

Ethical News

The newsletter of the AEJMC
Media Ethics Division

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Top-notch lineup for D.C. MED '07 program designed to attract

Elizabeth A. Skewes
Vice head/program chair

Those of you going to this year's AEJMC convention in Washington, D.C., will have a great line-up of panels to choose from, and the Media Ethics Division is leading the way with a wide range of panels focused on teaching, research and professional freedom and responsibility.

The division will take part in a special mini-plenary session featuring a Q&A with commissioners from the

Federal Communications Commission. The session, being held Thursday, Aug. 9, at 3:15 p.m., will include Erik Ugland from Marquette University as the Media Ethics Division representative.

In conjunction with the division's special paper call on the development of ethical theory in mass communication, there will be a panel featuring editors from top media journals - including Anantha Babbili from Journalism and Communication Monographs, Stephen Perry from Mass Communication and Society, Tom

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Media Ethics Summit II



Jack Ross photo

Kelly McBride (center), media ethics columnist at the Poynter Institute, and Stacey Woelfels, broadcast instructor at Missouri, were among the 40 media professionals and scholars at the "summit" for the field recently held in Tennessee. Participants assessed the maturity of the field and mapped possibilities for the future. See story, *page 5*.

We gain from strengthened ties to APPE

Come to Washington with ideas to work closer with applied ethics group

Stephanie Craft
Division head

In the four years since MED began holding its mid-winter meeting in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics, our participating members have tackled the ethics of the "new payola" and media bias, brainstormed best practices in teaching values and moral development, and presented research in both invited and competitive panels. Not a bad track record.

Perhaps that's why this year's more modest showing at the February 22-25 meeting in Cincinnati was a little disappointing. MED sponsored two panels - "The Diogenes Dilemma: Finding Moral

Exemplars in Public Relations" and "Who is a Journalist?" - and had just one paper in a refereed paper session. To be sure, lots of factors likely affected submissions and participation. The Media Ethics Summit held the following week (see related article) involved many of the folks who might otherwise attend APPE. Travel budgets aren't infinite, after all. It's also possible that the APPE paper deadline - October 15 - just isn't yet on everyone's permanent radar.

Proposal: MED appoint APPE liaison for 3-year term to enhance ties between groups

Even so, the relatively low participation this year sparked a fruitful discussion at the MED members' meeting about ways to maximize our association with APPE.

I'll highlight those ideas here and ask that all of you mull them over - and come up with a few of your own! - so we can discuss and even implement some of them when we meet in Washington, D.C., in August.

The goal of holding a mid-year meeting from the beginning has

been to bolster the quantity and quality of research in MED. In particular, our division has been interested in ways of encouraging graduate student research and conference participation. To that end, members suggested we consider ways of making the mid-year meeting one focused on graduate students. Ideas for doing that

include: granting "fellowships" to graduate students to attend APPE, holding a pre-conference workshop on teaching, scheduling an informal dialogue on teaching during the conference (perhaps immediately after the members' meeting), and creating special topics panels on case studies and teaching demonstrations. Members noted that emphasizing teaching plays to one of the strengths of the APPE conference, which features many sessions on pedagogy in a number of fields.

Another benefit of APPE is the opportunity to learn from scholars and practitioners in fields outside journalism and mass communication. Members suggested developing ways to encourage interdisciplinary sessions, so that MED

See APPE, *page 3*

The case to split ethics, law classes

Seow Ting Lee
Teaching Standards Chair

Recently I was asked for my opinion about merging ethics and law courses into one. Is it a good idea? My answer is an emphatic no. Such a practice means taking a huge step backward. Twenty or thirty years ago, merged law-ethics courses were common, especially when universities had little access to trained experts in these two fields, but the pedagogical trend today is to separate law and ethics for good reasons.

From a political perspective, the merging of law and ethics courses has its roots in authoritarian societies that mandate journalists and other mass communication practitioners to stay within the boundaries of government or institutional control of mass media. In some countries in Asia, Africa and Europe with authoritarian-style, state-run media systems or strong legacies of such governments, the norm is to combine media law and media ethics in a convenient bundle.

Each of these two fields has a substantial body of content (if they are taught by qualified instructors). Combining the two courses over a semester typically results in a sacrifice of content, usually at the expense of ethics because people tend to fall into the trap of believing that the law should supersede ethics. After all, it is easy to rationalize: unlike the law, ethics is non-binding; you don't go to jail for fabricating a story although you may lose your job. Merged courses are titled "Media Law & Ethics," but rarely "Media Ethics & Law"-a reflection of the precedence given to law over ethics. From a content perspective, it makes more sense to combine media law and policy, but not media law and media ethics.

Although law has its foundation in ethics, and

many legal experts rightly believe that the law is the best enforcer of ethical behavior, this may not always be true from the perspectives of media professionals. Law and ethics are intertwined. Often unethical actions are also illegal, but in many situations, what is legal may not be ethical. A media professional who is adept at avoiding legal restrictions or penalties is not necessarily a more ethical person. From the perspective of moral development theory (Kohlberg, Piaget, etc.), a reliance on the rule of law is not an indicator of high moral development. Mass media is a complex field. For many of the daily situations in which media practitioners find themselves, the law despite its comprehensive nature is not able to cover every sin-

Media law courses can explain why some actions are wrong, but they do not provide important ethical decision-making tools that students need in their future careers.

gle scenario and does not offer enough flexibility in terms of reasoning as that provided by ethical reasoning tools taught in ethics courses. In fact, if the legal system is truly adequate for our ethical needs, why are we seeing more and more ethical lapses committed by media practitioners?

From my experience teaching a merged course called Media Law & Ethics in Singapore, students tend to be confused by the mixing of legal and ethical perspectives. So which is more important, they want to know. We don't want to force such a superfluous choice on students. Having two independent courses is best,

befitting the equal importance of ethics and law in journalism and mass communication curriculum.

Any change in curriculum should also consider the larger picture. How relevant is ethics to young people's lives? A 2006 Josephson Institute's Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth found deeply entrenched habits of dishonesty among high school students, including lying to parents and teachers, cheating in exams, plagiarizing from the Internet, and stealing from family, friends and stores. More disturbing is the revelation that despite admissions of high rates of lying, cheating and theft, the youths expressed little contrition and maintained a high self-image of their character and ethics both in relative and absolute terms. Given this context, there is a greater need for courses devoted solely to ethics and better reasoning skills through the learning of ethical decision-making tools, and exposure to ethical issues and case studies.

In most journalism and mass communication programs, media ethics is the only ethics course that students are exposed to in their entire college careers. A media ethics course can build and train students into better decision-makers. Media law can explain why some actions are wrong (illegal) but the nature of the course content does not extend into providing adequate ethical decision-making tools that students need in their future careers in mass communication. I was a co-investigator with Clifford Christians and Ed Lambeth in a study on the teaching of media ethics published in the *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* in 2004. In the national survey of program administrators and teachers of media ethics-the fourth such survey since 1978-we found an increased standing for media ethics as a standalone course. Clearly, program administrators and teachers are paying more attention to media ethics and viewing it as an important core course in any self-respecting mass communication program.

Mark your calendars!

Join us at APPE in San Antonio February 21-24, 2008

The 17th annual Association for Practical & Professional Ethics meeting will feature:

*** MED's mid-year meeting**

*** Mini-conference on Ethics, Public Health & the Environment**

For registration & info, go to: www.indiana.edu/appe/

Eclectic MED program for D.C.

D.C. PROGRAM, *from page 1*

Schwartz formerly from Communication Law and Policy, and Linda Steiner from Critical Studies in Mass Communication.

This panel of editors will offer their views on the challenges and opportunities for media ethics scholarship in traditional research journals. The panel will be held on Thursday, Aug. 9, at 10 a.m. and is being co-sponsored by the Communication Theory and Methodology Division.

A panel featuring editors and academics talking about "Ethics Teaching in Newsrooms and Classrooms" will be held on Friday, Aug. 10, at 8:15 a.m. This panel, which will try to find ways to bridge the two worlds, features David Boardman from the Seattle Times, Ed Lambeth from the University of Missouri, Carol Nunnelly from the Associated Press Managing Editors, Patrick Plaisance from Colorado State University and Bob Steele from the Poynter Institute. The panel is being co-sponsored by the Newspaper Division.

Two panels are on tap for Saturday, Aug. 11. The first, at 1:45 p.m., examines the law and ethics of the First Amendment, and features Cynthia Mitchell from Central Washington University and Mac McKerral from Western

Kentucky University, and is being co-sponsored by the Law and Policy Division. The second, at 3:30 p.m., looks at how to use entertainment media to teach ethics, and is co-sponsored by the Entertainment Studies Interest Group. Panelists include John Chapin from Pennsylvania State, Beaver, Paul Martin Lester from California State, Fullerton, Elizabeth A. Skewes from the University of Colorado at Boulder, and Brad Yates from West Georgia University.

Make your plans to be in D.C. at AEJMC 2007 August 9-12

The final MED-led panel, being held Sunday, Aug. 12, at 11:45 a.m., focuses on finding a cross-cultural framework for ethics analysis. Presenters include Mark Fackler from Calvin College, Koji Fuse from Drake University, Minabere Ibelema from the University of Alabama, Jacque Lambiase and Mitch Land from the University of North Texas and Folu Ogundimu from Michigan State University. David Craig from the University of Oklahoma is the respondent for this

panel, which is co-sponsored by the International Communication Division.

Additionally, the Media Ethics Division is co-sponsoring several interesting panels, including:

- * A "hot topics" panel that's being developed to deal with the ethics of news coverage of the Virginia Tech shootings. The panel, co-sponsored with the Small Programs Interest Group, is on Friday, Aug. 10, at 3:15 p.m.

- * "Cultural Boundaries and Public Relations Ethics" with the International Communication Division on Thursday, Aug. 9, at 1:30 p.m.

- * "Journalism Ethics Goes to the Movies" with the Entertainment Studies Interest Group on Friday, Aug. 10, at 11:45 a.m.

- * "Authorship: Best and Worst Practices in Academia" with the Communication Theory and Methodology Division on Saturday, Aug. 11, at 8:15 a.m.

- * "Making Ethics Law" with the Law and Policy Division on Sunday, Aug. 12, at 10 a.m.

Finally, for your calendars, the MED members' meeting will be on Saturday, Aug. 11, at 7 p.m. this year. Updates and a summary of the research paper sessions will be announced in the summer newsletter. Hope to see you in D.C.

Strengthening ties to APPE

APPE, *from page 1*

members aren't just talking to each other at APPE, and having our own keynote speaker who might attract attendance from other disciplines. Someone with expertise in convergence or new media might fit the bill, for example.

Whatever we decide to do, MED needs to appoint a liaison to improve the consistency of our communication with APPE, whose executive director, Brian

Schrag, has been generous in providing slots on the schedule for us. So far, MED heads such as myself have taken on the job of communicating with Brian. But a one-year term doesn't allow for much institutional memory to develop. On our August agenda will be a proposal to appoint an APPE liaison for a three-year term. MED also will work on improving communication about APPE events and deadlines by making use of the improved email listserve.

A couple final notes: First, I'd like to formally thank David Boeyink for handling the APPE paper competition for us so graciously and seamlessly every year. Second, next year's APPE meeting is scheduled for February 21-24, 2008, in San Antonio. Mark your calendars for the October 15 paper deadline. Finally, for more information about APPE, check out the website <http://www.indiana.edu/~appe/> at:

'07 teaching workshop: Accountability

Once again, the Media Ethics Division will put the spotlight on teaching in a pre-convention workshop being held on Wednesday, Aug. 8, from 1 to 6 p.m.

The workshop, "How Do You Teach Accountability in a Media Ethics Class?" will be moderated by William A. Babcock from California State, Long Beach, and will feature presentations by:

- * Mathew Cabot, California State, Long Beach, on the "do not corrupt channels of communication" provision of the Public Relations Society of America code of ethics.

- * Clifford Christians, Illinois, on teaching students to be ethical and accountable when working in new media.

- * Louis Hodges, Washington & Lee, on press accountability in light of the First Amendment.

- * Margaret Patterson, Duquesne, on teaching theories of accountability to post-modern students.

- * Lee Wilkins, Missouri, on engaging students in discussions about media accountability.

The workshop is open to faculty, professionals and graduate students, but enrollment is limited to 30 participants. The workshop fee, which is payable when you register for the conference, is \$50 for faculty and professionals, and \$40 for graduate students. Pre-registration for the workshop is required. You may sign up with your convention registration under "MED Teaching Accountability" For more information, contact workshop director William Babcock at (562) 985-1730 or wbabcock@csulb.edu.

South Africa session focuses on global ethics

Shakuntala Rao
SUNY-Plattsburgh

Several members of Media Ethics Division of AEJMC recently met for a roundtable session March 15-17 to discuss global media ethics at the Stellenbosch Institute of Advanced Study at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. According to one of the co-organizers, Stephen Ward (University of British Columbia), "We decided to organize a roundtable to add to the momentum toward a global media ethics. We wanted in-depth discussions that advanced the field, while providing a platform for future scholars. The need for a responsible, diverse global approach to media is no more evident than in Africa and South Africa." Herman Wasserman, fellow organizer and professor of journalism at Stellenbosch, added, "We live amid a global media revolution that is blurring geographical and cultural boundaries. The result is that we need media ethics that is global in its understanding and reach. The Stellenbosch meeting was the first one in what will hopefully become a yearly event."

Scholars were asked to distribute full-length papers prior to the meeting. At the meeting, each participant was asked to present his or her paper followed by two hours of discussion. The research

papers were divided into two categories:

Ongoing scholarly work concerned with a universal ethics that is global in its reach. This effort focused on the search for common human values that bind all human beings and on which a normative media theory and ethics could be developed.

The use of case studies as a way to explore the potential of global media ethics. Scholars integrated specific theories such as postcolonialism, feminism, postmod-



Cliff Christians (Illinois, USA) makes a point during the global ethics roundtable session at Stellenbosch University in South Africa in March. He is flanked by Fackson Banda (Rhodes University, South Africa), left, and Kaarle Nordenstreng (Tampere, Finland).

ernism, ubuntuism, liberalism, ethics of care and Islamic ethics in efforts to enrich the larger discussions of global media ethics.

The next roundtable is being planned in Taipei, Taiwan. Details are to be announced later.

Here's a list of the papers presented:

- * Fackson Banda (Rhodes University, South Africa): "Negotiating journalism ethics in Zambia: Towards a 'glocal' ethics?";
- * Clifford Christians (Institute of Communications Research, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, US): "The ethics of universal being";
- * Ying-Chun Hsieh (Department of Journalism, National Chengchi University) and
- Ching-Chen Hsieh (Institute of

Philosophy as the foundation of normative media theory: Questioning African Ubuntuism as A framework";

* Ali Mohamed (Department of Art History and Communication Studies, McGill University, Canada): "Journalistic ethics and responsibility in relation to freedom of expression: an Islamic perspective";

* Kaarle Nordenstreng (Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Tampere, Finland): "What is universal in the world of difference?";

* Shakuntala Rao (Department of Communications, State University of New York, US): "Postcolonial theory and global media ethics: a theoretical intervention";

* Stephen J. A. Ward (School of Journalism, University of British Columbia, Canada): "A theory of patriotism for journalism";

* Herman Wasserman (Department of Journalism, University of Stellenbosch): "Finding the global in the particular: Media ethics and human dignity in the postcolony";

* Lee Wilkins (School of Journalism, Missouri University, US): "Connecting care and duty: How neuroscience and feminist ethics can contribute to understanding professional moral development";

* Gebremedhin Simon (Faculty of Journalism and Communications, Addis Ababa University): "Media ethics in Ethiopia".

Information Science, Academia Sinica, Taiwan): "The social responsibility of news media-the case of nuclear energy news reporting in Taiwan";

* Pieter Fourie (Department of Communication Science, Univer-

Help recruit grad students to AEJMC

As a Ph.D. student at the University of North Carolina, I found it was pretty much expected that we would join AEJMC. From almost the first day we arrived, we heard about "presenting at AEJ." I believe this culture help set the proper expectations for graduate students who would one day be faculty.

AEJMC is an integral part of a graduate student's socialization into academia. Yet while it is in their best interest to join the organization as early as possible, some students might hesitate to take that step. A nudge from a trusted

faculty member might be just what they need. Here are some proven ways that you can get graduate students involved with AEJMC

1. In your classes, require a research paper that can be submitted to a regional or annual AEJMC conference. Set due dates with the AEJMC deadlines in mind.

2. Partner with graduate students to conduct research beyond coursework to be presented at AEJMC-sponsored conferences. This research adds credibility by linking students' work with nationally known scholars.

3. Walk your advisees around at an AEJMC conference to introduce students to the people who might one day hire them. On a personal level, introducing graduate students to established faculty members helps to make students feel more comfortable as scholars.

4. Encourage your advisees to get involved in a division related to their research interests. This helps graduate students realize that they can contribute to the organization.

-Sue Westcott Alessandri
 Syracuse University

Media ethics: Assessing our growth

'Summit' of scholars and media professionals review maturing of the field

Mike Kittross
Media Ethics magazine

The recently held second "U.S. Media Ethics Summit" conference in as many decades provided dozens of media professionals and scholars an opportunity to take the pulse of the field, strengthen networks and listen to former Vice President Al Gore.

The first conference was held twenty years ago in the Boston area. One of the purposes of the second summit, held February 27-March 2 at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, was to take a measure of the development of the field over the preceding two decades.

To that end, representatives of 18 organizations told the other participants what their organization had accomplished and what they presently were working on, and another 17 "elders," some of whom had been present at both summits, gave their views. Additionally, the participants had been provided in advance with two major studies to inform their discussions. The first report, on media ethics education and literature, was researched and written by Cliff Christians of the University of Illinois-Urbana; the second, on public opinion toward media and media ethics (which also presented the first public results of two newly commissioned surveys) was prepared by Tom Cooper of Middle Tennessee State University, and Emerson College. These reports eventually will be made available in full.

The summit was co-convened by Christians and Cooper, hosted by Dean Anantha Babbili of MTSU, welcomed by President Sidney McPhee and Provost Kaylene Gebert of MTSU, and sponsored by the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation, the Scripps Howard Foundation, MTSU and its College of Mass Communication, and several other donors.

It was generally agreed that the growth in the field - represented by the establishment of organizations such as the Media Ethics Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and publications such as Media Ethics - made it difficult to

immediately come to agreement about what the next steps should be, although a series of several dozen draft recommendations were pared down to a dozen "issues" in discussions among the participants. At the summit's conclusion, participants were asked to prepare a personal statement on ethics, think on what they had learned, and prepare for the future.

Summit II also provided an opportunity to strengthen the growing network of ethicists, educators, and professionals in the media. A volume of proceedings of the Summit (and associated materials) will be published in the near future. The proceedings themselves were

20 years after the first media ethics 'summit' in Boston, ethicists & media pros gathered in Tennessee this spring to review the maturing field and ponder its future. Key areas of concern include media diversity, gender equity and portrayal and public relations and advertising policies.

recorded and are presently being transcribed.

Among the 40 or so participants - a number twice the size of the first summit even though some invitees couldn't attend - were representatives of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (Stan Tiner), Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (Stephanie Craft), Broadcast Education Association (Tom Berg), Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation (Taryn Boatman), International Radio and Television Society Foundation (Stephen Coltrin), Investigative Reporters and Editors (Brant Houston), the Journal of Mass Media Ethics (Lee Wilkins), Media Ethics magazine (Mike Kittross), National Communi-

cation Association (Tammy Swenson-Lepper), National Press Photographers Association (John Long), Organization of News Ombudsmen (Pam Platt), Poynter Institute (Kelly McBride), Radio Television News Directors Association (Stacey Woelful), Silha Center for Media Ethics and Law (Jane Kirtley), Society for News Design (Christine McNeal) and Society of Professional Journalists (Clint Brewer). The "elders" not named above included Ron Arnett, Tom Bivins, Jay Black, Sandra Borden, Kenneth Bunting, David Gordon, Lou Hodges, Jean Kilbourne, Ed Lambeth, Chris Meyers, Geneva Overholser, Bob Steele, Linda Steiner, and Stephen Ward. Also present for all or part of the conference were John Seigenthaler Sr., Ed Wasserman, Chris Harris, Peggy Bowers and Norwegian journalist Frode Neilsen.

Gore was one of the special guests who made public presentations for the summit participants. He had received an Oscar only two days before for his documentary production, "An Uncomfortable Truth." Filmmaker Robb Moss also presented an early version of his new film on secrecy, and Adam Clayton Powell III, director of the Integrated Media Systems Center of the Viterbi School of Engineering at the University of Southern California, presented a sobering view of the technological future.

Other topics presented and discussed from the standpoint of ethics (rather than law) were privacy, secrecy, First Amendment issues, media access, regulation, the protection of children, net neutrality, media ownership/concentration, manipulation of digital images and sounds, diversity and gender.

While surveying the growth of the field, participants also emphasized directions for the future. A number of separate "visions for a positive future" were presented in fields such as journalism (presented by Geneva Overholser), media diversity (Anthana Babbili), photography (John Long), design (Christine McNeal), gender equity/portrayal (Linda Steiner), education (Ed Lambeth), and public relations & advertising (Tom Bivins).

Further information on Summit II will be available in the forthcoming volume of proceedings and, in the interim, from Tom Cooper, twcooper@comcast.net, or at http://www.mtsu.edu/~masscomm/ethics_index.html

Continuing ethics ed for journalists?

Regular, voluntary 'short courses' could keep professionals sharp and credible

Renita Coleman
PF&R chair

Seemingly not a week goes by without a new question of journalism ethics popping up. The latest revolves around the media's handling of the Virginia Tech shooter, Cho Seung Hui. While I think journalists did a pretty responsible job of editing the video and refusing to air it repeatedly, public opinion once again condemns the press for "giving him what he wants." But public opinion and the issues surrounding this particular case are not the point; it merely serves as a catalyst for rekindling thoughts about how journalists might put ethics a little higher on their radar screen all the time, not just when a crisis arises.

The idea that I keep returning to involves continuing ethics education for journalists, much the way other professionals earn CEU's - continuing education units - to keep their certifications. Let me state immediately that I am NOT condoning the licensing and governmental or regulatory board oversight of doctors, dentists, nurses, social workers, and other licensed professionals with a capital P. Rather, I am suggesting that journalism, as a small-p profession, emulate the best of that system on a voluntary basis. If every journalist saw it as a duty to his or her professional growth and development to attend short courses on current issues in journalism, surely the profession would reap the benefits.

In many professions, these are one-day or weekend classes on topics that involve new findings and better ways to practice the craft; for example, social workers can attend seminars on the latest techniques for counseling the bereaved or working with clients who have Borderline Personality Disorder. Journalism already has such seminars associated with institutes such as Poynter and organizations such as the Society of Professional Journalists or the Society for News Design. A few even hold short courses and fly-in workshops that serve this purpose. When journalists attend these courses, they tend to return to newsrooms invigorated and eager to share and practice their newfound knowledge.

But attending annual conferences or week-long mid-career workshops and training seminars far from home is costly and time consum-

ing. Before I left the newspaper industry some 10 years ago, I had gone from attending at least one workshop per year - all expenses paid courtesy of my employer - to having to use my own money and vacation time to get to one. It was such a struggle, it made it easier not to go. Newsroom cutbacks make such continuing education classes a luxury, and most journalists no longer consider them a necessity for their professional development. That's a shame.

The short courses or fly-in workshops that

Taking a page from other
professions would cultivate
savvier, better-informed
journalists
and send an important
message to audiences
that journalists take their
responsibilities seriously.

last an afternoon or even two days are a better alternative. They typically start on a Friday afternoon or Saturday morning and end Sunday afternoon. They cost less and are held more frequently and in places closer to journalists' homes. Journalists are more willing to give a weekend of their time for such a stimulating experience. News organizations may even pay the cheaper costs.

I think it would serve the profession well on several levels for the industry to commit to the voluntary goal of having every journalist earn a set number of "credits" each year. For one thing, returning to the classroom to hear about new findings about how news affects readers, or ways to spot potential plagiarism, or learn new techniques in computer assisted reporting would sharpen journalists' skills. For another, it would keep the need to continue our educations fresh in our minds. Additionally, it might instill more confidence in journalists' abilities if their audiences know that they are making concerted efforts to stay current. It wouldn't need to be a mandate, but a value that journalists subscribe to. It would be a stronger affir-

mation of journalists' recognition of the responsibility that comes with their professional freedom.

Most importantly, ethics would be front-and-center in the continuing education credits system, as it should be. In every regulated profession, ethics training is singled out for a certain amount of credits per year. Professionals can choose other credits to match their interests and expertise, but all must take a mandatory amount of ethics education. So should journalists strive to include at least one ethics short-course every year or two.

Ethics educators can and should champion this cause. Furthermore, we should take responsibility for seeing to it that short and affordable ethics training is offered to journalists in convenient locations every year. Costs associated with traveling to the large cities where conferences and workshops are typically held deter many small- to medium-size news organizations' journalists. Instead, it's Peoria here we come!

I was associated with a similar effort by Investigative Reporters and Editors some years back. IRE secured a grant from the Open Society to conduct investigative reporting seminars for small- and medium-size news organizations in small- to medium-size cities around the country. The fee to attend was \$25. Journalists flocked to the sessions. Ethics educators could mount a similar effort. I envision the effort emanating from journalism schools around the country. Each year, four to six schools from different regions of the country could be responsible for coordinating a half-day to two-day ethics workshop. An ethics teacher exists in practically every J-school, and that person could be the workshop leader. Add a professor or two from other nearby schools and a few professionals from local media and it could be a simulating learning experience for all. Foundation funding could be used to defray the costs for teachers and attendants. I predict industry interest would be high.

An added bonus would be the new, stronger ties that would be forged between academia and industry - a relationship always in need of nurturing. I don't have all the details worked out yet, nor the luxury of tenure that would allow me to pursue such a goal, but it is something I plan to keep in mind for the future. Talk about service!

Like the idea? Or hate it? Let's start a conversation. Email me: renitac@mail.utexas.edu.

