

MED

Newsletter

MEDIA ETHICS DIVISION · SPRING 2022 · VOLUME 25 · NO. 2

Ethics of Digital Communication

by Sorin Nastasia, Newsletter Editor

A PEW Research Center report from 2020 outlined, in regards to digital communication nowadays, several risks as well as several opportunities which have profound implications for ethics pertaining to media coverage and public discourse.

Communication professionals should seek to understand ethics aspects of such risks and opportunities.



The report (<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2020/02/21/many-tech-experts-say-digital-disruption-will-hurt-democracy/>), based on a survey of nearly 1,000 policy experts from government bodies, technology businesses, think tanks, and academic organizations, counted among digital communication risks empowering the powerful, diminishing the governed, exploiting digital illiteracy, and waging info-wars, and among digital communication opportunities evolving individuals, adapting systems, enshrining values, and successfully mitigating disinformation practices.

MED Newsletter

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MED newsletter is published quarterly by the Media Ethics Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

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Watch for future MED Newsletter issues!

Highlights will include:

- Updates on conference preparation and activities
- Updates on Professional Freedom and Responsibility activities of MED
- Updates on articles included in the Journal of Media Ethics

In recent developments ranging from the January 6, 2021 U.S. Capitol insurrection to the 2022 war in Ukraine, risks and opportunities can be seen at play, as digital communication platforms are used, and much too often abused, for various purposes and interests.

According to the experts whose views are outlined in the report, there is a strong incentive for those with political and economic power to use digital communication means to sway audiences and make various forms of private gains. This is not currently matched by the zeal of the citizens' representatives and advocates to use digital communication possibilities to learn about peoples' problems and to deal with them.

However, there are also some reasons for hope in regards to the ethical aspects of digital communication. Collaborative teaching, research, and journalism initiatives in particular have resulted in devising strategies and tools to increase digital literacy and awareness of info-wars as well as to detect sources of disinformation and prevent the content they generate from spreading.

Recognizing the alarming prevalence of fake news and conspiracy theories, and the potential threat to consumers of false information and manipulation, many governments as well as various public and private entities have been investing in education on how to combat disinformation.

Many schools across all 50 states in the U.S. and in global settings have modified their curricula to add courses to encourage students to be critical to the information they find on digital platforms.

The nonprofit sector is also contributing. For example, the News Literacy Project (<https://newslit.org>) offers nonpartisan, independent programs that educate on how to know what to trust in the digital age.

Several fact-checking websites (such as those indicated at <https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/c.php?g=620677&p=4333407>) have become useful for reviewing the accuracy of digital information.

Recently, Google has also launched media literacy activities to teach kids how to be aware of the information they see online, and how to identify fake posts and URLs. They have also partnered with YMCA to host workshops for children and parents.

It is now more important than ever for communication educators, scholars, and students to understand the ethical implications of digital dissemination of information, to reflect on the risks and opportunities involved, and to contribute to finding solutions to reduce the risks and increase the opportunities.



Spring 2022 Updates

by Nicole Kraft - Division Head



Greetings MED friends! I write this on the first day of spring, and it could not come soon enough for those of us in parts of the country where January and February this year were synonymous with cold and ice.

If it's March, the AEJMC leadership must be hard at work on the annual conference (in truth they have been hard at work ever since the 2021 conference ended), and we have firmed up our programming, with the paper call nearing its close.

If you have not yet signed up to be a paper reviewer, I hope you will wait no longer, as we need each and every person who feels they can review to be part of our merry team this year. Our research chair, Yayu Feng, is waiting to hear from you. Here is the signup link: <https://forms.gle/fyTsiEESXN9xhxcA7>

Programming chair Anita Varma has also been hard at work making sure we have as many opportunities as possible to hear from professionals who may not otherwise attend the conference but could surely benefit our panels. She successfully petitioned AEJMC leadership to allow virtual appearances by industry expertise, after original planning would have allowed no online participation. It's one more example of MED leading the way.

The hard work taking place behind the scenes pales in comparison to the work you are all doing in your everyday academic life, and I hope everyone is making their way through what is

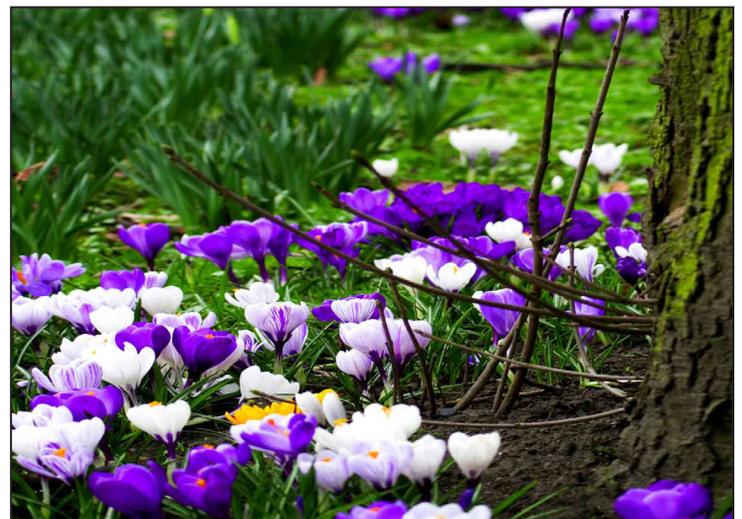
no doubt a challenging semester, quarter, or time of the year.

I don't know about you, but this semester I continue to be faced with a whole new array of classroom challenges from students who are constantly adjusting to an ever-changing new normal. Some struggle academically. Some take shortcuts that challenge us both. Mental health and burnout issues continue to be significant. Change and uncertainty seem to be our only reliable expectation.

Through it all, our best path is to support and care for each other, remind students that their grades do not represent or reflect who they truly are, and do all we can to protect our mutual health and mental well-being.

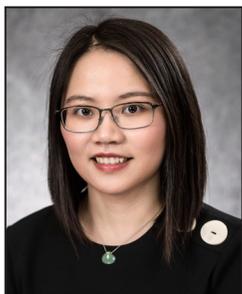
Please know how much your MED leadership values you and all you do, and our excitement at seeing you all in person in Detroit this summer grows with every organizational meeting.

Stay well and see you soon!



Preparing for April 1st!

by Yayu Feng - Research Chair



April 1 is just around the corner, and we all know what that means: It's time to polish research papers and submit them to the Media Ethics Division!

This year, we have the following paper calls:

- Open paper calls
- Special call for paradigm shifts in media ethics education
- Burnett Award for graduate students
- The Penn State Davis Ethics Award for scholars who have successfully defended ethics-related dissertations in the 2021 calendar year.

Details for all paper calls can be reviewed here:

<http://medaej.weebly.com/paper-call-detroit-conf.html>. We look forward to receiving your works!

We are still looking for a few more reviewers.

Please fill out this short survey on reviewing (<https://forms.gle/fyTsiEESXN9xhxcA7>) to let me know your interest and provide some information to help me with matching paper topics with your area of expertise. We greatly appreciate your service to the division!

Submission tips

- This year, we updated style guideline to APA 7th edition. Please review your paper to make sure that this is the style format you are using.
- Create your All Academic account as soon as possible. Every year you must create a new account, and this year, please make sure

you have an account on the following site:

<https://convention2.allacademic.com/one/aejmc/aejmc22/>. Doing this early would allow you to get familiarized with the system and expedite the submission process; it would also greatly help me when it comes to assigning reviewers.

- All submissions must be free of any identifying information. If you use the WORD program, here's Microsoft's guide (<https://tinyurl.com/ySk5f2a9>) on how to remove hidden information from documents. You can also find other tips online on how to ensure a blind review. Please leave yourself some time before the submission deadline to ensure all identifiers are erased, otherwise, a paper with any identifiers would be disqualified.

Other useful information:

Conference Registration and Hotel Reservation will be available during the month of April on <https://www.aejmc.com/home/events/annual-conference/>

The brand-new AEJMC Community website is live now and can be accessed here:

<https://aejmc.users.membersuite.com/home>



Teaching Diversity and Inclusion: A Media Ethics Approach

by Chad Painter - Teaching Chair



Mia Moody-Ramirez’s “Teaching Tips” column in the most recent AEJMC newsletter got me thinking about how we can better approach diversity, equity, and inclusion in our media ethics classrooms.

My goal in this column is twofold:

- to outline ways to better include DEI in teaching media ethics; and
- to provide concrete examples and resources to accomplish that goal.

But first, a quick definition: I think of DEI broadly to incorporate race and ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, class, generation, geography, ability or disability, religion, and a wealth of other “fault lines.” (More on Robert Maynard’s conceptualization of fault lines can be found at the following link: <https://www.media-diversity.org/>).

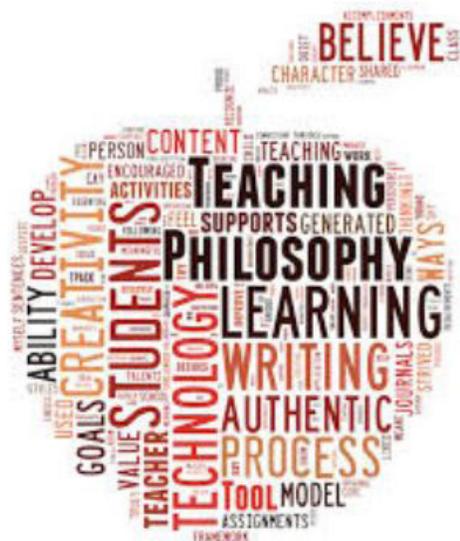
Moody-Ramirez’s entire column is well worth the read; she breaks down DEI efforts in course content and faculty evaluations, and highlights ways for departments to reward diversity efforts. Here, I’ll focus on course content.

In her column, Moody-Ramirez recommends integrating diverse exercises, textbooks, speakers, and programs into our classroom. Most of the leading media ethics textbooks either have a chapter dedicated to social

justice, weave DEI issues throughout the text, or both. This material can be supplemented by journal articles (the *Journal of Media Ethics* and *Media Ethics* magazine are both great resources for DEI content) or examples from the popular press.

One activity I use is to compare the Minneapolis Police Department’s May 25 press release (which is easily found online) following the George Floyd “incident” (their terminology) with what we know happened because of Derek Chauvin’s subsequent trial and conviction for murder. This discussion is a good entryway into issues such as truth telling and the misuse of objectivity by a reliance on official sources.

A second recommendation is monitoring diversity in course syllabi. The first step, of course, is to self-audit your syllabus to ensure that there is diversity both in terms of topics, readings, and speakers (if applicable).





The next step is to adjust accordingly, and there are several easy avenues to increase diversity in your syllabus. Case studies are a staple in media ethics classrooms, and the Media Ethics Initiative (<https://mediaethicsinitiative.org/>) and Wisconsin’s Center for Journalism Ethics (<https://ethics.journalism.wisc.edu/resources/resources-for-teachers-students/>) both have several diversity-themed cases - as do most media ethics textbooks. Poynter’s News University (<https://www.poynter.org/newsu/>) also has several **free** DEI trainings; some I’ve found useful include:

- “Make Design More Inclusive: Defeat Unconscious Bias in Visuals;”
- “Getting Beyond Stereotypes: Better Disability Journalism;” and
- “A Journalist’s Guide to Covering Jails and Police Reform.”

Finally, I would recommend attending the Media Ethics and Newspaper and Online Divisions’ teaching panel “Beyond the Usual Suspects: Incorporating More Women and People of Color Into Media Ethics Classrooms” during the AEJMC annual conference that will be held in Detroit in 2022.

Moody-Ramirez’s third recommendation is to encourage students to join diverse organizations, attend cultural events, and research topics that broaden their knowledge base of different cultures. The first two are very university specific. For example, many universities have SPJ campus chapters, but only some have associations with NABJ, NAHJ, NAJA, or similar organizations. Still, most universities and the college cities or towns have a multitude of cultural events - and covering those events have long been a staple of reporting classes.

Many colleges and universities also have a speakers series that could provide ample opportunities for co-curricular ethics education. For example, the University of Dayton where I teach hosted journalists Nikole Hannah-Jones and Wil Haygood in 2018 and Jelani Cobb in 2017 - each of whom also were open to interacting with students in classrooms during their visits. Finally, case studies provide an opportunity to expand student DEI knowledge. In Fall 2021, my students explored a plethora of topics, including the “missing white woman syndrome” surrounding the Gabby Petito murder, the use of migrant “death” photos in immigration stories, and the inequity of Covid-19 coverages in the media in terms of race and class.

The major takeaway is that incorporating DEI into our media ethics classrooms is important and - quite frankly - fairly simple. A major redesign of media ethics syllabi is not necessary; many of us already include diversity, equity, and inclusion as a fundamental part of the courses. However, it’s important pedagogically to step back occasionally to assess what we’re doing and how we can improve our media ethics courses to best fit the needs of our students.



Source for images in this article:
<https://sites.msudenver.edu/arichmo3/teachingphilosophy/>

Graduate and Social Updates

by Patrick R. Johnson, Graduate Student Representative



Graduate Student Update

AEJMC leadership is rallying around the graduate student membership and finding ways to build a more effective ecosystem that includes the

graduate students.

The new AEJMC Community site will include a student-only community that I will have an administrative role within the association thanks to my position as Graduate Student Interest Group vice-head. We intend to use this place for graduate students to meet one another and form virtual connections that we hope build to in-person opportunities in Detroit and beyond.

GSIG is also partnering with AEJMC to develop a survey for graduate students about their experiences with the organization. Our hope is that we are able to better understand the current status of graduate experiences and build programming to support that.

The DIGS and AEJMC leadership are working together to create a repository of graduate student opportunities. Our start is a list of all the graduate student awards available for paper competitions. We hope to expand this in the future so that any member would become able to submit and all graduate students would be able to participate. We imagine this will be useful for postdoctoral opportunities, grant funding, and jobs.

One of our barriers is finding the best way to help the graduate students have a home that isn't the content specific division to which they belong. My home is MED, but my other home is GSIG, where I advocate to give graduate students a voice and a seat at the table. In my transition to head of GSIG, we are also transitioning to a commission. This means more voice and more opportunities to build graduate student experiences.

One of my priorities, although small, is to give graduate students a voting voice, as they presently cannot vote in AEJMC. This is something I find unacceptable, and it is on my plate to solve it.

As always, if any MED members or graduate students need me for anything, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Social Media Needs

The conference is on its way, and I want to be able to celebrate your accomplishments for the year as we head into it. I will be putting out a form or call for you to submit your accomplishments - books, awards, appointments, hires, promotions, etc. I will then use our social media to celebrate you.

I will also be trying my hardest to be present at MED sessions in Detroit, but I have a full schedule. I will be looking for faculty and student involvement to make sure we cover all sessions on our Twitter account.

Announcements



Graduate Student Grants

Many thanks to the following longtime Media Ethics Division members, who made donations to support graduate student attendance at our 2021 conference:

Sandra Borden
Clifford Christians
Tom Cooper
Kathleen Culver
Bastiaan Vanacker
Stephen Ward
Ed Wasserman
Wendy Wyatt

Even though we didn't travel to see others in person in New Orleans, graduate students were grateful for registration support.

Your gifts are an important part of making our division a welcoming and supportive community. Thank you!

As the planning and submissions for the annual conference in Detroit are being finalized, it is time to invite additional donations from MED members. They will be useful for supporting graduate students with accepted contributions to the conference to travel to Detroit.

If you are interested in making contributions for the 2022 conference travel grants for graduate students, please email MED head Nicole Kraft at kraft.42@osu.edu or Kathleen Bartzen Culver at kbculver@wisc.edu.

Call for Papers

The Don W. Davis Program in Ethical Leadership is seeking manuscripts for the "Media Challenges to Digital Flourishing" symposium. Submission deadline is April 15, 2022.

The purpose of the symposium is to foster advanced theorizing in the field of media ethics and to open opportunities for interaction with discussants and the symposium's two keynote senior scholars. Up to 12 manuscript authors will be selected and provided with travel and lodging support. Top submissions will be considered for inclusion in a special issue of the *Journal of Media Ethics*.

Original manuscripts addressing issues in media ethics and communication technology are welcome. Manuscript submissions must be no longer than 9,000 words (not including figures, tables, and references). Send submissions to Patrick Lee Plaisance at plp22@psu.edu.



Book Announcement

Stephen J.A.Ward, editor.

Handbook of Global Media Ethics.

ISBN:

978-3-319-32103-5 (e-book)

978-3-319-32102-8 (printed book)

Publisher:

Springer International Publishing, 2021

<https://link.springer.com/book/9783319321028>

Assisted by six media scholars, I edited this book as a timely resource for teachers, researchers, students, and citizens on ethics of global media. It is the first comprehensive handbook outlining the problems, issues, principles, methods, and future of this emerging area of ethics.

The book's 70 chapters are spread over two volumes featuring original research by 76 authors around the world. The two volumes are divided into seven sections or topic areas. Each area was overseen by a separate editor. The chapters range from the theoretical, such as the methods, aims, and theory of global media ethics, to the practical, for example how to cover global issues like a pandemic or agents of misinformation. Each topic area is introduced by the editor in charge, plus there are suggestions for future reading.

This was an ambitious and complex undertaking. I see it as a milestone in media ethics. It is one more step in showing, concretely, how moral globalism - the philosophy behind this book - can be implemented. Some day, I hope, media ethics will be global media ethics, and the fact that it is "global" will be taken for granted.

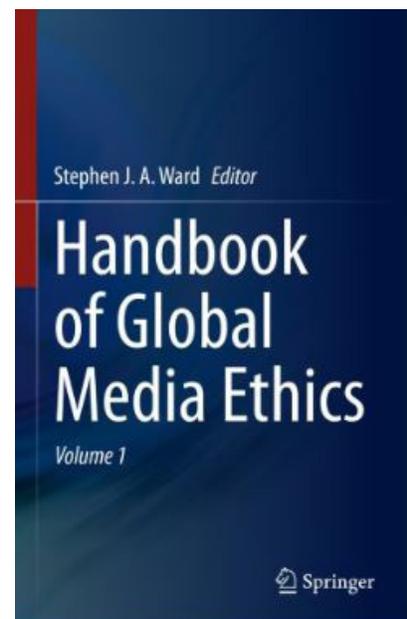
The project was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This required persistence and dedication by the authors and my distinguished section editors, professors Richard Keeble, Wendy Wyatt, Clifford Christians, Kathleen Culver, Katherine Bell, and Ian Richards. As editor-in-chief, I was assisted by professor Christians who doubled as section editor and managing editor.

Why a global media ethics? The advent of new

media that is global in reach and impact has created the need for a media ethics that is global in principles and aims. Much of existing media ethics, such as codes of ethics and practices, are too parochial and aimed at professional practitioners. This approach fails to provide adequate normative guidance for a media that is digital, global, and practiced by professional and citizen. A global media ethics seeks to define what responsible public journalism means for a global media era.

About the Author:

Stephen J.A.Ward, Ph.D., is an internationally recognized author, media ethicist, and historian of ideas whose research is on the ethics of global digital media as well as the rise of extreme media and its impact on democracy. He is professor emeritus and Distinguished Lecturer on Ethics at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada. He has written and edited 10 books on media ethics, including the award-winning *Radical Media Ethics* and *The Invention of Journalism Ethics*. A former war reporter, he is founding director of the Center for Journalism Ethics at the University of Wisconsin, co-founder of the UBC School of Journalism in Vancouver, and former director of the Turnbull Media Center at the University of Oregon in Portland. He has won the President's Award for lifetime contribution to journalism from the Canadian Association of Journalists.



Book Review

by Tom Cooper, Professor Emeritus
Visual and Media Arts, Emerson College



The Handbook of Global Ethics, edited by Stephen J.A. Ward and a team of sub-editors, is now available from Springer International Publishing both as a print book and as an e-book.

Ward has amazingly assembled a team of seven editors and seventy-seven authors from multiple countries and (sub)disciplines including such veteran leaders as Clifford Christians, Kathleen Culver, Ian Richards, Lance Keeble, Wendy Wyatt, Bob Picard, Robert Fortner, Brant Houston, Patrick Plaisance, Linda Steiner, Brian Winston, and Herman Wasserman. To this group, dozens of “rising stars” and “next-of-kin” astute voices have been added with wide representation across gender, race, geography, and contiguous fields.

The heavy-but-important tome is divided into seven areas, each with its own introduction by a sub-editor and a “further reading” listing, including:

- Concepts and Problems
- Approaches and Methods
- Digital and Social Media
- Global Issues for Global Media
- Freedom, Security, War, and Global Reporting
- Global Ethics and Journalism Practice, and
- Global Media Ethics in a Geographical Framework

The comprehensive and hyper-scholarly work concludes with a substantial index and is embedded with photos, links, citations, and notes.

Ward should be particularly congratulated not only for overseeing the editing of over 1,400 pages, but also for recruiting such talent, navigating the rapids with a challenging publisher, and writing seven of the chapters himself.

Moreover, he was able to encourage Clifford Christians, undoubtedly the senior and central pillar of the media ethics field, to be his “right hand man” and co-editor throughout the project.

The first U.S. Media Ethics summit conference in Massachusetts in 1987 involved only 20 representatives from organizations and publications. Twenty years later at the second summit in Tennessee, twice as many organizations and publications were represented. Ward’s scope is a reminder of just how widely the field is expanding only 15 years later.

The publication stands alone with such wingspan, “who’s who” in the field status, and currency. It also reports the overview and outcomes of the largest media ethics project to date through which the United Nations assembled leading experts from all populated continents and provided curricula for students and faculty willing to participate at the college, high school, and elementary levels of education! (In the interest of full disclosure, I wrote that chapter and was the UN representative regarding *media* ethics.)

To my view, every library, communication or journalism department, and colleague who teaches communication or media ethics should own a copy of this new reference-cum-textbook and share it with their students.

If “Bible” derives from ancient Greek meaning “books” or “a book of books”, *The Handbook of Global Ethics* is a new “bible,” or Torah, or library-of-itself, or canon for the field, which well complements the many compilations, anthologies, reference texts and inventories which preceded it.

Congratulations to Stephen Ward, Clifford Christians, and their large and impressive team.

The book is available at sites such as Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Book Deposit, and Springer Nature. Prices range from \$374 (hard copy) and \$341.85 (Kindle version) on Amazon to \$299 (hardcover) at Barnes and Noble and \$229.99 (both hardcover and e-book) at Springer International Publishing.