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## NEWSLETTER

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### MASTHEAD

Division Head: **Jenn Burleson Mackay**Vice Head/Programming Chair: **Jan Leach**Newsletter Editor: **Erin Schauster**Newsletter Layout & Design: **Tom Bivins**

## ETHICAL NEWS: SUMMER 2015 • VOLUME 18, NO. 4

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- Newsletter Editor Erin Schauster suggests as technology and media landscapes undoubtedly change, there are some ethical trends and crossroads to keep on your research radar

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- Division Chair Jenn Mackay thanks officers and members for a successful year and makes recommendations for the division's future

#### AEJMC MED RESEARCH PANEL SCHEDULE (/aejmc-med-research-panel-schedule.html)

- Research Chair Ryan Thomas is pleased to announce MED had the highest number of submissions since 2010 and thanks those who reviewed papers, or are serving as moderators and discussants in San Francisco; a schedule of sessions is provided

#### AEJMC CONFERENCE PROGRAMS (/aejmc-conference-programs.html)

- Vice Chair and Programming Chair Jan Leach provides a lineup of San Francisco programs to improve professional practice, to collect teaching tips, to be inspired by MED scholars, to network and socialize

#### OFFICER OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE MEDIA ETHICS DIVISION (/officer-opportunities-available-in-med.html)

- Officer elections will take place during our annual business meeting Friday, August 7, 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. Positions include Research Chair, Newsletter Editor, Professional Freedom and Responsibility Chair, Teaching Chair, and Graduate Student Representative

#### DIGITAL MEDIA, MEDIA CONGLOMERATION AND RESPONSIBILITY (/digital-media-media-conglomeration-and-responsibility.html)

- Professional Freedom & Responsibility Chair Chad Painter reviews the sale of The Dispatch Printing Company's print publications to New Media Investment Group Inc. in regard to the ethical issues of media conglomeration

#### TEACHING COLUMN (/teaching-column.html)

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#### MEDIA ETHICS MAGAZINE CALL FOR PAPERS (/media-ethics-magazine-call-for-

**papers.html)**

- *Media Ethics* invites MED members to submit articles, essays, polemics, research reports, case studies, commentaries, bibliographies, and more for the Fall 2015 issue; submissions are due September 8

**POYNTER KSU MEDIA ETHICS WORKSHOP SEP 17 (/poynter-ksu-media-ethics-workshop.html)**

- You're invited to join colleagues, media professionals and students at this year's Poynter KSU Media Ethics Workshop on Sept. 17 at Kent State University for a one-day professional development program; for more information go to <http://mediaethics.jmc.kent.edu/> (<http://mediaethics.jmc.kent.edu/>) or contact Jan Leach, MED Vice Chair and Programming Chair, at [jleach1@kent.edu](mailto:jleach1@kent.edu) (<mailto:jleach1@kent.edu>).

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## TRENDS AND CROSSROADS IN MEDIA ETHICS

BY ERIN SCHAUSTER, NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Media ethics as cross-disciplinary scholarship presents challenges and trends that affect journalism, advertising, public relations, entertainment, social media, organizations, leadership, financial models and education to name a few. Take a look at our AEJMC schedule ([/aejmc-med-research-panel-schedule.html](#)) and you'll soon grasp the diversity of topics. As technology and therefore media landscapes undoubtedly continue transitioning, there are some ethical trends and crossroads to keep on your research radar.

Painter's article ([/digital-media-media-conglomeration-and-responsibility.html](#)) addresses the recent sale of The Dispatch Company's print publications to New Media Investment Group Inc. The sale presents ethical issues related to media conglomeration, which can affect the locality of news and voice, loss of diversity and control. While media conglomeration is nothing new, the increasing dearth of independent organizations also affects advertising and public relations agencies; across the globe, agencies are publically held by one of the "big four" holding companies: Interpublic, Omnicom, Publicis and WPP. Associated challenges are those of roles and responsibilities including ones related to content, such as native advertising written by journalists, agencies and clients. Other challenges are ones related to changing financial models, such as commission-based models and programmatic buying.

According to a recent article (<http://adage.com/article/digital/programmatic-half-total-display-ad-revenues/299440/>) in *Advertising Age*, programmatic buying accounted for \$10.1 billion of total internet advertising revenue in 2014. Publishers accounted for 45% of this revenue and both advertising and public relations agencies offer this media buying option to their clients. Programmatic buying is based on data mining or the tracking and targeting of audiences. However, as an automated system, the process is fraught with deception and digital ad fraud. Ethical concerns relate to the transparency of tracking and reporting as well as the inconsistencies in pricing and commissions passed on to the client. Due to the multiple players involved, future research might examine and compare perspectives from publishers, journalists, agency executives and marketers.

The multi-player landscape also influences content: editorial, strategic and the blurring of the two. Research regarding the ethics of native advertising was presented in Montreal last year, and while advertorials have been around for decades, emerging media complicates the practice and ethics of paid content posing as editorial. Native advertising blurs the lines between what is paid media, such as a display ad, and what is earned media, such as a news story picked up by a paper based upon a press release. As a result, roles and responsibilities between journalists, public relations and advertising executives are blurring. Future research might explore these new roles and influences on the ethics of native advertising.

One final trend to note is the changing nature of organizations. Again referencing Painter's article, he notes our digitally-dominate information marketplace and its changing nature. One thing that will remain constant in media industries is change, including technological developments. Telecommuting is no longer an intriguing fad; brick and mortars are crumbling; information dissemination and consumption is digital and fleeting; bloggers are augmenting news and advertising content; and services are outsourced and automated. These emerging trends mandate an organizational approach to research, to get in and embed ourselves as researchers and observers into newsrooms and agencies, shadowing digital journalists, and interviewing marketers.

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## THANKS FOR A GREAT YEAR

By **Jenn Burleson Mackay**, Division Chair

Dear Media Ethics Division members:

It has been a pleasure to serve as your chair.

I hope you have enjoyed using our new Google Group. We've strived to ensure that you received the content you needed without getting your inbox flooded with messages. The group allows all members to contribute content directly to the listserv. If you haven't given it a try, I hope you will consider making a contribution.

We've had an interesting year, which saw a massive increase in paper submissions from graduate students. I'd like to thank Research Chair **Ryan Thomas** for overseeing that process and encouraging that rise in submissions.

Programming Chair **Jan Leach** took the reins on planning our program. She worked with a number of other divisions to provide you with panels on everything from the ethics of native advertising and sports team names to journalistic death

Newsletter Editor **Erin Schauster** has kept us organized, reminding us of deadlines and juggling all of our content. She's been wonderfully upbeat throughout the process. For countless years, **Tom Bivins** has voluntarily handled the layout and design for our newsletter. I've often wondered how much time he devotes to merely finding the right image for a given story. I am grateful for all the contributions they both made throughout this year.

Professional Freedom and Responsibility Chair **Chad Painter** and Teaching Chair **John Williams** have contributed panel ideas and contributed newsletter content throughout the year. They've helped us to maintain a strong, worthwhile newsletter. Those contributions become even more significant when AEJMC evaluates our status as a division.

Social Media Chair **Katy Culver** has strived to help the division connect in terms of social media. She asked members to participate in a social media survey and promoted the importance of ethics online. While she found it challenging to generate social media interest within the division, she never stopped trying.

**Tom Cooper** led the charge to raise money for graduate student travel stipends. He and other members contributed a total of \$300, which the division will use to thank students for submitting papers to our division. Three students will be awarded a \$100 stipend from that fund during our business meeting. I want to thank Tom and the other members who so graciously contributed to that fund.

While we've had a successful year, we have some important issues to consider regarding the division's future:

- We need to increase our emphasis on teaching. We've emphasized research and profession-based content for a couple of years. We may want to consider holding a contest that encourages members to submit ethics teaching ideas to the division. We also need more panel ideas devoted to teaching issues.
- Our faculty paper submissions dropped drastically this year. I'm hoping that's just an indication that many of our members opted not to attend the San Francisco conference. Nonetheless, the lower paper submission rate could be a problematic sign.
- We need to discuss how/whether we want to use social media to promote the division. It's unclear as to how much interest this division has in using social media.

I look forward to seeing many of you in San Francisco. If you're at the conference, please stop by our business meeting Friday, August 7, 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. If you have panel or preconference ideas, please don't hesitate to talk with me, Jan or Ryan.

Thank you for an excellent year.

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## AEJMC MED RESEARCH PANEL SCHEDULE

by **Ryan Thomas**, Research Chair



We have a very exciting slate of research panels scheduled for the Media Ethics Division this year.

Our total number of submissions was 44 papers, our highest number of submissions since the Denver conference in 2010. Of these, we accepted 21 papers, for an acceptance rate of 48%.

We had 15 faculty papers submitted, of which we accepted 9 (acceptance rate = 60%). We had a fantastic 24 student papers submitted, of which we accepted 9 (acceptance rate = 38%). The number of student submissions and the quality of the papers we have accepted give us reason for much optimism about the future of the division in the coming years. We also had 5 papers submitted to our special call in “New Horizons in Media Ethics,” of which we accepted 3 (acceptance rate = 60%). Thank you to all the people who submitted a paper to our division, and to all the people who encouraged a graduate student to submit a paper to our division.

I also want to recognize the 73 people who volunteered their time and expertise to review papers for our competition. The reviews were completed in a timely fashion and, for the most part, offered very thorough and extensive feedback to our authors, regardless of whether the ultimate recommendation was to accept or reject. Finally, I want to thank those that have volunteered to serve as a moderator or discussant for the conference. Whether you served as a reviewer or will serve as a moderator or discussant, your service is hugely appreciated.

Our list of accepted papers emphasizes the diversity of topics, perspectives, and methods that comprise media ethics research, including papers on moral development, advertising ethics, participatory media, media accountability systems, journalistic practices and routines, and much, much more! We have four research panel sessions and one scholar-to-scholar session this year. Here is a rundown of our research paper schedule:

### Thursday, August 6, 8:15 - 9:45 am

#### Discourse, Debate, and Representation as Ethics Issues

- Moderating Marius: Ethical Language & Representation of Animal Advocacy in Mass Media Coverage of the Copenhagen Zoo Saga (\*Top Student Paper\*) *Christina DeWalt, Oklahoma*
- Analysis of Moral Argumentation in Newspaper Editorial Contents with Kohlberg's Moral Development Model (\*Second Place Student Paper\*) *Yayu Feng, Ohio*
- Weekly Newsmagazines' Framing of Obesity, Responsibility Attribution, & Moral Discourses. *Lok Pokhrel, Washington State*
- The Point of Debating Ethics in Journalism: Consensus or Compromise & the Rehabilitation of Common Sense as a Way Toward Solidarity. *Laura Moorhead, Stanford*

**Moderator:** *Ryan Thomas, Missouri*

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**Discussant:** *Chris Roberts, Alabama*

## Friday, August 7, 8:15 - 9:45 am

### New Horizons in Media Ethics

- How Do Ads Mean? A Mutualist Theory of Advertising Ethics. *Margaret Duffy, Missouri, Esther Thorson, Missouri; Tatsiana Karaliova, Missouri; Heesook Choi, Missouri*
- Media Ethics Theorizing, Reoriented: A Shift in Focus for Individual-Level Analyses (\*Top Faculty Paper\*) *Patrick Plaisance, Colorado State*
- A Duty to Freedom: Conceptualizing Platform Ethics. *Brett Johnson, Missouri*
- The Ethical Implications of Participatory Culture in a New Media Environment: A Critical Case Study of Veronica Mars (Special Call Winner) *Murray Meetze, Colorado-Boulder*

**Moderator:** *Jack Breslin, Iona*

**Discussant:** *Theodore L. Glasser, Stanford*

## Saturday, August 8, 12:15 - 1:30 pm

### Scholar-to-scholar session

- The Many Faces of Television's Public Moral Discourse? Exploring Genre Differences in the Representation of Morality in Prime Time Television. *Serena Daalmans, Radboud University Nijmegen*
- Toward an Ethic of Personal Technologies: Moral Implications Found in the Fruition of Man-Computer Symbiosis. *Rhema Zlaten, Colorado State*
- Examining Intention of Illegal Downloading: An Integration of Social Norms and Ethical Ideologies. *Namkee Park, Yonsei University; Hyun Sook Oh, Pyeongtaek University; Naewon Kang, Dankook University; Seohee Sohn, Yonsei University*
- Ethics in Design: The Public Sphere & Value Considerations in Online Commenting Development. *Kristen Bialik, Wisconsin-Madison*
- The Press Complaints Commission is Dead: Long Live the IPSO? *Mark Harmon, Tennessee; Abhijit Mazumdar, Tennessee*

**Discussant:** *Chad Painter, Eastern New Mexico*

## Sunday, August 9, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

### Ethical Implications of Journalistic Practices and Routines

- Journalism Under Attack: The Charlie Hebdo Covers & Reconsiderations of Journalistic Norms. *Joy Jenkins, Missouri; Edson Tandoc, Nanyang Technological*
- When White Reporters Cover Race: The News Media, Objectivity, & Community (Dis-)trust. *Sue Robinson, Wisconsin-Madison; Katy Culver, Wisconsin-Madison*
- The Death of Corporal Miller: Omission, Transparency & the Ethics of Embedded Journalism. *Miles Maguire, Wisconsin-Oshkosh*
- Aggregation & Virtue Ethics. *Stan Diel, Alabama*

**Moderator:** *Karen Slattery, Marquette*

**Discussant:** *Aaron Quinn, California State, Chico*

## Sunday, August 9, 12:45 - 2:15 pm

### Media Ethics at the Organizational and Institutional Levels

- An Update on Advertising Ethics: An Organization's Perspectives. *Erin Schauster, Bradley*
- Peace Journalism & Radical Media Ethics. *Marta Lukacovic, Wayne State*
- NGOs as Newsmakers: Boon or Bane? A Normative Evaluation. *Matthew Powers, Washington*

- What Constitutes Good Work in Journalism Education. *Caryn Winters, Louisiana-Lafayette*

**Moderator:** *Genelle Belmas, Kansas*

**Discussant:** *Ryan Thomas, Missouri*

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## AEJMC CONFERENCE PROGRAMS

by **Jan Leach**, Vice Head and Programming Chair

Why attend Media Ethics Division programs during AEJMC's San Francisco convention next month?

That's easy:

- To improve your professional practice,
- To collect teaching tips,
- To be inspired by current research,
- To network with colleagues,
- To socialize with your MED friends.

AEJMC's convention program is crammed with exciting speakers, presentations and panels. And your MED program is part of that excitement.

For example, drought and water issues are the focus of the annual "Hot Topics" panel we co-sponsor with the Small Programs Interest Group.

"When the Tap Runs Dry: Covering the California Drought," will feature journalism experts from the front lines of the water crisis: Dennis Dimick, executive editor (environment) for National Geographic Magazine; Diana Marcum, the 2015 LA Times Pulitzer-winning reporter who won the award for her portraits of Californians in drought-stricken towns; Kate Galbraith, reporter for CALmatters (a non-profit media organization that explains California's policies and politics), and David Siders, who covers state politics for the Sacramento Bee. Moderating what is sure to be a spirited discussion of this "hot topic" will be John Jenks of Dominican University and Jack Breslin of Iona College.

**To improve your professional practice, check out these sessions:**

- "Journalists in Fear: Covering the News Ethically Despite Death Threats, Terrorism and Dangerous Stories." This panel features Delphine Halgand, US Director of Reporters without Borders; Thomas Peele, investigative reporter and author of *Killing the Messenger*, and Tom Kent of the Associated Press. MED Chair Jenn Burleson Mackay will moderate this discussion on Thursday, Aug. 6 beginning at 3:15 p.m.
- "Student Press Freedom through Policy, Practice and Partnership." The panel features John Bowen, Kent State University; Genelle Belmas, University of Kansas, and Scott Eveslage, principal at Harriton (Pa.) High School. Thomas Eveslage of Temple University, will moderate this session, also on Thursday, Aug. 6, starting at 1:30 p.m.
- "Examining the Practice and Ethical Implications of Native Advertising for Public Relations and Advertising." Panelists are Shannon Bowen of the University of South Carolina; Steve Rubel, Edelman public relations firm; Guy Golan, Syracuse University; Debbie Yount, University of Oklahoma, and Bartosz Wojdyski, University of Georgia. Moderator for this Thursday, Aug. 6 session starting at 5 p.m. will be with Beth Egan, Syracuse University.
- "Too Offensive to Keep or the PC Brigade Gone Awry?: Native American Team Names and Mascots in the 21st Century." Panelists are Janie MacCauley, Associated Press; Ted Kian, Oklahoma State University; Kelly Poniatowski, Elizabethtown (Pa.) College, Mark Goodman, Kent State University, and a member of MED. Danielle Sarver Coombs will moderate this session on Friday, Aug. 7, at 11:45 a.m.
- "Reporting the News When Journalists Are the News." This panel features Ted Glasser of Stanford; Stephanie Craft, University of Illinois; Audrey Cooper, San Francisco Chronicle, and Fred Vultee, Wayne State University. Paul Voakes of the University of Colorado will moderate this session on Friday, Aug. 7 at 3:15 p.m.
- "The Pillory Effect: Public Shaming as a Function of News Media." This panel features Lisa Waller, Deakin University, Australia; Joseph Campbell, American University, and Ed Wasserman, University of California, Berkeley. John C. Watson of American University will moderate this session on Saturday, Aug. 8, at 3:30 p.m.

**To collect teaching tips, check out the "Hot Topics" session, above, and other teaching programs including:**

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- Teaching Ethics through Campus Media.” This panel will look at how campus media provide hands-on environments where students can discover ethical concepts such as fairness, balance, conflicts of interest and social responsibility. Panelists are Adam Maksl, Indiana University Southeast; Chad Painter, Eastern New Mexico University; Bradley Wilson, Midwestern State University, and Dan Reimold, St. Joseph’s University. Moderator for this session is John Williams of Principia College. It will be Thursday, Aug. 6, beginning at 11:45 a.m.

**To be inspired by current research MED conference-goers, you can visit four different research sessions and one poster session featuring MED scholars. These are scheduled as follows:**

- Thursday, Aug. 6, 8:15 a.m., “Discourse, Debate and Representation as Ethics Issues.”
- Friday, Aug. 7, at 8:15 a.m.; “New Horizons in Media Ethics.”
- Saturday, Aug. 8, at 12:15 p.m., Scholar-to-Scholar poster session.
- Sunday, Aug. 9, at 11 a.m., “Ethical Implications of Journalistic Practices and Routines.”
- Sunday, Aug. 9, at 12:15 p.m. “Media Ethics at the Organizational and Institutional Levels.”

**Finally, there are opportunities to network and socialize.**

- The Media Ethics Division business session/members’ meeting is Friday, Aug. 7, 1:30-3 p.m. in Sierra A in the convention hotel. An off-site brunch social is planned for Saturday, Aug. 8, 12:15-1:30 p.m. at Farmer Brown, a restaurant close to the convention hotel. Reservations are required for the brunch. Contact MED Chair Jenn Burleson Mackay at jemackay@vt.edu (mailto:jemackay@vt.edu) for information.

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## OFFICER OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE IN MED

By **Jenn Mackay**, Division Chair

Officers provide a foundation for the division. They write articles for our newsletter and assist with annual conferences.

Serving as an officer is a great way for faculty members and graduate students to learn more about the division. It provides an opportunity to meet other people across the division. I found that serving as an officer helped me to discover new teaching and research ideas. As an added bonus, serving as a division leader is an opportunity to build your curriculum vita.

Officer elections take place during our annual business meeting. This year a meeting will be held during the annual AEJMC conference on Friday, **August 7, 1:30 to 3 p.m.** The business meeting is open to all division members and those interested in joining our division. It's an opportunity for old friends to reunite and for newer division members to meet other teachers and scholars.

The election process is casual. Sometimes, an individual will opt to stay in a position for a second year. Often, a single person runs for an individual position. As a general rule the previous officer who held the position and the division chair help officers transition into their new role.

The various officer positions carry different workloads. If you are new to the division or are looking for a position with a lighter workload, you might consider a position such as the professional freedom and responsibility chair or newsletter editor. If you are ready to move into the higher levels of the division, consider research chair.

The following positions are available:

### Research Chair

The research chair is the gateway position into the leadership hierarchy. Normally, the research chair becomes the programming chair/vice head of the division after one year. The following year, he or she becomes the division chair.

The research chair is responsible for writing a minimum of 3 to 4 newsletter articles during the year, which relate to ethics research. The chair also organizes the research paper competition for the next AEJMC conference. He or she makes decisions about the paper call, finds judges for the competition, notifies individuals of paper acceptance, and manages division awards. Typically, the research chair has a heavy workload during the fall semester.

### Newsletter Editor

The newsletter editor is responsible for editing the content for the division's newsletters. We publish 4 newsletters each year.

The editor sets deadlines for receiving the content, reminds officers to submit the content, edits all of the stories, and provides headlines. The editor gives the completed contact to our newsletter designer, Tom Bivins, who handles the visual elements.

This position is a great way to learn about the division structure. It's also an easy way to become acquainted with other members of the division.

### Professional Freedom and Responsibility Chair

The PF&R chair is responsible for writing 3 to 4 newsletter articles about the profession. For example, the individual might write a piece discussing a specific ethics case within public relations. This individual is tasked with considering what professionals are doing right or wrong in the field.

Typically, the PF&R submits a panel idea related to the profession for the next AEJMC conference.

### **Teaching Chair**

The teaching chair is responsible for writing 3 to 4 newsletter articles throughout the year, which focus on the teaching of ethics.

This individual also may be asked to assist with submitting teaching panel ideas to the division. If the division holds a special call for teaching ideas, this individual may be asked to assist or manage that process.

### **Graduate Student Representative**

Our graduate student representative is responsible for helping the division connect with graduate students. He or she writes 3 to 4 newsletter articles throughout the year, which provide a graduate student perspective. We don't hold an election for this position. We accept volunteers who simply want to be involved.

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## DIGITAL MEDIA, MEDIA CONGLOMERATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

by **Chad Painter**, Professional Freedom & Responsibility Chair



This news cycle has been dominated by major stories. Dylann Roof killing nine people in a Charleston church and the subsequent debates about the Confederate flag and gun control. Two major U.S. Supreme Court rulings, one legalizing marriage for same-sex couples and a second upholding the Affordable Care Act. The debt crisis in Greece, as well as budget crises in states such as Kansas and Louisiana. The seemingly daily announcement of another person seeking the 2016 presidency.

With these news stories dominating headlines, even media professionals might have missed the sale (<http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2015/06/03/0603-dispatch-sold-to-new-media-group.html>) of a Columbus, Ohio, publishing empire that ended 110 years of local editorial control of the news.

The Dispatch Printing Company announced June 3 that it was selling its print publications to New Media Investment Group Inc., commonly known as Gatehouse Media, for \$47 million. The publications include the city daily *The Columbus Dispatch*; *ThisWeek*, a collection of 24 suburban newsweeklies; and seven magazines, including *Columbus Monthly*, *Columbus CEO*, and *Capital Style*.

Two weeks later, on June 17, longtime *Dispatch* editor Ben Marrison ([http://www.bizjournals.com/columbus/news/2015/06/17/columbus-dispatch-editor-ben-marrison-resigns.html?ana=e\\_colum\\_bn\\_breakingnews&u=4RsSe2q14GETFNCP3e%20D%252FQ0ed2be4c&t=1434573413%23i1](http://www.bizjournals.com/columbus/news/2015/06/17/columbus-dispatch-editor-ben-marrison-resigns.html?ana=e_colum_bn_breakingnews&u=4RsSe2q14GETFNCP3e%20D%252FQ0ed2be4c&t=1434573413%23i1)) announced he was leaving the paper. He had served as editor since November 1999, overseeing the paper and its staff through awards, job cuts, and a redesigned print product.

The Wolfe family had owned the *Dispatch* since 1905. In a June 3 letter (<http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2015/06/03/letter-from-the-publisher.html>) to *Dispatch* readers, family patriarch John F. Wolfe wrote: "Single-city, independent, family-owned newspapers—long the traditional model of American journalism—found they lack the economies of scale necessary to adapt in our fast-changing, digitally-dominant information marketplace. As a result, few retain that traditional ownership model."

New Media Investment Group owns 550 publications (including 126 dailies) in 32 states.

There are a host of ethical issues inherent with such media conglomeration. A loss of local control could mean a loss of local voices. Conglomeration, when coupled with monopolization such as in the Columbus market, also could mean a loss of diversity or differing voices in the marketplace of ideas. This monopolization was true in Columbus even before the *Dispatch* sale (the company owned nearly all of the print publications in Columbus after buying C.M. Media in 2011), but it could be exacerbated by the loss of local control. Conglomeration, both locally and nationally, leads to less competition and, subsequently, less incentive for innovation or risk. A major media company such as New Media also needs to balance the desires of shareholders with the needs of local stakeholders such as citizens, the community, and local newsrooms.

“You get this homogenization effect,” said Thomas Caywood, a former reporter at Worcester’s Telegram & Gazette in a June 3 *Boston Globe* article about Gatehouse Media. “I think you lose some of the regional individuality. GateHouse is to journalism like what Olive Garden is to Italian food.”

The Wolfes will continue to own and operate WBNS-TV, the Columbus CBS affiliate; WBNS AM and FM radio stations in Columbus; and the Ohio News Network, which supplies news, weather and sports to 70 radio stations across Ohio.

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## STUDENTS SIMULATE PITCHING RNC DEBATE FORMAT

by **John W. Williams**, Teaching Chair



Where will you be Thursday evening, August 6, 2015? You know you should be at the AEJMC Keynote, awards presentations and reception. Where might you be? Watching the first round of Republican presidential candidate debates? Where will you actually be? I'll accord you your right against self-incrimination.



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How could Fox News and the Republican National Committee have failed to check their calendars?

With two weeks before the first debate among the candidates for the Republican 2016 presidential nomination, Fox News, host of the first debate, is still working out details. There are 16 noted and declared candidates (though I could argue 17 with Jim Gilmore, former governor of Virginia), not to mention a number of others (run a Google search for a list of declared candidates). The RNC has decided to limit the number of debates and Fox has decided to limit the number of candidates “on stage.” They will accept the ten candidates who rank the highest in the average of the five most recent national polls as of Tuesday evening, August 4 (5 pm EDT). The remaining candidates were scheduled for a 90 minutes “midday consolation” debate. Fox has just decided to move that debate to 5 pm, reduced to an hour, as the lead-in to the evening’s coverage of the “main event.” The consolation candidates will double their audience as they lose their “face time.” We’re going to fixate on the process and selection of who is “main stage” and who is consolation, and on the debate itself.

As Teaching Chair, let me suggest a media ethics simulation. Fox News and the RNC have been and are going through the decisions right now, though they are probably not thinking in ethical terms, but political, economic and practical terms. These are the very pressures that make ethical decision making so complex and fascinating.

Use the actual situation: the disastrous cycle of 27 primary debates and forums in 2011-12, and the desire of the RNC to bring sanity to the process and not engage in self-destructive “circular firing squad” with 16 (or more) candidates. Be sure to consider the real candidates and their politics and issues. Use your favorite web source for basic data--RealClearPolitics (<http://www.realclearpolitics.com/>) is one of the familiar news and data aggregators.

Organize your students into teams of managers and producers from major networks and cable services pitching their programming to the RNC. The one restriction—set aside the political reputation of your network or news organization. The RNC will sponsor 12 debates (that’s true) and will select eight news organizations (that’s true). Two of the organizations will host three debates/forums each; the other six organizations will host only one apiece (that’s true). The goal of the student manager/producer teams is to win 1) the opportunity to host a debate or forum, or 2) the right to host three of the debates or forums, or 3) the privilege to host three of the debates, including the first and last debates (ratings jackpot, start calculating the ad revenue).

The instructor, as the RNC (now this is where it might get fictional), requests a conceptual proposal that addresses the following questions:

1. As a news organization, what do you see as your role in hosting one or more debates? This question should get the students thinking about the role of the press in our democracy (think Lippmann, Hutchins Commission, “Four Theories of the Press,” and much of what we find in Chapter One of the textbook).
2. Given that your news organization cannot host all declared candidates (one Internet website lists at least 32 declared candidates), how many do you propose hosting and how will you decide who those candidates will be?

This question should surface values—fairness and diversity, for example—and expose the ethical dilemmas in any selection process. *The New York Times* recently published the article “The First G.O.P. Debate: Who’s In, Who’s Out and the Role of Chance ([http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/21/upshot/election-2015-the-first-gop-debate-and-the-role-of-chance.html?abt=0002&abg=0&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/21/upshot/election-2015-the-first-gop-debate-and-the-role-of-chance.html?abt=0002&abg=0&_r=0)),” by Kevin Quealy and Amanda Cox, which is an examination of the “chance” behind the process proposed by Fox with suggestions for other factors to be considered.

3. Finally, given a 90 minute slot, how will you structure the debate or forum? What will be the role of your moderators(s)? These questions should also surface values—right of the candidate to speak in his or her own voice and message versus the importance to probe and interrogate, fairness and equity, balance, appropriate tone—as well as the ethical implications of the debate procedures or rules.

Once the teams have committed themselves to paper, have a “pitch meeting” at which each of the teams answers and defends its answer to Question 2. Have the other teams challenge and interrogate the proposals, based on values, topics and issues of ethics (perhaps as developed from the text or course material). Repeat the process, in a different order, with Question 3.

After they complete rounds of pitches and critiques, debrief the exercise by having the class attempt to come to consensus on a process for both questions 2 and 3. Finally, ask the class—given the political, social and economic context of the debates—how likely will their own or the consensus solution be accepted?

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## MEDIA ETHICS MAGAZINE CALL FOR PAPERS

*Media Ethics* magazine is again on the lookout for well-written and well-reasoned articles (essays, polemics, research reports, case studies, commentaries, bibliographies, and more) dealing with any aspect of media ethics. The magazine is published twice a year, and is now planning the Fall 2015 issue.

All manuscripts should be submitted via e-mail to John Michael Kittross, Editor, at [editor@mediaethicsmagazine.com](mailto:editor@mediaethicsmagazine.com) (<mailto:editor@mediaethicsmagazine.com>) no later than September 8th, 2015 in order to allow authors as much time as possible to polish their works.

If you are unfamiliar with *Media Ethics* magazine--which has been published for more than 25 years--back issues may be read (without cost) at [mediaethicsmagazine.com](http://mediaethicsmagazine.com) (<http://mediaethicsmagazine.com>). The magazine is independent and eclectic as to content, style and format, and aims to serve its readers with any and all ideas on the subject of media ethics. "Media" includes both mass and social media, and "ethics" articles range from analysis of current cases to long-standing ethical and philosophical principles.

Most articles are between 300 and 3,000 words in length, but we have published valuable material as short as a single page and as long as a dozen. The editor believes in communicating editorial decisions as soon as possible. Although all material is subject to necessary editing, the copyrights to each article reside with its author(s), except for the right of the magazine to publish the article itself.

If you have any questions about a topic or an approach, please contact the editor--who expects to be at the AEJMC convention in San Francisco this summer--as soon as possible via e-mail. (<mailto:editor@mediaethicsmagazine.com>)

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## POYNTER KSU MEDIA ETHICS WORKSHOP

by **Jan Leach**, Vice Head & Programming Chair

Covering trauma -- a tragic accident, a horrendous attack, a sickening court case, even a catastrophic weather event – exposes journalists and victims to complicated questions about ethics and responsibility. Join your colleagues, media professionals and students at this year's Poynter KSU Media Ethics Workshop on Sept. 17 at Kent State University for a one-day professional development program.

Speakers, panelists and others will delve into significant topics including privacy, re-victimization and the trauma that journalists themselves often deny. Best practices for PR and other media professionals also will be covered.

The keynote address for the Workshop will be delivered by Dr. Frank Ochberg, a founder of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, and the nation's leading authority on covering traumatic news events. Ochberg has worked with journalists for decades. He also has worked with victims and survivors of major national news stories such as the Columbine school shooting and the Cleveland kidnap victims.

Among the other confirmed speakers are Ginny Whitehouse, MED member and associate professor of journalism at Eastern Kentucky University. Kelly McBride, vice president of academic programs and head of the ethics faculty at the Poynter Institute will moderate many sessions. She will be joined by Bob Steele, formerly of the Poynter Institute.

The Poynter KSU Media Ethics Workshop provides a unique forum to learn about and discuss significant issues crucial to understanding media ethics and its effect on our world. If you cannot attend in person, the entire event is available on a live web stream, which is archived for later use by classes and researchers. For more information or to register for this year's Workshop go to <http://mediaethics.jmc.kent.edu/> (<http://mediaethics.jmc.kent.edu/>) or contact Jan Leach, MED program chair at [jleach1@kent.edu](mailto:jleach1@kent.edu) (<mailto:jleach1@kent.edu>).

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