exciting to present our first Penn State Davis Ethics Award for the best dissertation on ethics to Anita Varma, Stanford University. Thank you for Patrick Plaisance for his work to establish this new award.

Thank you to all our members who served as panelists, moderators and discussants during the conference. Plans are already underway for next year's conference in San Francisco. Our programming and vice-chair is Katy Culver and she is hard at work at planning our panels and recruiting other divisions as co-sponsors.

In the meantime, there are plenty of ways to keep ethics top of mind. I would like to thank Diana Sisson, our new PF&R chair, and Kati Berg for representing the Media Ethics Division in a Twitter Chat for public relations ethics month on Sept. 12, jointly sponsored with the AEJMC Public Relations Division and the PRSA Educators Academy. The one-hour discussion resulted in 335 tweets related to ethics education. The panelists discussed teaching

resources and what skills are essential for students to develop related to ethics in public relations. Ethics month has provided me with four different speaking opportunities to discuss my research in the area of public relations ethics including a national conference call with PRSA and a visit to the PRSA chapter in Richmond, Virginia. I also will have the opportunity to discuss public relations ethics education at the PRSA International Conference in San Diego in October along with other members of the Commission on Public Relations Education.

Coming up is the 2019 International Symposium on Digital Ethics and Policy at Loyola University in Chicago on Nov. 7-8. Some of our members will be participating in the Research Colloquium:

<https://www.digitalethics.org/essays/research-colloquium>. The event is open to the public, but registration is required. I hope some of our members will be able to attend.

I am sure that many of our members also are speaking about ethics throughout the year. Please keep us informed of activities that our members may be interested in attending.

I am grateful for all our division volunteer and would like to thank them for their service: Katy Culver, vice-head and programming chair; Nicole Kraft, research chair; Jan Leach, teaching chair; Diana Sisson, PF&R chair; Tom Bivins, newsletter editor; Lindsay Palmer, social media chair; and graduate committee members Yayu Feng and Shiyu Yang. In addition, Chad Painter is leading our mentoring program. I also would like to extend a word of appreciation to Patrick Plaisance who has served as the editor of the *Journal of Media Ethics* for the past five years and plans to continue in that role. Feel free to reach out to us with questions and recommendations.



Marlene

IS THERE A STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS FOR REPORTING A STORY?

BY NICOLE KRAFT, RESEARCH CHAIR



How far back should questionable behavior go before it is no longer part of your narrative?

Ask Carson King. King held up a sign during ESPN's "College Game Day" visit to University of Iowa that read, "Busch Light Supply Needs Replenished - Venmo - Carson-King-25."

Donations to his beer fund "poured" in.

At the \$600 mark, King decided instead to donate to the university's Children's Hospital. Busch and Venmo saluted his effort and agreed to match the funds raised. Donations eventually reached more than \$1 million. Busch Beer said it would give King a year's supply of Busch Light, his face on the can.

It was the feel-good story of college sports.

Until it wasn't.

The fairytale turned nightmare for King on Sept 24 when the Des Moines Register, digging into his background, found retweets he posted as a 16-year-old in 2011 referencing a racially charged segment from the show "Tosh.0."

King owned up to the tweets and actually revealed the controversy and apologized before the paper had even gone to press. But the damage was done. Bush would honor the charitable contribution but severed ties with the hero of the story. The past had indeed come back to haunt.

This story caught my eye, because it came less than a week after another ethical debate among the sportswriters who gathered to cover the Little Brown Jug, a horse race in Delaware, Ohio. If successful, one driver (jockey for harness racing) of a favorite would be a first time winner of the \$600,000 race—and he was a native Ohioan to boot. His cousin had already won the race five times.

It was the feel-good story of horseracing.

Until it wasn't.

You see, the hometown boy had, seven years ago, served a suspension for drug use that kept him away from

racing for 367 days. It was his third suspension—and by far the longest.

If he won, should we include it in the story? We debated both of these topics in class this week, joined by a sports columnist from the Columbus Dispatch. We discussed the challenges of changing contemporary community standards, by which behavior acceptable in one generation/decade/year is verboten in another.

My students argued against publishing the negative aspects both stories. The reason: Why harm these people on such a celebrated occasion for circumstances that happened so long ago?

Why indeed. These stories each involve someone doing something they probably should not have done. But when does the statute of limitations run out?

The class consensus for King was it should have already happened. A sampling of tweets from years ago should not decide fate for a lifetime to come. He's not running for office—he is soliciting beer. These tweets are not relevant and not germane to the story. And he turned that solicitation into a charitable donation that could benefit kids who once had no hope.

On the other case, we were equally firm: We had no choice but to publish the information on the suspension.

This was germane to the story. It was integral to the story. It was a vital part of the story. Redemption is a narrative that fits those who are redeemed. To skip this aspect of the story would fail the reader.

What the media publishes can alter lives indefinitely.

King just wanted some free beer. Now he had to defend an irresponsibility of teen years and, in the ultimate irony, so did the reporter who "outed" him, as he was discovered to have past online issues of his own.

The Jug participant wanted to win a race, not relive the worst moments of his life for prying media eager for a story.

How we treat both is guided by the ethics we bring to our reporting experiences.



CELEBRATING BANNED BOOKS WEEK BECAUSE BANNING BOOKS CLOSES MINDS

BY PAULETTE D. KILMER, UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

How are *Walter (the Farting Dog)* and *Romeo and Juliet* similar?

Both offended someone, and so somewhere a community lost easy access to these characters that live inside the pages of books. Every holy book, the dictionary, and even *Where's Waldo?* have made the American Library Association's lists of challenged and/or banned books.

One school district removed *The Diary of Ann Frank* from English classes because "it's a real downer."

My passion for celebrating the right to read and think began 22 years ago when I saw a poster in Thackeray's Bookstore, a family-run oasis of ideas, humor, and books that closed a few years later. A handful of my students joined me in the graveyard shift of the ACLU's 24-hour read-a-thon at the bookstore, and I treated them to breakfast the next morning.

We had fun, and we met many book lovers who shared our desire to prevent censorship.

When the insurance company ended our 24-hour vigil at Thackeray's, I moved the event to campus. The first year we read some passages from our favorite books, sipped coffee, and planned for a campus-wide festival the following year. In the beginning, we did not think about the future; we worked on keeping the fire of intellectual inquiry burning brightly.

Then, on Dooms Day, the dean of libraries tore down the Freedom Center in the basement and in the middle of August told me we could join the American Library Association in commemorating Banned Books Week. He said we would not find a place, and I thought we might end up in the sunshine on the quad—unless it rained, and then we would huddle under umbrellas. The chair of the theatre department joked that lightning would strike me out in the open and conferred with one of the directors, who agreed for that one year to let us use the little theatre where she was rehearsing a show that opened two nights after our event!

I asked the library director to reconsider, and he yelled at me. I cried. The chair of the Honors Department

stepped in, assured me we could move into the Honors Building immediately, although he was not sure how he would make space for us. We stayed with the Honors Department for many years, and the Honors College now is one of the hubs of the UT Banned Books Coalition. The librarians always supported us as individuals, and so the UT Libraries also serve as a hub. My department, Communication, fills the other post in the center of our alliance. My department has increased support for the event over the years.

Our community partner, Barry's Bagels, gave us warm bagels and coffee during the wee hours of the 24-hour vigil at the bookstore. We retained "vigil" in naming our event because it connects us to Toledo's rich history of defending everybody's right to read and think freely that the ACLU introduced to us.

The manager at the Barnes and Noble Bookstore helped me figure out how to organize our coalition so that no one entity controlled it, which would make it hard for any one unit to shut us down when our embrace of controversial books offended anybody.

The first one to give me a door prize on campus, Marge, at the UT Credit Union, coached me in how to approach others. She handed me the most elaborate and beautiful ruler I have ever seen and told me that my belief in the cause would inspire donations. The Credit Union has given us many classy things since then, now usually a sack full of goodies. We give away 300

goodie bags at the door, 16 Starbucks sack full of prizes, and this dozens of UT items from my MC prize bin. The School of Visual and Performing Arts always buys books for us. We will raffle off 153 books our sponsors have donated this year.

The Marketing and Communication Office on campus also helped us greatly in the beginning and remains a staunch ally. The first few years, Tobin somehow got a box of cool UT stuff for us, which gave us time to find backers.



(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

Our radio station, WXUT, began donating items to us many years ago, too, and today sponsors a WXUT Free Expression Tweet Off where students win T-shirts as well as always generously gives us promotional items. Our Collegian student newspaper students give presentations, host the Jeopardy Game, and restore our venue to its original look so quickly I often am still chatting with those who wish to stand with the banned for a few minutes longer.

The Provost and President at our institution help us in many ways, and the Provost has donated \$500 in books for quite a few years! I cannot go through the list of all our sponsors, who represent diverse groups, including Phoenicia Cuisine, Career Services, and the UT Police Department. A lieutenant explained to me how to make a sign to put in the middle of the quad (who could do it, how to design it, and where to place it so the most people would see it). She said the UT Police love the event,

think what we are doing is important, and to call any time we need help.

I am blessed with 53 partners, including Disability Studies, Law and Social Thought, The Inside-Outside Program, and Women and Gender Studies who paid for food for this year's celebration of the right to read and think freely. The UT Athletic Department is buying us pizza to close the event, which always ends with a performance often from our chair of the Theatre Department and/or his talented wife, A dear friend donated \$100 for us to use for incidental things, like giant dispensers of water.

The battle for the First Amendment is never over, and so our campus legacy festival of unfettered inquiry defends targets of those worried about evil writers corrupting our souls with characters, like Captain Underpants, Scout from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and Cholly Breedlove from *The Bluest Eye*.

It's the best day of the year! Read on!



POYNTER KSU MEDIA ETHICS WORKSHOP RECAP

BY JAN LEACH, TEACHING CHAIR



The most significant journalism is activism.

Or at least it should be, according to Kelly McBride, senior vice president at The Poynter Institute and chair of the new Craig Newmark Center for Ethics and Leadership at Poynter. McBride tackled the provocative

question of whether journalism can be ethical and also activist during the annual [Poynter KSU Media Ethics Workshop](#) on Sept. 19. Activism, she said, puts journalists in a sometimes “weird and confusing” place. Ethicists, she said, can argue all sides of the question.

In history, McBride explained, there are clear moments where journalists document or receive documentation of abuses of power. The dissemination of information about that abuse provides society with the evidence to tip the scales of public opinion and public policy making. That is activism by journalists.

She used poignant stories to bolster her point that all journalistic decisions can be perceived as activism. Some journalism is activism (or at least it should be.) Yet, she said, the moral clarity needed for controversial issues only comes with hindsight.

Sometimes it takes time to recognize and defend journalism activism.

Among the moving examples McBride offered were the recent ProPublica decision to use audio of wailing migrant children at an immigration detention center at the U.S.-Mexico border, a New York Times video showing



Kelly McBride, vice president of The Poynter Institute, discusses journalism, activism and advocacy at the 15th annual Poynter KSU Media Ethics Workshop.

South Carolina police officer shooting a man in the back, and the heart-rending Gene Patterson column written after the 1963 Baptist church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, that killed four little girls.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

Moments of galvanization where public policy or public action become clear seem much harder to come by today, McBride said. That might be because we're numb from the exposure to so much injustice, or because political discourse has coarsened our sensibilities, or because we lack the journalistic leadership to follow-through on stories about social inequality.

Eugene Patterson, writing in the midst of the Civil Rights movement in the South, risked his job to be an

activist editor. People threatened his home and his family. His dog was shot in his front yard (and lived.) Yet, stalwart and activist he remained.

For McBride the question is not whether journalism is a form of activism at all but an ethics question. "How can journalism be the galvanizing force that not only helps citizens see the truth, but recognize the clear pathways to public policy and political leadership that can respond to that truth with moral clarity?"



MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS JOURNALISM TEACHERS TELL THEIR STORY

BY JAN LEACH, TEACHING CHAIR

The journalism teachers from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, told the audience at the [Poynter KSU Media Ethics Workshop](#) how difficult and wrenching it is to cover a story when you're part of that story.

They and their students experienced myriad emotions stemming from the tragic shooting at the high school that left 17 students and teachers dead and another 17 wounded in February 2018.

Melissa Falkowski and Eric Garner, the print and broadcast journalism teachers from Parkland, talked about their responsibilities as teachers and teachers of journalism, dealing with the national media, and how their students showed empathy for the victims and the community.

For Falkowski and Garner, the day of the Parkland shootings started normally, though it was Valentine's Day and there had been a fire drill in the morning. It ended with Falkowski and Garner credited with saving more than 50 students in their classrooms.

During and after the shooting, the teachers helped the student journalists tell stories through memorials, documentaries and special publications.

It was, as moderator Kelly McBride of the Poynter Institute said, compassion from inside a story that wouldn't occur to the media from outside the story.

"(The students) had so much empathy for their classmates... They had empathy for this loss our whole community was feeling," Falkowski said. "They also had insight into this story that the national reporters didn't have."

Falkowski and Garner also discussed sometimes questionable behavior by the media.

"We experienced a lot of negative sides of the media," Falkowski said. Some were very kind "but we also had some outlets who would shove microphones in kids' faces

as they were walking to school... The professional journalism community behaved badly." She said the students learned from their experiences what kind of reporters they want to be.

Garner echoed her sentiments. He said reporters should realize "high school kids can have opinions. And they are smart and they're living through this. They have a voice. They're in the game. Maybe you ought to listen to them for a few minutes and see if you can learn something from them."

"Act. Action. Activism?" the 15th annual Poynter KSU media ethics program explored issues of media ethics and activism. The day-long Workshop included the Parkland teachers as keynote speakers, and two special sessions related to the 50th anniversary of the events of May 4, 1970 at Kent State.



Melissa Falkowski and Eric Garner, both journalism teachers at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, talk during the keynote question and answer period.

A NOTE FROM THE OTHER EDITOR

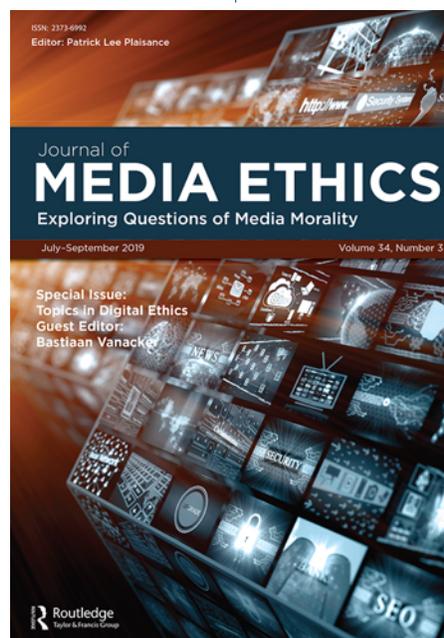
BY PATRICK PLAISANCE



Having had the honor of serving as Editor of the *Journal of Media Ethics* for a five-year term, I'd like to start a conversation about the future of the Journal. Some of you attended the Media Ethics Division business meeting at the AEJMC annual conference in Toronto in August, where I first broached the topic. As I indicated then, I feel there is still much for me to do, but this is a

good time to get everyone's thoughts about Journal content and direction. I very much want our flagship research publication to both mark how much our field has matured and to serve as a vital source & outlet for the new generation of emerging media ethics scholars. I've asked the Media Ethics Division leadership to field your comments and suggestions and relay to me central themes. To start things off, some points worth noting:

- The Journal remains financially healthy, with strong stated support from Taylor & Francis.
- Full-text downloads, T&F's key metric of Journal readership, has increased from 29,363 in 2013 to 44,162 in 2018 – A 66-percent increase.
- The Journal's impact factor has increased from .226 in 2013 to .967 in 2018.
- The decision in 2014, the first year of my editorship, to drop the "Mass" from the title has arguably better positioned the Journal to reflect the direction of scholarship and appeal to a wider audience of scholars.
- Submission numbers have generally remained steady, and the Journal's acceptance rate, while varying from year to year, is typically around 15 percent.
- The 'Cases & Commentaries' section, under the leadership of Ginny Whitehouse, consistently has provided timely, valuable classroom material for all of us.



- The discontinuation of traditional book reviews in 2016 to make way for a new "Trends" essay and "Ethics Elsewhere" feature has enhanced the value of those pages, thanks to Trends Editor Kati Berg.
- More anecdotally, the Journal has been successful in attracting a broader range of quality scholarship over the years, with issues regularly featuring work from "new" names.
- Journal content offers a variety of explicative, qualitative and empirical approaches.

• Efforts to expand the international scope of the Journal are paying off; not only does the Journal feature more scholarship from Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Journal consumption in those regions is increasing as well. The Journal's readership continues to be dominated by North American audiences, but the proportion of that segment has dropped in the last two years from 42 percent to 31 percent.

All of this is to say that I think the Journal is in a very good place. I hope to continue broadening the Journal's international scope and finding the right balance of philosophical and social science content. I'd like to expand the "invited essay" program I began in 2015, where senior scholars offer a focused treatment on a topic of interest.

And I want to look for more opportunities for special issues; you might have seen that the latest issue is a special issue featuring the top papers from the Digital Ethics Symposium at Loyola-Chicago. Bastiaan Vanacker and I have been talking about possibly making this an annual feature, with his new symposium structure that harks back to the sponsored colloquia many of us participated in during the early 2000s.

My renewable Editorship contract is with Taylor & Francis and not with MED or Division membership, but I'd be grateful for your thoughts and suggestions. You may send them directly to me, at plp22@psu.edu. Or if you prefer, send them to MED Chair Marlene Neill or Programming Chair Katy Culver, both of whom can ensure confidentiality. Marlene's e-mail is marlene_neill@baylor.edu; Katy's e-mail is kbculver@wisc.edu.



NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS



2019-2020 MED OFFICERS



Head
Marlene Neill
Baylor University
254-710-6322
Marlene_Neill@baylor.edu



Vice-Head/Programming Chair
Kathleen Bartzen Culver
University of Wisconsin-Madison
608-575-4082
kbculver@wisc.edu



Research Chair
Nicole Kraft
Ohio State University
614-247-6274
kraft.42@osu.edu



PF&R Chair
Diana Slsson
Auburn University
(334) 844-2887
dcs0016@auburn.edu



Teaching Chair
Jan Leach
Kent State University
330-672-4289
jleach1@kent.edu



Newsletter Editor/Webmaster
Tom Bivins
University of Oregon
541-346-3740
tbivins@uoregon.edu

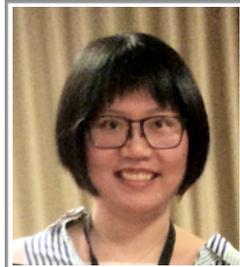


Social Media Chair
Lindsay Palmer
University of Wisconsin-Madison
608-709-6593
lindsay.palmer@wisc.edu

Graduate Student Committee



Shiyu Yang
University of Wisconsin-Madison
syang364@wisc.edu



Yayu Feng
University of Illinois
yfeng42@illinois.edu



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 hand work.



Jan Leach (right) receives the Outstanding Service Award from Katy Culver.



Joseph Jones (left) receives the Burnett Award from Katy Culver



Patrick Plaisance (right) receives the MED Teaching Award from Jan Leach.



Patrick Plaisance (left) presents Anita Varma with the Penn State Ethics Award



Chad Painter (left) receives the Professional Relevance Award (with co-author Alexandra Scherb, not pictured)



Yayu Feng receives the runner up for the Burnett Award from Katy Culver

OUR OWN JAN LEACH WINS THE PRESTIGIOUS DOROTHY BOWLES AWARD



Jan Leach of Kent State University accepts the Dorothy Bowles Public Service Award. The Award recognizes an AEJMC member who has a sustained and significant public-service record that has helped build bridges between academics and professionals in mass communications either nationally or locally, and, been actively engaged within the association.



SNAPSHOTS FROM AEJMC



In a session on the benefits of using philosophy in ethics classes, Lindsay Palmer (top left), Ginny Whitehouse (bottom left) wax eloquent while Chad Painter (below) argues the importance of Emanuel Kant as a cartoon character.





A MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION
FOR EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM
AND MASS COMMUNICATION

