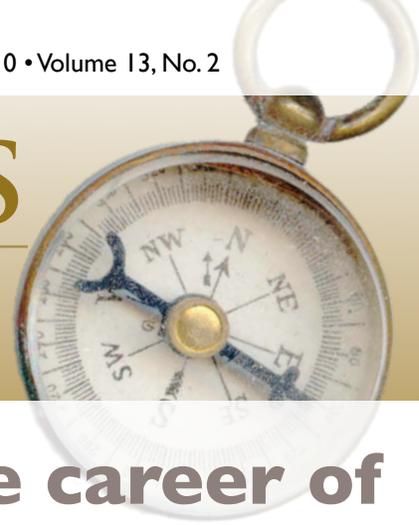


ETHICAL NEWS



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- Visit the MED website at http://jcomm.uoregon.edu/~tbivins/aejmc_ethics/index.html
- Have an announcement or an article to share with MED members? Email the newsletter editor at bvanacker@luc.edu

Celebrating the career of Clifford G. Christians

John P. Ferré
 University of Louisville

Clifford G. Christians' distinguished 35-year career as a faculty member at the University of Illinois' Institute of Communications Research was the occasion for a night of celebration at the AEJMC meeting in Boston last August. Forty-eight friends, family members, colleagues, and fellow media ethics scholars from across North America as well as Australia, Africa, and Europe joined Christians to fill a private room at Legal Seafood for a soirée that included more than a dozen tributes to Christians' profound personal and professional influence.

As waiters brought out triple chocolate layer cake and Boston cream pie to conclude the four-course dinner, Lee Wilkins of the University of Missouri unrolled a 32-foot scroll. "This is Cliff's CV," she said, threatening to read it line by line from beginning to end. Noting that there was too little time left in the evening, she stopped in "Academic Background" somewhere after his doctoral thesis on Jacques Ellul but before his honorary doctorate from Marquette University.

Wilkins then read a tribute from Jay Black, cofounder of the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*. "He knows more than Wikipedia; he's cited more often than Google; he's invited to more places than Barack Obama; he has more



friends than Facebook; he's more eclectic than Isaac Asimov; he's nicer than Mr. Rogers," Black wrote. "If he actually has found the time to read and comprehend all the tomes and esoterica he has cited he must be really really smart, and really really old – akin to the legendary visitor to Russia's Hermitage Museum, who needs to take 9,000 years just to spend one minute on each exhibit."

Another in absentia tribute came from Ed Lambeth, author of *Committed Journalism*. Lambeth described one of Christians' public presentations. "It unfolded like a Van Gogh canvas – alive and colorful, clear and doubly worthy of the attention to his audience of primarily Missouri students. Yes, it was about media

ethics. And it was as though he was speaking to them individually. My impression is that each of the students felt that he or she had just been admitted to the University of Missouri School of Journalism Hall of Fame, not Cliff!

"But, of course, it was Cliff, giving to them what he has given to each of us.

"And that is the gift of himself, with respect and sincerity, and at a level of consistent excellence in scholarship, teaching, service and collegial good will." Bill Babcock of Southern Illinois University recalled collecting signatures for the AEJMC petition to establish the Media Ethics Division. "I have a confession," Babcock said. "In getting these signatures, I asked countless dozens of potential signers, 'Don't you want to help establish a division that can help highlight and promote the work of such a deserving person as Cliff Christians?'"

"It was the best, most honest, sales pitch I've ever made," Babcock recalled. "I was able to get the required number of signatures in short order. And AEJMC now has a division that honors this most deserving man."

Tom Cooper of Emerson College offered a toast to "the five Cliffs – great colleague/thinker, servant leader, ethics global emissary/scholar, literal

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and figurative father figure who unites all around him into family, and finally, inspirational super-friend who holds the light high whenever we hit darkness in our lives or field."

Another toast came from Ginny Whitehouse of Whitworth College. "Cliff's greatest genius may be that he can use variations of the word 'normative' as every part of speech in a single sentence," she said.

There were many other tributes. Paulette Kilmer of the University of Toledo spoke of "Cliff's gift of presence, listening with his whole being." Maggie Patterson of Duquesne University described Christians and his work as quintessentially Dutch, both in the sense of tolerance and of indifference toward status. Steve Shenton of Shippensburg University called Christians "a champion of freedom and media ethics." David Gordon of the

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire reminded the celebrants that they were gathered as media ethicists "because of Cliff's ground-breaking research in the 1970s that focused everyone's attention on the neglect into which media ethics had fallen."

Christians won the AEJMC Presidential Award for distinguished service to journalism and mass communication education in 2003 and AEJMC's Paul J. Deutschmann Award for Excel-

lence in Research the following year. He has published a dozen books, including *Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning*, now in its eighth edition, and the recent *Handbook of Mass Media Ethics*. More books are in various stages of development.

"I look forward to all the research he will be doing during his retirement," said Michael Bugeja of Iowa State University.

CS

The genesis of MED, what took us so long?

Jack Breslin
Division Chair

After chatting in Boston with some veteran MED members and former chairs about our division's tenth anniversary, I couldn't help but wonder why there wasn't a separate media ethics gathering before 1998. Why did it take that long? Why wasn't media ethics among the original divisions? What and who inspired the movement for interest group, then division status?

So I emailed those folks and compiled the following history of MED's pre-interest-group days.

From the founding of the Association for Education in Journalism in 1912, which later added "mass communication" to its name, individual scholars among the various disciplines pursued media ethics research since ethics has always influenced all mass media professions.

"It took a quite a while for AEJ to establish divisions and at the same time develop programs and publications that might appeal to everyone," said John Kittross, who joined the association in 1960. "We still have that problem, I'm afraid!"

Some divisions, such as mass communication and society, law, broadcast journalism and other research or theory-focused divisions, attracted research papers and sponsored panels with media ethics focus as more scholars authored books on the subject. But applied ethics struggled for respect among quantitative and qualitative researchers judging papers and organizing panels.

"A few of us got interested in ethics in journalism in the late 60s and 70s," said

John Merrill, one of those early media ethics authors. "I suppose AEJers in those days simply dovetailed ethics-related pieces into their normal writing and research. Panels and papers began in a serious way in the 80s."

That small, but motivated flock of media ethics scholars and other AEJMC members had long considered forming a division, but no official movement developed.

"The idea that there was a need for an 'ethics division' cropped up pretty early in this game," Kittross stated. "Usually someone with something to say could find a corner of a panel or paper presentation session, but there weren't all that many who bothered."

"Although I heard all sorts of ideas, there were so many divisions, and so much opportunity within them to set up a panel or two that the idea of a 'division of our own' didn't get off the ground for a couple of decades."

Kittross recalled "at least two times" that a group of "a half dozen or more" members gathered at a convention to discuss a separate division prior to 1997.

"None of these initiatives got off the ground, although a few glasses did make it off the bar," he said.

National journalism events, such as the Civil Rights movement, the Watergate investigation, and the "Jimmy's World" fabrication, focused concern about ethics in the profession.

"This salutary result for journalism also placed an increasing responsibility on journalism educators to include ethical analysis of the work of watchdog journalism, an important role for the free press," Ed Lambeth stated.

In the academic world, media ethics not only became a "hot" topic, but a more prominent and fundamental element of journalism education. Courses were popular, and served as good public relations for schools offering them. That ethics focus quickly spread to the other mass media disciplines as separate, sometimes mandatory, media ethics courses in curriculums across the country.

"Law and ethics courses were being taught and in 1980, the Hastings Center published its findings on professional ethics in U.S. universities, including journalism ethics," Cliff Christians said. "Over the years, there was an average of one or two papers/panels on ethics annually at AEJMC conventions."

Back at AEJMC, media ethics got a boost from James Carey in his 1978 president's address. Cliff Christians and Catherine Covert surveyed the teaching of media ethics for the Hastings Study on Professional Ethics. The resulting paper, which blossomed into a teaching book, was presented in *Journalism Educator* and summarized in the monograph on journalism ethics.

"Cliff's paper drew attention to what we were ignoring as a field, and (at least in my opinion) raised our collective consciousness about the need to pay attention to ethics as an entity separate from the passing mentions it was getting in connection with such recognized areas as law and reporting," commented Dave Gordon, Mass Communication and Society program chair for that convention.

"Cliff's paper was completed late, so when he asked if it could still be fitted into the program somewhere, I found a slot for it. But I'm sure that if it hadn't been presented

at that convention, it would have been on a subsequent program with the same results.”

On the research side, members of some divisions, particularly Law and Policy and MC&S, were arguing for more attention to media ethics. That argument was strengthened by the founding of the Journal of Mass Media Ethics in 1984, and the first “Media Ethics Summit” held near Boston three years later. From 1984 to 1998, Lambeth offered fourteen five-day media ethics teaching “boot camps,” which flourished into pre-convention MED workshops.

Among his regular faculty members and speakers were Christians, Merrill, Jay Black, Lou Hodges, Deni Elliott and Ralph Barney.

“Ed’s workshops had helped mold a couple of hundred ethics faculty members before it lost the national funding, so merging the workshop into MED made perfectly good sense,” recalled Jay Black, long-time JMME editor, who has previously shared his memories of these early days in Ethical News.

Besides providing a place for sharing knowledge and research, these forums encouraged an increase in the teaching of media ethics as a specific discipline. Some departments began looking for professors specializing in media ethics to teach the

topic, rather than giving the course to someone with no background.

By the early 80s, this growing attention to media ethics was heightened by AEJMC’s Standing Committee on Professional Freedom and Responsibility and an informal group of media ethics scholars.

“That informal group, plus the committee, ‘convinced’ each division to include ethics research and panels in its annual convention agenda,” said Black, who chaired the PF&R committee. “We even had a plenary or two.”

With ethics included in the PF&R mandate, a subcommittee called the “Ad Hoc Committee on Ethics” was formed in 1982 with Christians as chair. The committee got two slots for papers or panels at the convention and was assigned to meet with each division’s PF&R chairs to implement ethics “more fruitfully.” According to its mandate, the committee aimed to “strengthen the commitment to media ethics” in the entire association, not just make new “structures or activities” to complement existing divisions.

Despite that official support, some still opposed a separate media ethics group since ethics already got enough attention.

“Some AEJMC officials thought that ethics should permeate all divisions rather

than be identified as a separate area,” Maggie Patterson recalled.

But that dissent didn’t stop Bill Babcock and Michelle Johnson from organizing the media ethics veterans into a formal effort which resulted in achieving interest group status at the Baltimore convention in 1998. MED was approved the next year in New Orleans.

What were the reasons behind their motivation?

“First, since ethics was a part of virtually every division, many folks did not see the need for a free-standing division,” Babcock explained. “Second, prior to 1988, no one to my knowledge had decided to try to start a division.

“In the late 90s, there was so much ethics research being done that it simply made sense to have a ‘home’ for such scholarship, much the same way that there were AEJMC ‘homes’ for law, history and international scholarship,” Babcock explained. “As I recall, more scholarship was done in the 90s in ethics than was done in any other area of journalism.

“The timing thus was right for someone to start such an AEJMC division. The stars all were in alignment!”

The Diversity-Ethics Connection

Brenda J. Wrigley, Ph.D., APR
Syracuse University

The Diversity Standard is one AEJMC member institutions sometimes struggle to achieve. Reviews today demand more than just lip-service to diversity. A genuine, demonstrable effort in this area is imperative in order to achieve compliance.

Looking beyond the academy, diversity is frequently the subject of organizational crises and missteps. Where discriminatory hiring practices years ago would have been ignored or hidden, now such transgressions are the stuff of front-page headlines.

Despite many indicators to the contrary, I believe the ethical imperatives of diversity will drive the future of strong performances in diversity, not only in the academy, but also in business and society at large. Here’s why:

There is a general skepticism in American culture about organizations and their intentions when it comes to basic, let alone controversial, subjects. This skepticism forces organizations to be more transparent.



1. Transparency is good for these organizations and forms the foundation of a more ethical practice. Although often forced by crises to be more transparent, organizations nonetheless must work toward this transparency or risk failure when ethical lapses—including those related to diversity—are exposed.
2. While journalism will contribute to the shift to transparency, that shift will be accelerated by public relations, the profession that is more often than not

3. charged with being the organization's "conscience".
4. If public relations' cornerstone is two-way communication and mutual understanding, this forms the framework for increased understanding and relationship building.
5. In a society that is more and more diverse, with whites becoming the minority before 2050 in the U.S., it becomes imperative to reach out to diverse groups and work hard on those relationships.
6. Such diversity in the society also demands diversity within organizations, as external publics want to see, and can better relate to, those who are like themselves.
7. In a societal context where publics are distrustful of business and its motives in general, unless organizations make a concerted effort in this area, they will be assumed to be unethical and to lack diversity. Even if this isn't true, perception is reality.
8. With Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a growing trend in public relations, there is an opportunity for creating more diverse organizations and strengthening ethical policies.

What about organizations that fail to heed this advice? Beyond strong products, brands and services, the organization's most precious asset is its reputation. Without smart and proactive reputation management,

run the risk of losing it all when trouble appears.

In 2008, Lockheed Martin settled a racial discrimination lawsuit filed by a black former employee who claimed he was taunted by co-workers and a supervisor. Restaurant chains including Denny's and Cracker Barrel have had racial discrimination lawsuits. Abercrombie & Fitch and others have been in the spotlight for racial issues and the police in Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s neighborhood came under fire for assuming he was a burglar when in fact he was trying to force entry to his own home.

You might say, "Well, these were temporary missteps for these organizations. They recovered and are continuing to operate today." That may be true.

But what about the next time something happens? And there will always be a next time of one sort or another. Will the public be less forgiving and more skeptical about the organization's ethics? It's very likely.

This is where smart issues management programs—those which look for impending issues on the horizon that may affect the organization and proactively strategize for how to deal with them—will save organizations from ethical lapses and missteps when it comes to diversity issues.

Issues managers today must be conversant in how diversity issues are developing in society in order to counsel their organizations effectively. This type of practice enables organizations to live up to their ethical obligations.

In a 24/7 media environment, where social media spread bad news like a grass

fire, organizations have the best chance to be successful if they behave in an ethical manner as a matter of policy and not a matter of reaction to current events. Diversity is an important part of an organization's ethical framework. Those who fail to recognize that will fail.

Public relations and journalism can be partners in this endeavor, but only if they understand each others' roles. Increasingly, though, public relations can circumvent journalists and direct their messages through social media, bloggers and other online venues that will not only spread messages more quickly and more widely, but also engage audiences to form a relationship with an organization. When that organization demonstrates to audiences that it is both ethical and diverse, it results in a win-win for the organization and the publics.

I have long believed that organizations need to move their public relations professionals from a role of SDA (Stealth Diversity Advocate) to an SDA that stands for Strategic Diversity Advocate. Diversity can contribute to the organization's goals by enhancing reputation and making it possible for the organization to achieve its objectives, hire and retain talent, and create stronger relationships with its key publics. If it takes convincing that diversity and ethical practice add to the bottom line—and not just to executives patting themselves on the back—then advocate for that. The end result will still be a stronger, more diverse and certainly more ethical organization. That's the kind of win-win we can all agree works for business and society.

Finding Ethics in Digital Mayhem

Jenn Burleson Mackay
Teaching Chair

I had a two-day discussion with the students in my Multimedia Journalism class last semester about the legal and ethical ramifications of new technology. We talked about typical multimedia issues such as the perils of using copyrighted music in slideshows and manipulating digital news photos. It seemed like a solid discussion.

At the end of the semester, the students were required to create documentary style news stories that were then published online. One of my groups created a lovely story about a Christmas charity, including informative interviews and beautiful cuta-

ways. As a transition between images, however, the group chose to add a bit of music - the popular "Linus and Lucy" song from the Peanuts cartoons.

Not only was the copyrighted music used without permission, the students also did not give the artist any credit. I had told the students at least a dozen times that they could not use popular music in work that they publish online. I even directed them to the Jamendo Web site, where they could select music that is not subject to traditional copyright rules and I thought that I emphasized the importance of giving artists credit for their work. The students just did not seem to get the message. Even though they are able to memorize ethical concepts for a

test, students seem to lose their way once they enter the real world.

Digital technology has given us a dizzying array of opportunities. With the click of a couple of buttons we can illegally download and upload music and films, manipulate images, and hide our identities behind avatars and nicknames. To borrow Marilyn Greenwald's (2004) words: "If information is not readily available on their computer screens, many student and professional reporters simply are not encouraged to seek it out. And the widespread use of e-mail, cell phones and the Internet makes 'cheating' easier."

Our students are growing up in a world where the general rule is to assume there are

no rules when it comes to technology. So how do we teach them that they, as future journalists, need to uphold a higher standard than other people who post frivolous content online?

Maybe the solution is to have more professionals visit our classes to discuss the ethical issues in their own newsrooms. A journalist visited one of my classes last year and told the students about his experience confronting an employee who had accidentally plagiarized material from Wikipedia. The same journalist talked to the students about his news organization's struggles with addressing how Facebook should be used by journalists.

Perhaps bloggers might be useful guest speakers as well. One study by David Perlmutter and Mary Schoen (2007) found that bloggers typically do not have codes of ethics, but that they value appearing ethical. It might be useful for the students to hear from bloggers about how they make ethical choices even without a written code in place.



Another solution might be to show the students how ethical issues can turn into nasty legal battles. I can remember a time when my own journalism professor instructed me that it was acceptable to use what some people now refer to as "inline linking." The idea is that a webpage designer inserts a copy of an image that belongs to someone else on his or her webpage without actually uploading the file to his or her own server. There have not been too many lawsuits of consequence from this technique, but photographer Lesley Kelly sued Ditto.com for following this practice. He argued that by copying his images,

Ditto.com had violated his copyright privileges. The journalist eventually won \$345,000 through the court system (Foust, 2009).

I can't say for certain whether visits with professionals or discussions of real world consequences will make any difference in our students' ability to make wise ethical choices. I believe that educators face a new challenge as they struggle to prepare young journalists to enter the 24/7 multimedia world. We must recognize those challenges and seek out ways that we can best prepare our students to be morally sound and credible journalists.

Sources:

Foust, J. C. (2009). *Online Journalism Principles and Practices of News For The Web*. Scottsdale, Arizona: Holcomb Hathaway, Publishers.

Greenwald, M. (2004). "Beware of 'techno-journalism,'" *Quill*, 92, 22.

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Announcements

The Future of Ethics Panel in Denver

Shannon A. Bowen
Vice Chair for Programming

The Media Ethics Division cordially invites all members to attend a special panel in Denver on Thursday Aug. 5 at 3:15 – 4:45, The Future of Media Ethics in Journalism, Public Relations, Entertainment, and Advertising. The real highlight of this forward-looking panel will be the respondent comments from ethics visionaries Clifford Christians and Tom Cooper. Christian's 2008 book on this topic, *An ethics trajectory: Visions of media past, present and yet to come* will provide a springboard and reference for further-reaching discussion on applied ethics

This discussion will feature Tom Bivins (representing advertising expertise), Shannon A. Bowen (Joint Editor of the journal *Ethical Space*), Patrick Plaisance (a prominent journalism/ media ethics scholar), and an as-yet-to-be-named entertainment scholar, (who will tackle the ethics of press agency). Moderator Lee Wilkins, Editor of the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, will pose challenging questions for the panel.

Debating the future ethical standards and dilemmas of public relations, advertising, journalism, and entertainment, will, no doubt, include much discussion about the speed of information and access, the lack of gatekeepers, and projections of the future ethical challenges of the field posed by new technologies and new modes of news gathering. We encourage you to attend what promises to be a remarkably insightful and memorable panel of the Media Ethics Division.

News from the Mid-winter Meeting

Shannon A. Bowen,
Vice Chair for Programming

This is a fantastic year to submit a competitive paper to MED! At the mid-winter planning meeting in Jacksonville, we nabbed one of the sought-after high density research sessions (Wed., Aug. 4, 11:45-1:15), in which eight to 10 papers will be presented in an informal, conversational style. These sessions are fantastic for generating new ideas on your research and for helping graduate students learn to present in a low-stress environment. Because of the higher number of papers that we can accept this year, it's a great time to submit a competi-

tive paper. We ask that you please encourage your graduate students to submit to MED, as well. As always, we are looking for paper reviewers. If interested, please contact our Research Chair, Kati Tusinski Berg at kati.berg@marquette.edu.

Your MED officers did a lot of horse-trading and session wrangling in Jacksonville. We have an exciting panel program awaiting you in Denver. In fact, we will be offering an enormous menu of sessions that MED members can attend – so many that we'll encourage you to pick and choose wisely! In addition to this the high density research session, we have 10 co-sponsored panels across varying interests, a scholar-2-scholar (poster) session, our traditional research sessions, and a teaching ethics preconference.

Our members (business) meeting is Thurs., Aug 5, 6:45pm-8:15 followed by our *Inaugural Offsite Social at 8:30*. More details on that will follow, but please mark your calendar now! Check the AEJMC website for more details about the panels we are planning and the location of our Offsite Social.

Special Small Programs call for Denver AEJMC: Social justice journalism in the classroom.

We teach techniques and technology, law and theory, but how should we handle questions of social justice? Advocacy for the poor and powerless is nothing new to journalism. Muckrakers and crusaders through the decades have lived by the motto: “afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted.” Many of us teach students about America's strong tradition of the alternative press that still thrives today. Additionally, many colleges and universities have social justice as part of their mission.

But what should this mean to journalism educators? How does a commitment to social justice square with journalists' ideals of fairness, accuracy, impartiality and truth? Here's a chance to explore. SPIG invites critical essays, qualitative papers, and quantitative research on the issues and questions involved in pursuing justice through the journalism classroom.

We already have a slot reserved for this research panel during the Denver convention – 5 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 5. This is in addition to our regular research showcase at the scholar-2-scholar session.

Submit your papers through the standard All Academic on-line process by April 1. (Details available at: http://aejmc.org/_10call.php) Make sure you use the phrase “social justice” somewhere in the title.

If you have any questions, please contact either of us:

John Jenks (jjenks@dom.edu)

Teresa Housel (housel@hope.edu)

Going to APPE?

Association for Practical and Professional Ethics
19th Annual Meeting
March 4-7, 2010
The Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza,
Cincinnati, OH

MED-sponsored panel

Friday, March 5, 1:45-3:45 p.m.

If They Bleed, Should They Lead?: Ethical Dimensions in the Media's Coverage of Crime Victims

Moderator: Chris Roberts, Alabama

Panelists: Jack Breslin, Iona College
Marty Pieratt, Indiana
Bruce Shapiro, Dart Center, Columbia
Edward Zimmerman, Washington and Lee

5:45-7 p.m.

AEJMC-MED Winter Meeting