Brian Johnson not only hatched the idea, but he solicited equipment from Apple and Canon to keep registration costs low. Brian, along with Edgar Huang and Larry Dailey, taught the participants to use the camera and audio equipment before turning them loose on the streets of Chicago to shoot a compelling story. The last challenge was editing the video under a tight deadline before showing the completed stories to their peers. The participants were exhausted but excited about the skills they had learned. Here are a few comments from the evaluation forms:

“I feel empowered, but I also need to get Final Cut Pro and keep practicing.”

“This has changed a lot of the ways I think about video.”

“Great instructors and a lot of knowledge in a short, intense time frame.”

“I feel that I am definitely on my way to teaching a bit of video.”

The regular conference programming was also a success. We had a solid turnout for many sessions, and a highlight was our division luncheon at the Chicago Tribune. More than 50 members heard two multimedia journalists talk about their jobs and how they try to incorporate interactive features to increase the number of clicks. Mindy McAdams gave a presentation with tips on how educators can add multimedia skills into the curriculum. David Perlmutter followed with his views on the state of visual communication research. Edgar Huang, our outgoing division head, incorporated many of these ideas into the State of Visual Communication report on pages 8 and 9 of this newsletter. Other convention highlights included our Best of Web and Creative Projects competitions. In addition, there were 15 research papers presented that covered topics ranging from

NOTE FROM THE NEW DIVISION HEAD

VisCom Division activities result in positive outcomes

Before the August convention officially began, our division had already achieved one success. Thirty eager participants had completed our three-day preconvention workshop, Video Storytelling for Educators.

RENEE MARTIN-KRATZER is head of the Visual Communications Division and Assistant Professor of Journalism at the University of Florida. rmartinkratzer@jou.ufl.

“Great instructors and a lot of knowledge in a short, intense time frame.”

“I feel that I am definitely on my way to teaching a bit of video.”

The workshop, cosponsored with the Newspaper Division, was so successful that we have talked about offering it again in Boston. You will hear more about this in the spring, so stay tuned.

The regular conference programming was also a success. We had a solid turnout for many sessions, and a highlight was our division luncheon at the Chicago Tribune. More than 50 members heard two multimedia journalists talk about their jobs and how they try to incorporate interactive features to increase the number of clicks. Mindy McAdams gave a presentation with tips on how educators can add multimedia skills into the curriculum. David Perlmutter followed with his views on the state of visual communication research. Edgar Huang, our outgoing division head, incorporated many of these ideas into the State of Visual Communication report on pages 8 and 9 of this newsletter. Other convention highlights included our Best of Web and Creative Projects competitions. In addition, there were 15 research papers presented that covered topics ranging from

2008-09 VisCom officers appointed

Head: Renee Martin-Kratzer, University of Florida
Vice-Head & Program Chair: James D. Kelly, Indiana University
Second Vice-Head: Jennifer George-Palilonis, Ball State University
Research Co-Chairs: Nicole S. Dahmen, Louisiana State University Sang Um Nam, University of Wisconsin
PF&R Chair: Jerry Swope, Saint Michael’s College
Teaching Chair: Larry Dailey, University of Nevada
Best of the Web Chair: Lily Zeng, Arkansas State University
Creative Projects Chair: Ellen Mahaffy, University of Wisconsin-Eau Caire
Logo Chair: John Freeman, University of Florida
Membership Chair: Teresa Hernández, Kent State University
Newsletter Editor: Jennifer George-Palilonis, Ball State University
Visual Communication Quarterly Editor: Paul Martin Lester, California State University, Fullerton
Webmaster: Sang Um Nam, University of Wisconsin
2009 CONVENTION | BOSTON

Call for AEJMC convention panel ideas

W asn’t the Chicago meeting just last week? How could it be time to plan for next year in Boston already? Surprisingly, it is, and just what we will do there is up to you. Please take a few minutes this week and send a proposal for a convention panel—either a Professional Freedom and Responsibility (PF&R), Teaching, or Research session. You can include a Boston location for an off-site visit or recommend area journalists who might serve as speakers as well.

PF&R includes five subject areas:
1) Free Expression: the importance of the open circulation of ideas;
2) Ethics: discussion of practices, protocols, and breaches;
3) Media Criticism and Accountability: the constructive evaluation of the professional marketplace;
4) Racial, Gender and Cultural Inclusiveness: issues of unequal treatment of women and minorities reflected in hiring and promotion practices, institutional policies and stereotyped portrayal in the mass media; and
5) Public Service: activities that enhance understanding among media educators, professionals and the general public.

Teaching sessions focus on:
1) Curriculum: the philosophy, design and examination of issues, developments and trends in building the best curriculum for students;
2) Leadership: organizational efforts to recognize and enhance good teaching and mentoring and ways of thinking about teaching and learning;
3) Course Content and Teaching Methods: examining teaching techniques and strategies; and
4) Assessment: weighing the effectiveness of teaching.

Research sessions are mostly comprised of paper presentations, but if you have a great idea for an invited panel, please pitch it.

Send me a short proposal with your best ideas. Act now because we must have our division’s ideas to headquarters no later than Nov. 1.

JIM KELLY is the Visual Communication Division Vice-Head and an associate professor in the School of Journalism at Indiana University, Bloomington. kellyjd@indiana.edu

GUIDELINES
What to include in your proposal:
■ Type (i.e. PF&R, Teaching, Research)
■ Tentative Title
■ Possible Moderator
■ Possible Panelists (limit to three so we can work on linking with other interest groups and divisions)
■ Brief Description
■ Possible Panel Cosponsors (divisions or interest groups)

I appreciate your help in making the Boston convention a rewarding experience for our members.

Jim Kelly
VisCom Division Vice-Head
Indiana University
School of Journalism
Ernie Pyle Hall 200
Bloomington, IN 47405

Continued from Page 1

Looking for more information on the AEJMC Visual Communication Division?
Visit the Web site: http://aejmc.net/viscom/
Do you have information for the newsletter?
Contact the editor: Jennifer George-Palionis jageorge2@bsu.edu (765) 285-8216

MARTIN-KRATZER

Japanese photography to the visual framing of genetic engineering.

The following outgoing officers deserve our thanks for their service the past year: Edgar Huang, Janis Page, Michelle Seelig, Meg Spratt, Loret Gnivecki Steinberg and Ed Youngblood. These officers helped our division achieve some goals. First, a new brochure for our division is available for you to print at our Web site (http://www.aejmc.net/viscom/index.html). We hope that the brochure can be used as a tool to recruit new members, including students. Please consider posting one where graduate students can see it. The participation guidelines for a mentoring program were established, and this year we will work toward recruiting participants. You will hear more about this as we get closer to launching it. We will also be working on increasing diversity in our division and enhancing the content of our newsletter and Web site.

I feel honored to serve as the division head this year. I am looking forward to meeting more members and building upon our division’s past achievements.
MIDWINTER CONFERENCE CALL

Consider submissions for midwinter conference

This year, 12 AEJMC divisions, interest groups and commissions are participating in the Midwinter Conference, scheduled for March 6-8, at the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication (University of Oklahoma) in Norman, Okla. The location offers participants many winter diversions outside the conference activities, including world-class museums and art galleries. The conference follows an informal structure that allows for presentations and extended discussions in a relaxed setting.

Paper submissions: Authors should submit research paper proposals consisting of a 300- to 500-word abstract to the relevant division/interest group/commission contact person. The abstracts should give a clear sense of the scope of the research and the method of inquiry used. Conclusions should be highlighted for works that have been completed by the submission deadline. Do not send full research papers for consideration. However, authors of proposals accepted for presentation at the conference must submit complete research papers, not exceeding 30 pages, to their discussant two weeks prior to the conference. Papers presented at this conference also are eligible for presentation at the national AEJMC convention. Accepted authors are encouraged to use feedback from reviewers at this conference as they improve and finalize works in progress for submission to the national conference.

Panel submissions: Panel organizers should submit proposals to the relevant division/interest group/commission contact person indicating the panel title, a description of the session’s focus, the issues to be discussed, and a list of panelists (potential and confirmed), including affiliation.

Format: Identify the paper’s author(s) or panel’s organizer(s) on the title page only, and include the mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address of the person to whom inquiries should be addressed. The title should be on the first page of the text and on running heads on each page of text. Include your abstract or proposal as an attachment to your submission. Do not send any identifying information from your document (with the exception of the title page).

Registration: Details on conference registration, hotel accommodation, and travel information will be available at http://www.ou.edu/gaylord.

VISCOM SUBMISSIONS

All abstracts and panel proposals for the Visual Communications Division must be e-mailed to the paper chair:
Jennifer George-Palolinos (jageorge2@bsu.edu 765-285-8216)
You will be notified about whether your submission has been accepted for presentation by Jan. 10, 2009.
General questions about the conference can be sent to Elanie Steyn, Conference Site Host (Elanie@ou.edu) and Homero Gil de Zuniga, Communication Technology Division Midwinter Chair (hgz@mail.utexas.edu).

HOTEL INFORMATION

Sooner Suites
The Sooner Suites are cottages located within walking distance to the University of Oklahoma campus. Each cottage has two queen bedrooms, a bath, living room, dining room and kitchen. Some also have queen sleeper beds.
Rate: $88 + tax per night, including continental breakfast
Reservations: 405-325-2270; mention promo. code “AEJMC Midwinter Conference” by Feb. 16, 2009 to receive the above-mentioned conference rate.

Best Western Norman Inn & Suites
Located one mile from campus and other local attractions, the Best Western is just a few months old. Each room has either two full size or one king bed and an executive work area with complimentary high speed Internet.
Rate: $69.95 + tax per night, including breakfast and shuttle service to and from the conference venue
Reservations: 405-701-4011; mention promo. code “AEJMC Midwinter Conference” by Feb. 16, 2009 for the above-mentioned conference rate.

The Sooner Legends Inn & Suites
The Sooner Legends Inn & Suites in Norman is a full-service boutique-style, sports themed hotel. Recently renovated, the double queen or king rooms and suites offer various comforts and amenities, including leather furniture, flat screen TVs & DVDs and wireless Internet.
Rate per standard double queen or king room: $89 + tax per night
Rate per king or queen suite: $129 + tax per night
Rates include breakfast and shuttle service to and from the conference venue.
Reservations: 405-701-8100; mention the promo. code “AEJMC Midwinter Conference” by Feb. 16, 2009 to receive the above-mentioned conference rates.
Visit: http://www.soonerlegends.com for more information.
Rubrics solve the grading puzzle

If you’re teaching any form of “hands-on” visual communication course, it’s only a matter of time before a student complains that your grading system seems unfair.

And, really who can blame that student. An lot of what we do seems very subjective — especially to people who are new to visual communications.

When I began teaching, this presented a problem. I wanted students to meet high standards, and I wanted to grade them fairly. But rationale for grading their work was difficult to explain in a paragraph or two.

Many of my first teaching assignments involved teaching basic and advanced photography. I knew a good picture from a bad one, but I frequently had difficulty explaining why a picture was graded as good or bad.

Fortunately, one of my early teaching assignments was at a school focused on educational practices. There I was introduced to the concept of rubrics.

At first, of course, I didn’t even know what rubrics were. I thought they had more to do with a colorful cube than with education.

I later learned that these tools could help me handle a couple of pedagogical puzzles. By using rubrics, I learned to fairly grade students and better articulate expected qualities of excellence in visual communications.

In her book, Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide, Linda Suskie defines the rubric as “a scoring guide: a simple list, chart, or guide that describes the criteria that you and perhaps your colleagues will use to score or grade an assignment. At a minimum, a rubric lists the things you are looking for when you evaluate a student assignment. The list is often accompanied by guidelines for evaluating each of those things (author’s emphasis).” Suskie goes on to explain that rubrics can be constructed to look like anything from rating scales or a table grid, to chunks of paragraph text descriptions.

A rubric is a tool that teachers use to create...
Share benefits of VisCom membership with others

What does it all mean? What do all those letters strung out in a row, just waiting to be rearranged by some of our inverting minds, represent?

The first time I saw the acronym AEJMC, I thought I had stumbled onto the JUMBLE in the newspaper and wondered why the comics were nowhere to be found.

I think we sometimes take for granted what we already know and we forget that newcomers may just not understand. I volunteered to be membership chairperson while I still remember.

I am relatively new to VisCom. I am learning the importance of being part of a group of people whose roles may not be clear to those on the periphery. Many of our colleagues are already AEJMC members, but may not know how it would benefit them to join VisCom.

So, how do we get new members? There are people, who may not know it, but who would benefit greatly from belonging. Let’s tell them. The benefits are important to all of us.

I need your help. Here are some suggestions:

Share your stories
Next time you are out for coffee with a colleague, tell him or her about your experience as a VisCom Division member. Think of it less as a sell and more as a story. The stories of your experiences will be what entice them to join.

Invite others to join
When you go to another conference or meeting, invite the individuals from other disciplines to consider joining VisCom. Just recently at a conference, I was chatting with a journalism professor from Israel and we were discussing the professional organizations to which we belong. It was fun to see the intersection of our lists.

Highlight connections
Encourage friends and colleagues to see the visual connections. As we know, the boundaries between disciplines are blurring. The newcomers to our departments and schools may not realize the importance of joining our division.

I urge you to tell them about VisCom. Invite someone to the party.

My goal is to reach out to individuals in universities of one-visual-person departments and let them know we exist. If you know any of these people, you can help by sending me their contact info. Additionally, I would like to recruit graduate students. I will be sending invitations to departments in the near future. Know any students that would be interested? Have any ideas? Let me know.

You will all be getting hard copies of the new VisCom brochure in the mail, and digital copies are available. Please, share them with your colleagues, friends and contacts.

Make the visual connections. We will all be richer for it.

TERESA
Hernández is the membership chair of the Visual Communication Division and Assistant Professor of Journalism at Kent State University.

thernand@kent.edu

RESEARCH
Chair proposes named award for top grad student paper

Greetings visual communication division members! It was great to see so many of you at the national convention in Chicago this summer.

One of the issues raised in our members’ meeting was increasing the number of research paper submissions by graduate students. Currently, the division accepts graduate student paper submissions and judges them on equal footing with faculty submissions.

For reference, we received 10 graduate student submissions last year, and we accepted four for presentation in Chicago.

The division also presents a cash prize of $100 and a plaque to the “top paper” among graduate student submissions.

To increase graduate student submissions, I would like to propose creating a named award for the top paper prize among graduate student submissions. For example, the Mass Communication & Society Division annually awards the “Leslie J. Moeller
CREATIVE ENDEAVORS

Tips for successful projects

Having been the coordinator and moderator for VisCom’s Creative Projects competition for five or six of the past 10 years, I have a pretty good idea of what works and what doesn’t with the judges.

The competition, started about 15 years ago to give peer-reviewed recognition to work faculty members accomplished that wasn’t traditional research.

Some projects promote student accomplishments that go beyond basic classroom teaching. They explain a goal or the reason why work was undertaken, or they showcase how the professor led students to an outcome. A few projects show how new courses developed or even preview textbooks about to be published. Some projects highlight grants or summer activities by faculty who basically go back into the field to do the things they normally teach. Photography teachers shoot photos for someone. Online teachers work on web sites. Graphic design professors do freelance.

Some projects are about offbeat ideas through which professors wanted to learn something new, or in retrospect, discovered something internal about themselves. Some people have presented work that basically said, “When I’m not teaching, here’s what I like to do.” One topic judges don’t favor, though, is projects that are too close to home. In other words,

John Freeman is an associate professor in the journalism department at the University of Florida.

jfreeman@jou.ufl.edu

On the first day of the group’s arrival in Ilula, girls from the Ilula Orphan Center greet the St. Michael’s guests with song and dance. For the 33 girls living at the orphan center, singing and dancing are an integral part of their daily activities and helps contribute to a meaningful sense of community. (Photo by Jerry Swope)
In spring 2007, St. Michael’s College Professor Jerry Swope team-taught a class called HIV/AIDS in East Africa with a colleague in political science. As part of this service learning class, he took a group of ten students to work with an NGO called the Ilula Orphan Program (IOP) in the Iringa region in Tanzania for three weeks. The service goal of the trip was to help write grants and produce documentary materials for IOP’s fund raising efforts including the Web site www.ilulaorphanprogram.org.

Students from Isagwa Primary School peer out their classroom to look at a group of visitors from St. Michael’s College and the Ilula Orphan Program. This school is located in a village over 20 miles down a poorly managed dirt road and does not have many outside visitors. (Photo by Jerry Swope)

LEFT: Liz Koelnych ’07(center) shows a group of girls at the Ilula Orphan Center a photograph on the back of her digital camera. (Photo by Jerry Swope)

ABOVE: Toward the end of the trip, the staff and residents of the Ilula Orphan Center held a number of celebration to say good bye to their guest from St. Michael’s. Here, girls at the center and St. Michael’s students sing and dance around a camp fire. (photo by Jerry Swope)
Over the past three decades, visual communication as a discipline has evolved to encompass several areas that were considered separate disciplines partly due to the emergence of new technologies. The Visual Communication Division is an example of these trends and developments. The division was formed in 1982 with the merger of the Graphic Design Division and the Photojournalism Division. Within the broad context of visual communication, educators, researchers and professionals share many values, including an understanding of the power of visuals to tell stories, the knowledge of the principles of design, the need to adapt to new technologies, the study of the production, dissemination, reception, interpretation of and interaction with visual images and the ability to draw from a common body of literature that extends in many disciplines within the academy.

Mainly due to the introduction of new media over the past two decades, visual communication has extended from its traditional territory of analog print design and photojournalism into other areas, such as broadcast or electronic media, multimedia, Web design, digital imaging, and the ability to draw from a common body of literature that extends in many disciplines within the academy.

Theories and applications of visual communication are found in advertising, propaganda, visual images and culture, visual literacy, and visual aspects of political campaigns.

We believe that members of the visual communication community share an attribute: love of their subject matter. It is quite possible to study political communication but hate politics. Students of science communication might be bored by the scientific data being communicated. But we visual communication scholars have found that people who study the visual universally love and are fascinated by the visual. That does not mean they can’t be severe critics of industry practices, government propaganda, or undergraduate assignments. Visual communication professors are passionate about what they teach, and they believe that students appreciate this quality. Because the discipline is so vast, some scholars believe this discipline should also include other related areas. Many faculty job postings these days have changed the traditional “visual communication” faculty position title to “multimedia” or “interactive media,” and new hires are expected to teach not only traditional content, such as print design and photojournalism, but also Web design, video, animation, and so on in a converged journalism curriculum. Some faculty question the need to have three separate divisions—Visual Communication, Communication Technology, and Radio and Television Journalism—since there is an overlap in these areas in terms of teaching and research.

New (or social/interactive) media technology is largely responsible for the trend of these areas to converge. In addition, as any college teacher can testify, much “new” media is not new: Our 18-year-old undergrads were born just as the “Internet” began, and text-messaging and blogging are no more “new” to them than the fork or the backpack. Nevertheless, for political reasons, these divisions probably will coexist in the organization with this overlap for the foreseeable future.

Identity issues also arise among visual communication scholars who are experts in different areas. At the 2008 AEJMC conference, members at the division meeting agreed that sometimes multimedia professionals or professors do not view themselves as visual communicators. The terminology also matters, with some scholars bristling when the term “visual culture” is used over “visual communication.” On the other hand, art schools, journalism schools and new media schools all claim “visual communication” as their scholastic territory — but they cover quite different content. Some artists see visual communication as their area and view visual communication people in journalism as “professionals” or “craft workers,” not quite up to making art, and not entirely qualified to critique or talk about it as art historians. All of these factional forces weaken the discipline and provide little sense of a ruling orthodoxy, if such a diverse field can be orthodox at all. A great deal more dialogue is needed to bring these contentious issues into better focus and to provide a better understanding of what visual communication scholars are about.

The debate about what to include

Identity issues also arise among visual communication scholars who are experts in different areas.
or exclude under the umbrella term “visual communication” was the challenge undertaken by the editors of the Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media (Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005). The book does not presume that there is a discipline of visual communication but rather that the area is an aggregation of visually oriented work from a variety of disciplines. Its table of contents admits to the complexity of what we refer to as visual communication.

Currently, visual communication is going through a long, anxious transition period largely because of the introduction of new media and the Web. The professional field has a need for versatile journalism practitioners who are skilled in and savvy about producing multimedia. Although some faculty are calling for a new curriculum or new courses to teach these skills, many visual communication professors are not prepared to take on such a challenge. As a result, many of them continue to focus on print design and/or photojournalism. However, the reality in the print media industry is that photojournalists are no longer just taking images but are also called upon to capture sound and video. Photojournalists are transforming into multimedia content creators, and in many instances must do the editing and production work as well. The “camera guy” of yesteryear is now a multi-duty content provider and manager required to possess story-telling skills as much as understand color. Print media page designers may also be called upon to design graphics for the Web. The corollary is that most visual communication curricula need to be updated, and faculty need mid-career enrichment opportunities so that they are able to teach multimedia skills.

Responding to the requests of print professors, the Visual Communication Division initiated a three-day pre-convention workshop at the 2008 Chicago conference to teach journalism educators how to shoot and edit video. The workshop, attended by 30 professors from across the nation, was well received. They learned what is involved in producing a video and how to present a story visually. Many of them expressed that the workshop was extremely useful for their future teaching. Other professors at the conference who did not attend this pre-convention workshop asserted that they also needed such training. In this regard, the AEJMC conference offers an excellent venue for the Visual Communication Division to bring such training to more professors, which will gradually change the landscape for the visual communication professorship.

Interestingly, many highly successful visual communication professionals from both print and broadcast industries have joined journalism school faculty in recent years, a development that can facilitate the evolution of visual courses. In one sense, the tragic layoffs and buyouts of mid-career professionals among media businesses will be the academy’s gain.

In terms of research, visual communication has drawn from many scholarship traditions, including:

- Art History
- Visual Literacy
- Visual Anthropology & Sociology
- Visual History
- Visual Ethics
- Neurobiology/Cognitive Psychology
- Behavioral Psychology
- Critical/Cultural Studies
- Social Science: Contents, Responses & Effects
- Linguistics
- Applied Visual Information Studies

We believe that VisCom has the potential to become a “master” area of scholarship, taking strength from a diversity of interests, creativity and intellects. The rise of visual culture has permeated every corner of people’s lives and practically all areas of academic scholarship, from psychology to public health to civil engineering. This fact provides scholars in both research and creative endeavor with rich opportunities to study visuals as a dominant media phenomenon in a larger context of social development and to create new genre within visual communication. In recent years, visual communication has risen as a respected sub-field within journalism and mass communication. Many visual studies have appeared in mainstream journals that did not usually carry visual studies, although such high-quality visual studies are still rare. Visual creators continue to push the boundaries of traditional media and scholarship. Visual communication is unique as a discipline in that its research also intrinsically includes creative endeavor.

In sum, within the classroom and the media lab and through scholarship, which includes traditional research and creative endeavor, we believe VisCom is growing, changing and challenging not only its teachers, researchers and practitioners but all the academy and society itself.
Analysts were debating whom to blame—the greedy fat cats on Wall Street, the predatory lenders, the politicians who voted for deregulation or the consumer-driven Americans living beyond their means on Main Street. Since this crisis did not seem to affect me—I have a good teaching job, I am far from retirement and I am not interested in buying a house in the near future—I gradually tuned out the repetitive doom and gloom stories and I flipped through a few issues of NPPA’s Photographer magazine. Unfortunately, I could not escape the doom and gloom. The two issues (June 2008 and September 2008) that I looked at as I ate my corn flakes made me realize that the current chaos in the economy (combined with the well-documented changes occurring in the media world) was actually affecting me because it was affecting the journalists on Main Street—my friends, former students, former colleagues and the industry for which we are preparing our current students.

The June 2008 issue included an article by Brian McDermott titled, “Should I Stay or Should I Go?” McDermott sites a study by Ball State University professor Scott Reinardy that found “…31 percent of journalists under 34 want to leave the profession, and another 43.5 percent said they ’didn’t know’ if they want to stay.” As McDermott accurately indicates, three out of four young print journalists are “ambivalent about their future in journalism.”

An article in the September 2008 issue titled, “A Death in the Family: Thousands of Journalism Jobs Gone in Just a Few Months, with Many More Losses Looming on The Horizon,” by Jim Michalowski chronicles the “cataclysmic” job losses in the journalism industry during the past two years. He writes, “Over 15 percent of people employed in journalism-related fields, both print and broadcast, have lost their jobs through layoffs, buyouts, consolidations or outright closures.”

So, it seems that while three quarters of young journalists are ambivalent about their futures in the business, many of the other one quarter are having a hard time finding full-time jobs or are getting laid off. Clearly, there are exceptions. One of my best students was recently hired right after graduation by our local paper because he is a great storyteller who excels working in a variety of media. Most recent grads, however, are struggling to find journalism jobs. Some are trying to freelance, some are caught in the poorly-paid internship cycle and some are moving into the public relations world.

As I sipped my tea at the breakfast table and pondered these troubling trends, my worries about my fourth year review materials quickly diminished and I thought, “What are we doing in academia to prepare our students for these changing times.” Although I have only been working in the hallowed halls of academia for six years, I have noticed that changes tend to hap-
pen more slowly than in other professions. So, I think it is essential for us as educators to evaluate what we are doing and create a more open dialog with editors in the business. We need to assess what skills will be needed in the dynamic journalism industry now and in the future. We need to analyze our curricula to make sure the courses we offer provide a solid foundation in all forms of storytelling, media literacy and critical thinking, but also provide opportunities for students to develop specific marketable skill sets. We also need to educate them about the business side of the business.

As our small department at St. Michael's college goes through this process, I find no easy answers. It seems there is more to teach, but no more time in the schedule to teach it. Ten years ago, before I arrived, my forward thinking colleagues created a converged curriculum that emphasized good storytelling, media literacy and a basic proficiency in a variety of media. Today, as the variety of media is expanding and the need for specific technical expertise increases, something has to give.

At this point, I cannot provide any profound insights or answers. The solutions may vary from school to school. I would, however, like to create an opportunity for more discussion and debate on the topic of how best to prepare our students for the dynamic journalistic world. Have you or any of your colleagues recently sat down with editors, producers or news directors to ask them specifically what kinds of skill sets they are looking for? Has your department recently revamped its curriculum? If so, how and why? Is your department currently in this process? If so, what changes are being proposed and why? Does your department offer a class that helps students navigate the freelance world and the business side of the business?

Please send your thoughts on these questions or other relevant information to me. I will keep this conversation going in the next newsletter and try to provide specific, workable solutions that can help us best prepare our students for the future.

Despite the stories of doom and gloom, I am hopeful. A democracy always needs good storytellers and an engaged media-literate public. The communication media may evolve and change, but the fundamental principles of good journalism will not. Now more than ever, we need dynamic, creative professors to guide passionate, courageous and skilled young journalists.

OUT & ABOUT IN CHICAGO

Renee Martin-Kratzer and husband Brian Kratzer head out for dinner one night at the Chicago convention. No, it wasn’t even close to raining. Brian is the assistant manager editor of multimedia at the Gainesville Sun and teaches the lighting/studio photojournalism course at the University of Florida as an adjunct instructor. (photo by John Freeman)
DAILEY

Continued from Page 4

ate little chunks of expectations and assign grade values to those chunks. When students submit work, teachers can use these chunks to evaluate the various aspects of their work.

As a new teacher, I used to simply assign a grade based on my feelings about photographs technical, aesthetic qualities. While these grades may have reflected the quality of photographs, I’m afraid that my technique denied students the valuable feedback that they deserved. Also, since there was no concrete artifact that I could offer students to demonstrate how they were being graded, I may have been promoting the perception that I played favorites.

Rubrics have changed that.

I now subdivide the expectations for each assignment, and I create a grid that allows for the evaluation of several concrete aspects of visual communication. For basic photography, this means that I create grids for good exposure, acceptable but not great exposure and unacceptable exposure.

I do the same thing with focus and other mechanical aspects of photography. I also do this for aesthetic categories. For an example see the picture-editing chapter in Ken Kobrè’s book Photojournalism: the Professional’s Approach. The Washington Post hierarchy is actually a rubric that can be used to quantify excellence in photojournalistic content. I then assign a point value to each square in the grid. The student’s grades are the sum of the point values.

When teachers construct rubrics, they are actually quantifying behaviors related to assignments’ expectations. Grades — even those evaluating artistic and aesthetic content — are assigned specific meaning for both the teacher and the students. It does take some time to construct rubrics. But for me, at least, the time that I spend constructing rubrics is regained by the time I save in grading students’ work. And, because I know I am grading issues that we have identified and discussed prior to the assignment, grading becomes less stressful for me. It does not take advanced technology to construct a grading rubric. As I’ve mentioned, it can be summed as simple as constructing check sheets or grids.

But, I am a techno-geek. So I’m always looking for ways to computer-ize tasks. Fortunately, teaching tools such as Blackboard and WebCT are now including rubric tools in their products. My school uses WebCT, and it has a rubric-creating tool called “Grading Forms.” At grading time, I simply click the boxes that best describe my students’ work. The tool totals the grade and automatically enters the grade into an online gradebook. For me, this makes grading so easy that it actually becomes fun. So, if your current grading system is leaving you puzzled, you may want to try to solve it with a rubric. It’s not a game. But you may find it to be nearly as fun.

DAHMAN SMITH

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Award” to the top student paper, and the Science Communication Interest Group annually awards the “Lori Eason Prize” to the top student paper.

Creating a named award for the top paper prize could create a higher mark of distinction for the award. And a named prize could help bring recognition to our division by naming the award in honor of someone who has made a significant contribution to our division.

In addition, it is more prestigious for a graduate student to include a named award on his or her vita as opposed to just including “top paper” in the student paper competition.

I would like to open this proposal to discussion; please send me your thoughts on creating a named award as well as nominations for a possible honoree. I look forward to hearing your feedback.

FREEMAN

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unless your home video of little Susie and her ballet class won a YouTube award, keep it to yourself. Let me pass on a few specific tips to help you prepare a successful creative project that might get peer-reviewed and accepted for the convention in Boston:

Start early, and think about how to visually showcase your work. The best entries are accompanied with printed material that gives a strong sample of the work. This means laser prints of photographs or PowerPoint handouts loaded with images. A couple of projects that sounded good projects were rejected last year because the submitter failed to include finished work. Simply writing, “At the convention, I would present a slide show of my students’ work in the field,” won’t cut it.

Include a CD that you know will work on either Mac or PC, using PDFs or a common program. Not sure? Walk down the hall and check it out on a colleague’s computer or home laptop. Nothing is more irritating than the spinning hourglass. Some judges would prefer the CD over evaluating a paper project. Your presentation time at the convention is generally 15 minutes. Don’t overload the judges with more material than you can show in that time period.

Provide an explanation that clearly states why you did what you did and what was the outcome. Did it improve your teaching? Did your school get recognition? Were you spotlighted for outstanding work? Did the village you photographed in Ethiopia get a new well for fresh drinking water because of the photo essay you published?—that kind of thing.

Generally there are three judges and most are former presenters. The average number of entries is 15, and generally four or five get accepted.

I’m taking a break from Creative Projects coordination this year to run the Logo contest. Entries and questions for the Boston 2009 convention are being handled by:

Ellen Mahaffy, mahaffe@uwec.edu
University of Wisconsin-Eau Caire

To join the VisCom listserv, send a message with SUBSCRIBE in the message line to AEJMC-VISCOM@LISTSERV.MIAMI.EDU.