VisCom site provides two new resources for members

If you find yourself aimlessly surfing the Web this summer, be sure to click on our division’s web site at http://aejmc.net/viscom/index.html. I’m excited to announce a couple of changes—the activation of the mentoring form and the addition of two new resources. Sang Um, our Webmaster, did a wonderful job making these improvements and helping us to meet the division goals we set last year.

In search of a mentor? Long to give advice to newbies? Join our mentoring program.

This began as a division goal in 2008. That year, Edgar Huang worked with officers to establish the guidelines. The intention of the program is to formalize a process in which untenured and new professors could communicate with tenured and more established professors for advice about academic matters. This might include bouncing off ideas for research or creative projects or how to handle certain academic situations. I hope this is helpful to all our untenured members, and I want to thank those of you who are in more senior positions who will sign up to be mentors and share your time and knowledge. Having a mentor can be invaluable, and it might be particularly helpful to a VisCom member who is the only person on his or her faculty teaching visual courses. Even if they are assigned a mentor within their department, their research and creative ideas might not match up. Our mentoring program will provide a formal outlet for them to reach beyond their campus to find support. If you are interested in serving as a mentor, or you want to be assigned a mentor, go to http://aejmc.net/viscom/mentoring.html and enter your contact information. We will assess the program after a year to see if it is successful.

Steal (ahem, I mean “adapt”) ideas from fellow VisCom members.

Have you just been assigned to teach a new design course? Are you hoping to get fresh ideas for the same course you’ve been teaching for years? Then click on our division’s new online teaching resources tab to browse through syllabi, assignments and PowerPoints submitted by our members. Of course, the success of this initiative depends on you! If you are willing to share your materials with others, please email them to Sang at ams@uwplatt.edu. We only have a few items now, but I hope that after this announcement, his inbox will be flooded. I think this is a resource that will grow through the years.

Another goal for this past year was to highlight the accomplishments of Creative Projects and Best of Web winners. We now offer links to the winning Web sites and feature information about the winning creative projects. The research papers will continue to be available through AEJMC.

Other opportunities you don’t want to miss

Planning for the 2009 convention in Boston has been underway since the fall. I’m grateful that Vice Head Jim Kelly and Second Vice Head Jennifer George-Palilonis have worked so hard to make this event a success. As the deadline for the early-bird registration nears (July 10), don’t forget to mark off two items on your registration sheet. First, our preconvention workshop offers hands-on training in Flash from Larry Dailey and Don Wittekind. Jim has arranged for a bus to take participants from the hotel to Boston University, where we will use the computer labs. The preconvention has a limited number of slots, so don’t procrastinate too long! Send in your registration now.

Martin-Kratzer, continued on page 2
VISCOM SERVICES

Volunteer to serve on division board

Consider stopping by our members meeting at 7 p.m. Friday, Aug. 7. Not only do you get the opportunity to meet other people with a keen appreciation for visual communication, but you can also nominate yourself for a leadership role.

We do not put together a slate of officers to vote on before the meeting – we take nominations from the floor. We often have several positions open, so don’t be shy. If you’d like more information about a position, please contact me at rmartinkratzer@jou.ufl.edu. At right is a list of the open officer positions with related duties.

Second Vice Head
- Attend the midwinter planning session (chip auction) in December
- Plan, coordinate Mid Winter Conference (in February or March)
- Assist the head and vice head
- Write newsletter articles
- Move up to vice head and then head

Research Chair
- Coordinate research competition
- Plan research panels for the annual convention
- Contribute newsletter articles
- Send letters to research paper panelists to encourage submission to Visual Communication Quarterly

Professional Freedom & Responsibility Chair
- Organize convention panels focusing on PF&R topics
- Write newsletter articles

Teaching Chair
- Organize convention panels focusing on teaching topics
- Write newsletter articles

Best of Web Chair
- Coordinate Best of Web competition cosponsored with ComTech Division
- Write newsletter articles

Creative Projects Chair
- Coordinate Creative Projects competition
- Write newsletter articles

Logo Chair
- Coordinate logo competition
- Write newsletter articles

Membership
- Brainstorm and implement ideas for increasing membership
- Write newsletter articles

Newsletter Editor
- Edit and design this newsletter, which is published three times a year
- Solicit ideas from members, officers

Click on our division’s new online teaching resources tab to browse through syllabi, assignments and PowerPoints submitted by our members.

MARTIN-KRATZER

Continued from Page 1

Also, the luncheon will be well worth the extra money. Not only does the $40 include transportation to the restaurant and your meal, but you’ll get to mingle with other VisCom members and hear presentations from visual staff members at the Christian Science Monitor. This event also has a limited number of seats available, so please sign up early.

Thanks to our officers

I am grateful to all the officers who agreed to volunteer their time for our division. Jim Kelly was roped into service after he stumbled into the VisCom members meeting and found himself nominated as Vice Head. We are lucky that he agreed to serve! Jennifer George-Palilonis has been doing double duty as the second vice head and the editor and designer of this newsletter. Those are two big roles, and she has done an outstanding job. Research Chair Nicole Dahmen, Creative Projects Chair Ellen Mahaffy, Logo Chair John Freeman and Best of Web Chair Lily Zeng successfully oversaw the judging process for each of these competitions and organized the related panels. This takes considerable time and effort, and I appreciate their dedication. PF&R Chair Jerry Swope and Teaching Chair Larry Dailey contributed articles to the newsletter and helped organize convention panels. Larry agreed to be in charge of our preconvention. He also taught at the three-day preconvention last year, so he is definitely fulfilling his service duties by returning this year for more fun. The new look and resources on our Web site wouldn’t have been possible without Sang Um Nam, our Webmaster. Thanks for putting up with my email requests to do more work! We all benefit. Membership Chair Teresa Hernandez stuffed our division’s brochure into hundreds of envelopes to help recruit new members. And finally, Visual Communication Quarterly continues to be a high-quality journal thanks to the editorship of Paul Lester. You all deserve a big thank you! And I hope many of you will think about serving again next year.

I look forward to seeing you in Boston!
Division activities promise to be diverse, engaging

Last summer’s business meeting was the first I had attended for at least a half dozen years. By the end of it, I had been elected the new program chair and since then I have been regularly reminded of what makes our division great—the members who step up and serve as officers and as convention organizers. Their work since Chicago has been impressive.

Larry Dailey has teamed up with Don Wittekind to put together a pre-convention workshop over in one of Boston University’s computer labs. The all-day workshop Tuesday will teach skills needed to incorporate interactive features into visual messages in a wide range of media. Last year’s pre-con workshop filled up fast. Don’t wait too long. You’ll want to go home from Boston with new computer skills for the classroom, so put a check beside the “Beyond the Printed Page” (VISIC) option when you register for the convention.

Jennifer George-Palilonis has also helped organize a nice luncheon for Wednesday, Aug. 5 from 12:30-2:30 p.m. with the visual staff of the Christian Science Monitor. At the end of March, the 100-year-old CSM shifted from a daily paper strategy to Web publication with a printed weekly edition. Photography Editor Alfredo Sosa and his associates will tell us how the transition has gone and explain the role that visuals play in the new strategy. This is the first national newspaper to drop its daily paper edition. Their experience should be enlightening.

The featured cuisine is traditional Boston Thai curry at a restaurant just across the street from the CSM offices and just a couple blocks from the convention hotel. Don’t overlook the separate check box for this event on the official AEJMC registration form because registration is required to attend and we are limited to 40 seats.

Our division has taken the lead on organizing a mini-plenary you won’t want to miss. Following up on a lively discussion of brain science research with Cliff Christianson and a stellar panel, Julieanne Newton has convinced Stephen M. Kosslyn, Harvard’s John Lindsley Professor of Psychology and one of the world’s foremost theorists in visual neuroscience to join a panel that will explore Brain and Media:

The Ethical Imperative of Embracing Neuroscience in Journalism and Communication. Media Ethics and Communication Theory and Methodology Divisions are co-sponsoring this, one of just four mini-plenaries.

Boston is also a bit of a reunion for several other people who have helped in some way that I am not completely aware of. I look forward to thanking them all in person and seeing you all in Boston. Please be sure to attend the fine sessions these folks have worked so hard on and come to our members meeting Friday night at 7 p.m. Who knows, you may just wind up as a chair of something.

The complete list of programming follows. It represents the work of a couple dozen members who have organized workshops, organized PF&R and teaching sessions, agreed to present in those sessions, collected and sent out research papers, judged research papers, submitted research papers, found judges for creative projects, submitted creative projects, agreed to discuss those papers and projects, submitted to the contest, as well as several other people who have helped in some way that I am not completely aware of. I look forward to thanking them all in person and seeing you all in Boston.

Convention Hotel & Rates

The Sheraton Boston Hotel
39 Dalton Street
Boston, MA 02199
Phone: 617-236-20
http://www.starwood-hotels.com/Sheraton/

Current taxes are 12.45%
Subject to change without notice

Convention Registration

Early Bird Rates (by 7/10/09)
AEJMC Member: $135
Non-AEJMC Member: $240
AEJMC Student Member: $60
Non-AEJMC Student Member: $105
Retired AEJMC Member: $60

Onsite Rates (after July 10, 2009)
AEJMC Member: $185
Non-AEJMC Member: $290
AEJMC Student Member: $75
Non-AEJMC Student Member: $120
Retired AEJMC Member: $75
Visual Communications Division Schedule of Events

**TUESDAY**
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
**Workshop Session:** Beyond the Printed Page: Visual Communication Goes Interactive
**Cost:** $75 (Pay with conference registration)
**Moderating/Presiding:** Larry Dailey, Nevada-Reno
**Panelists:** Don Wittekind, North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Ryan Sparrow, Ball State University; Larry Dailey, Nevada-Reno

**WEDNESDAY**
8:15 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.
**PF&R Panel Session:** Preparing the Next Generation of VisCom Scholars
**Moderating/Presiding:** Keith Kenney, South Carolina
**Panelists:** Ann Marie Barry, Boston College; Paul Messaris, Pennsylvania; James Kelly, Indiana; Keith Greenwood, Missouri; Keith Kenney, South Carolina

10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
**Refereed Paper Research Session: Top Research Paper Panel**
**Moderating/Presiding:** Nicole Smith Dahmen, Louisiana State
**Discussant:** Andrew Mendelsohn, Temple
**Assessing the Impact of Web site Domain on End-user Evaluations of Web Page**
“Aesthetics Using an Immediate Aesthetic Perception Technique” *
Jonathan Adams, Florida State; Forrest Doddington, Curiositi Design Solutions and Juliann Cortese, Florida State

“Message Characteristics and Persuasion: The Mediating Role of Visual-Verbal Redundancy on the Effectiveness of Anti-smoking Messages” **
Jie Xu, Villanova

“A Visual Typology of Surveillance News: Tools, Techniques, and Implications for Public Understanding” ***
Julian Kilker, Nevada, Las Vegas

“Labeling Participation: Exploring the Role of ‘I Voted’ Stickers in Public Affairs Participation and Conversation on Election Day” ****
Elizabeth Cohen, Georgia State
* First Place Faculty Paper
** Second Place Faculty Paper
*** Third Place Faculty Paper
**** First Place Student Paper

12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
**Off-site Luncheon:** Lunch with the Visual Staff of the Christian Science Monitor
**Cost:** $40 (Pay with conference registration)
**Moderating/Presiding:** Renee Martin-Kratzer, Florida
**Speaker:** Will feature remarks from three members of the Christian Science Monitor’s visual staff, including Alfredo Sosa, Picture Editor.

In April 2009, the Monitor became the first nationally circulated newspaper to replace its daily print edition with its Web site; the 100 year-old news organization now offers subscribers weekly print and daily e-mail editions. The staff will make a presentation on the visual changes at the CSM and take questions from the crowd.

3:15 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.
**Visual Communication, Communication Theory and Methodology and Media Ethics Divisions Mini-Plenary PF&R Panel Session:** Brain and Media: The Ethical Imperative For Embracing Neuroscience in Journalism and Communication
**Moderating/Presiding:** Julianne Newton, Oregon
**Discussant:** Lee Wilkins, Missouri
**Panelists:** Ann Marie Barry, Boston; Rick Williams, Lane Community; George Marcus, Williams Stephen M. Kosslyn, John Lindsley Professor of Psychology, Dean of Social Science, Harvard

5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
**Visual Communication and Newspaper Divisions Teaching Panel Session:** Preparing Student for the 21st Century Media Careers: Teaching Critically When to Use What Platform and Why
**Moderating/Presiding:** Michele Weldon, Northwestern
**Panelists:** Tom Kennedy, former managing editor for multimedia, Washingtonpost.Newsweek Interactive; Diane Lynch, Stephens; Jeremy Gilbert, Northwestern; Dave Stanton, Florida

**THURSDAY**
8:15 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.

**Moderating/Presiding:**
Gracie Lawson-Borders, Wyoming

**Panelists:**

1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.
**Research Poster Session**
**Discussant:** Nicole Smith Dahmen, Louisiana State
64. “Why They Clash? The Role of Political Posters in Perpetuating the Hegemonic Structure of Feudalism and Sectarianism in Lebanon”
Yasmin Dabbous and Khaled Nasser, Louisiana State

65. “A Semiotic Analysis of the Media Representation of China by the Australian Public Broadcaster”
Xiufang (Leah) Li, Missisippi

Radhika Parameswaran, Indiana


**FRIDAY**

8:15 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.  Refereed Paper Research Session: Eye Tracking: A Research Method for the 21st Century

**Moderating/Presiding:** Keith Greenwood, Missouri

**Discussant:** Sandra Utt, Memphis

“PHOTO FIXATION: Evaluating Web Site Conventions in Online News Slideshows”

Lynette Holman and Laura Ruel, North Carolina at Chapel Hill

“Correlating Eye Tracking with Robust Cognitive Measures for Visual Representations in News”

Ronald Yaros, Maryland

“Effects of Hyperlink Density on News Web Page Reading: An Eye-tracking Study”

Laura Ruel and Bartosz Wojdynski, North Carolina at Chapel Hill


Dave Stanton, Florida

3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.  Magazine and Visual Communication Divisions

**PF&R Panel Session:** Slate, Salon and Beyond: The New Promise of Web-only Magazines

**Moderating/Presiding/Discussant:** Jacqueline Marino, Kent State

**Panelists:** Don Nicholas, managing partner, Mequoda Group, LLC; chief architect, Mequoda Wordpress Systems; editor-in-chief, Mequoda Daily Network; Michael Martin, former editor, Nerve.com; senior web editor, Time Out New York

Jeanne Carstensen, managing editor, Salon.com; John Fennell, Missouri Samir Husni, Mississippi

5:15 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.  Refereed Paper Research Session: Creative Projects

**Moderating/Presiding:** Ellen Mahaffy, Wisconsin-Eau Claire

**Panelists:** “From Concept to Book in Only Twenty-five Years”

Robert Heller, Tennessee

“The RayHoundTales.com Project”

Ray Wong, Middle Tennessee State

“Access, Analyze, Act: a Blueprint for the 21st Century Civic Engagement”*

Renee Hobbs, Temple

“44 Years to the 44th President: Connecting Our Past to America’s Historic Future”

D. Michael Cheers, San José State

Creative projects panel incorporates student learning with social media tools and experiences centered around the historic 2008 Presidential election, as well as in-depth media projects about Holocaust survivors and a positive look at the people raising, training, and racing greyhounds.

* Top Project Award Winner

7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.  Business Session: Members’ meeting

**Moderating/Presiding:** Renee Martin-Kratzer, Florida

SATURDAY

8:15 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.  Visual Communication and Magazine Divisions

**Teaching Panel Session:** How to Design an Infographic

**Moderating/Presiding:** Jennifer George-Palilonis, Ball State

**Panelists:** Jeremy Gilbert, Northwestern; Jennifer George-Palilonis, Ball State; Javier Zarracina, graphics director The Boston Globe

11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.  Refereed Paper Research Session: Visual Communication Research: Teaching, Ethics, and Technology

**Moderating/Presiding:** Renee Martin-Kratzer, Florida

**Discussant:** James D. Kelly, Indiana


Karon Speckman, Missouri

“Photojournalism’s Dilemma: Being a Dispassionate Observer or a ‘Good Samaritan’”

Yung Soo Kim, Kentucky

“Using Research Informed Design Methods Enhances Audience Understanding Among Visual Communications Students”

Jennifer George-Palilonis, Ball State University

“Self-trained and Self-motivated: Newspaper Photojournalists Strive for Quality During Technological Challenges”

Keith Greenwood, Missouri and Scott Reinardy, Kansas
If we find fields of study and professions that use photography as an essential tool, we will begin to understand how we might be able to create niches for our students’ skills. Now that our students have moved from simple still, single-image photography to incorporating audio, multiple images, text and video into their tool kits, they have increased their ability to communicate, not only visually but somewhat multi-dimensionally.

Last fall, while working on a project with urban designers David Jurca and Gauri Torgalkar, we came up with an idea to have our students collaborate in a unique project. In the spring semester, the students in my color photography class worked collaboratively with graduate students from the College of Architecture and Environmental Design at the Urban Design Center in Cleveland to produce digital narratives, as the design students worked on a redevelopment project in the Cleveland area. This type of project is cutting edge in terms of what could be a new model for communication photographers and urban designers to work in conjunction, contributing to each other’s creative processes to enhance both.

We asked the students to open their minds to the idea of helping people who need to develop narratives for designs. As communicators, I felt we could contribute greatly by working with designers to help communicate their process using our photographic skills. The students were asked to use their knowledge to help designers communicate their vision. The photographers were challenged to work with the urban designers to first understand and then transform the designers’ vision into a visual language that would then be understood by clients, jurors, professors and the public.

The collaboration was both scary and exciting not only for me, but for the urban designers. Physical distance and time constraints were our primary concerns. The urban design collaborative is in Cleveland, while my class meets in Kent, a 45-minute drive at best. My class was scheduled to meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays while the design studio met on the alternative days at different times. I was concerned that the photography students would not be willing to make the drive and fulfill the time commitment.

When the students were introduced to the idea, many were skeptical, but to their credit, they worked hard and enjoyed the process greatly. The work, which was divided up into three phases, improved with each deadline. The students learned a little Flash to create animation from the design process. The ones who had more video experience taught the others. On nights before deadlines, they converged in the digital darkroom, bonding over fast food and technical frustrations, not unlike those we experienced in the old days of wet darkrooms.

The urban design students learned a lot from the photographers and many said they felt the process helped them learn to articulate their project ideas better. Some of the jurors even said that the videos and slideshows gave a better representation than the verbal presentation by the design teams.

I would be more than happy to share materials with anyone who is interested. Just email me at therinand@kent.edu.

Examples of the work can be seen at http://www.cudc.kent.edu/blog/index.php?paged=2
Photo Student Liz Meyers takes photos of her group at the Port of Cleveland.

Above Left: The project was the redesign of the Cleveland port. At the port office, where the students were briefed, one of the groups sits together taking notes and jotting down ideas. Photojournalism Student Katie Roupe (fourth from right) worked with three of the three urban design students pictured here. Her video of their process can be see at the http://www.cudc.kent.edu/blog/index.php?paged=2.

Above Right: Kent State photojournalism students met with the urban designers to discuss their collaboration.

Left: The students brave the cold on their initial site visit during the project at the Port of Cleveland.
PREPARING STUDENTS

View from inside the newsroom

To find out what’s needed in today’s newsrooms, in mid-June I asked photo editors and multimedia producers at four newspapers what skills are still in short supply. Video editing, storytelling and audio skills led the list.

Even though his newspaper, The Spokesman-Review, has pulled back from its earlier online ambitions, Colin Mulvany said today’s visual journalism students must be prepared for an online future. That includes both gathering and editing audio, as well as posting stories and photo galleries from the field.

Video remains important even though it’s time-intensive; Mulvany, a photojournalist/multimedia producer, said he’s confident that video “will pay off smartly in the future.” All visual journalists need to have strong video production skills, he said. “You might not use them every day, but big news stories will demand video attention.”

Tom Burton, photo editor and multimedia producer at the Orlando Sentinel, concurred. “We could use more people who can easily work with nonlinear video editing programs,” he said. Experience with Final Cut Pro is preferred, but someone who understands a different editing system could learn FCP “in an intense four-day course.”

The traditional j-school approach, which “teaches you to have a single skill set that fits into a larger organization,” doesn’t cut it today, Burton said. “Those organizations are falling apart, and the jobs for a single skill set are gone.”

Every journalist needs multiple skill sets “to be their own publisher, in a sense,” Burton said. “In our newsroom, you can get your work on the Web quickly if you can gather the assets (words, photos, video), process them and build the page yourself. Otherwise, you have to wait for another overworked person to help you.”

Jen Friedberg, a multimedia producer at the Fort Worth (Texas) Star-Telegram, said a journalist’s attitude counts for a lot. “Your curiosity and desire to tell the story should be paramount. Every visual journalist should know how to write a basic story in inverted pyramid form, shoot and edit a video that tells a complete story in about 1:30, gather and edit audio, shoot great images with everything from a cell phone to an SLR, turn it all out fast and get the information to where it needs to go online and to the people at your paper.”

Friedberg says today’s journalists should know some Web coding. Basic HTML will allow a photojournalist to add tags in video players and embed photos and videos in blog posts. Even though the newsroom content management system (CMS) shields the journalists from most of the code, “sometimes there are workarounds in the CMS, and if you have a basic knowledge of HTML, you can use them,” Friedberg said.

“Also, that way of thinking helps you understand what’s possible online and how to take advantage of the tools that are out there,” she said. “Not being afraid of HTML is a leg up.”

J-schools should teach students about the potential for innovative coding, Burton said. “If they have ideas, they can always find someone to collaborate with,” he added. Journalists who know how to code will find opportunities. “Almost no one in a newsroom has these skills today, but they are needed,” Burton said.

Tom Priddy is the multimedia editor at the Spartanburg (S.C.) Herald-Journal. “I don’t envision everyone requiring a one-size-fits-all journalist all the time,” he said. “But for the average working photojournalist, you’d better be able to write a caption accurately, handle a blog, edit audio and video, post directly onto the content management system and send back five grafs on a house fire.”

All those interviewed used words such as ingenuity, creativity, versatile and flexible when describing “the right stuff” for a journalist today.

“The most critical part is how to tell a story—and knowing when a story IS a story,” Priddy said. “Recognize when you come across a good story. You need to know that before you can know which tool is best to use for which story.”

Mulvany suggested that educators should lead students to “look deeper into the ways a story comes together”—what works, and what doesn’t. “They can take the photos, gather the audio, but they fail to make it into something compelling.”

Both Mulvany and Priddy have been training journalists in multimedia reporting in their newsrooms for a few years. Mulvany said we can teach storytelling only after the students feel comfortable with the tools, but Priddy said we can’t really teach them mastery of the tools. “They have to do it over and over and over again,” he said. The only way to feel truly comfortable with the tools is to use them—a lot.

Beyond knowing how to use the tools, a journalist must be able to assess whether a particular story will work well or badly in different
Winning logo design

DENVER 2010

McADAMS

Continued from Page 8

formats. “A school board story is lousy for a photo gallery, but it could be perfect for a mash-up of schools facing closure,” Burton said. “A story that has compelling people can make a perfect audio slideshow or video, if you can get them in an interview. And that interview is going to be different than an interview conducted for print.”

The skills in storytelling and the use of the tools go hand in glove. Students will be inexperienced at both, so they’ll simply have to learn both at the same time.

The current crop of interns “could be better at audio,” Burton said, “but that is the weakest area I see throughout the industry. You wouldn’t have to be all that good to be the best audio person working for a newspaper. Bad audio is very, very difficult to fix in the edit.”

All the photojournalists at the Star-Telegram are good at both gathering and editing audio, Friedberg said. “That has been sort of a long battle, but they’ve had to do it now for several years. They are pretty quick with it.”

Mulvany pointed out that for video or audio slideshows, both reporters and photographers need to write scripts and voice their own narration. “Yes, some sound awful at first,” he acknowledged. “But I am amazed at how fast people find their voice. I have pushed a lot for producers, both reporters and photographers, to voice their multimedia. It has not been a battle at all.”

One thing seems very clear: There is no place in the newsroom for a photojournalist who doesn’t also report, write detailed captions, file copy from the field and work on the Web.

“I firmly believe there will be no more just reporters or just photographers,” Mulvany said. “We all need to have crossover skills. The Web demands it.”

2008-09 VisCom officers

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
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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

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-Palilonis jageorge2@bsu.edu (765) 285-8216
TEACHING MULTIMEDIA

Add interactive graphics to curricula

like me, I am sure many of you have recently been challenged to develop new courses that focus on multimedia, cross-platform storytelling and media convergence. Of course, anytime we rethink curriculum, it’s a trick to balance the foundations of good journalism, more software and technical training, and how to determine exactly what tomorrow’s visual journalists need to know to be successful in this evolving media landscape.

As the journalism graphics sequence coordinator at Ball State, I have had the opportunity to teach a number of digital storytelling courses, and I have also dabbled in research on how informational graphics can be used in multimedia news packages.

Recently, I conducted a survey of newspaper editors across the country that was, in part, intended to gauge their attitudes toward different types of multimedia content. One of the things I learned from the survey was rather frustrating for me as a professor who teaches a number of courses focused on information graphics: Most editors are directing most of their efforts and resources toward video and photo slideshows, while few devote much, if any, space to interactive graphics.

Don Wittekind, assistant professor of multimedia at the University of North Carolina agrees. In a 2007 Design magazine article, Wittekind wrote, “as news organizations strive to produce ever more multimedia while expending increasingly less effort, the immersive interactive graphic has become somewhat of an endangered species.” He argues that although interactive multimedia graphics can be time consuming to create and require specialized software skills on the part of their producers, they are the content most capable of taking full advantage of the Web’s strengths as an interactive medium.

I agree. Video and photo/audio slideshows can be very compelling. But, neither is terribly interactive, a feature that allows us to engage audiences in ways traditional media cannot.

Of course, there are a number of reasons for the absence of multimedia graphics on news sites. These types of displays are often time-consuming and with many newsrooms cutting back, there are fewer professionals with the necessary illustration and/or Flash skills.

Although we can’t necessarily change the market, as educators, we can solve the second problem. We can, and should, train all journalism students to be aware of and know how to use all of the different storytelling tools available to them. As we all try to navigate the changing media landscape, I think we should consider whether our courses/curricula include how conceptualize, research, illustrate, animate and edit multimedia graphics to make our students more versatile, well-rounded journalists.

If you’re interested in starting to focus on interactive graphics in your courses, I have two important pieces of advice: 1) Look for ways to integrate Flash in your courses. If you need to learn it yourself, the preconvention workshop in Boston will be a great start for you; 2) Develop a few class projects that focus on four main types of interactive graphics:

Instructives allow a user to click through the steps of a process. An instructive should explain how something happens or how something works.

Example: www.msnbc.com/modules/tornado/default.asp.

Narratives offer a vicarious experience through a narrated story. They provide a relatively passive viewing experience, but strong narrative graphics combine interesting audio voice-over with graphic depth and rich animation.

Example: www.msnbc.com/modules/enron/

Simulations & Games enable the user to experience content. They are usually a representation of real-word phenomena and are also highly immersive.

Example: www.sun-sentinel.com/broadband/theadge/sfl-edge-n-paperplanes,0,3508402.flash

Data Visualizations combine databases with interactive maps, charts and diagrams to help the user visualize complex data. Although they are based on hard numbers, data visualizations can often be beautiful and creative.


Source: elearningpost.com

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