RESEARCH CHAIR

Recognizing our graduate students

A proposal to consider and discuss at the annual conference

Nicole Dahmen
Research Chair

Greetings visual communication division members!

As a way to increase the visibility of our division and to increase graduate student submissions in the future, I would like to propose creating a named award for the top paper among graduate student submissions. In addition, as suggested by one of our members, I would also like to propose increasing the amount of the cash prize with this award; we currently offer a $100 prize.

Looking to other divisions, the Mass Comm & Society Division annually awards the “Leslie J. Moeller Award” to the top student paper, the History Division annually awards the “Markham Award” to the top student paper, and ComSHER annually awards the “Lori Eason Prize” to the top student paper. The Eason Prize comes with a $1,000 cash award.

Creating a named award for the top paper prize could create a higher mark of distinction for the award. A named prize could help to 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 be able to include a named award on his or her vita as opposed to just including “top paper” in the student paper competition. We can discuss this at the business meeting in August in Minneapolis. But, for now, I would like to open this proposal to discussion. Please send me your thoughts about creating a named award, an increase in the cash award, and nominations for a possible honoree for the named award. You may reach me by e-mail at ndahmen@uoregon.edu. I look forward to hearing your feedback.
AEJMC ’16 Preconference

Program Chair: Matthew J. Haught, University of Memphis

The Visual Communication Division offers a workshop teaching some general visual communication skills applicable to all disciplines of journalism and mass communication. Topics include photography, infographics, web design, smartphone video, and more. These are skills everyone can do, and teach, that don’t require high end tools and high end knowledge. For additional information, contact Matt Haught, Memphis, at mjhaught@memphis.edu.

Aug. 3, 1-5 p.m. schedule:

**Nouns and Verbs: Thinking about storytelling with images.**
Gabriel Tait, Arkansas State

**Basics of sequential thinking and shooting.**
Peg Achterman, Seattle Pacific

**Video Storytelling: Quick-Start Shooting & Editing.**
Quint Randle, Brigham Young

**Working with visuals across platforms.**
David Grewe. California State Northridge

**Captions and writing for visual media.**
John McClelland, Roosevelt University

**Web Design in 2016: Just Enough Code.**
Mindy McAdams, Florida

**Tips for building a media portfolio.**
Matt Haught, Memphis

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Join the Visual Communication Division for its annual luncheon. Frenchy Lunning, professor of design, cultural theory and popular culture at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design will speak about visual communication and popular culture; her specialties are anime, manga and cosplay. Luncheon at The News Room (http://thenewsroommpls.com), 990 Nicollet Mall. Pre-registration is required.

Frenchy Lunning focuses on design, popular culture, and cultural theory throughout her work. She has written a book on fashion and fetish published by Berg Publishers in Britain, and she is currently working on two books, one on fetish and fashion, and the other on cosplay for Berg Publishers. She is also working on a book she began on a Fulbright to Japan in 2008 on the shôjo as a global character.

Lunning is the director of Schoolgirls and Mobilesuits: Culture and Creation in Manga and Anime and the Mechademia Conference, the only academic conference in the United States focusing on Asian popular culture. And she is the co-founder and editor-in-chief of Mechademia, a book series published by the University of Minnesota dedicated to Asian popular culture, manga, and anime. The latest book is Mechademia 9: Origins.

Lunning recently began working in object-oriented ontology, an aspect of the philosophical area called Speculative Realism, and has chapters published in two anthologies addressed in that field. In addition, she has a film and video production firm, Moving Walkway Productions, which works primarily on music videos but also is developing a feature-length indie film.
I learned it in Little League

For years I’ve threatened to write a book titled “Everything I Know About Teaching I Learned Coaching Little League.”

I began coaching youth sports in 1991, when my oldest daughter wanted to play T-ball. Six years of Little League and two years of summer softball followed, punctuated by stints coaching 4th-grade basketball and PeeWee hockey.

The lessons have been many, but three had implications for my classroom teaching:

Break it down. When I began coaching Little League, I realized that Yogi Berra was right when he said, “In baseball, you don’t know nothing.” I had played and watched baseball my whole life, worked a minor-league beat and covered a World Series. But I realized I didn’t know how to teach hitting, pitching or fielding. So I went to clinics.

What struck me was how winning baseball coaches broke down the most basic actions on the field into a stepwise process. They started with the proper grip (knuckles on both hands lined up, bat laid across them, firm but relaxed hold on the handle), then moved on to the stance (feet shoulder width apart weight evenly distributed), the stride (hop and glide, see the ball before you stride) and the swing (head down on the ball as the body unwinds).

The same was true of other sports. Watching Greg Popovich teach the jump shot was a lesson in breaking down a complex action into easily understood and repeatable motions.

Design or photography often can seem hopelessly complex to the beginning student. Breaking down the process into its constituent steps helps dissolve the complexity. I define graphic design as a purposeful and systematic process for creating an end product that communicates effectively. It starts with studying the creative brief, thinking and brainstorming, then forming a plan.

After all this, the designer begins to execute the project. Within the execution phase come other steps: Define the space, choose the typography, sketch and create a first answer, refine the design and apply color.

Evaluation has to be part of all the steps, and that means inviting others into the process. This brings me to the second thing I learned from youth sports:

Teach teamwork. Contrary to some opinions, children do not need to be taught to compete. Even at 6 or 7 years old, they already have learned how to get what they want from time in day care, kindergarten and first grade. My fellow Little League coaches and I had the opposite problem from what you might expect: how to get them past “me first, I want to pitch” and into a learning mindset.

Many of them already practiced the two-pronged method of cutthroat competition: 1) win doing my best, and 2) win by ensuring that the other guy fails. We had to enforce the rule that anyone who said, “Can I bat first, can I bat first?” would have to bat last.

College students are no different. They have had too many classes graded “on the curve,” a zero-sum game where my “A” has to be balanced by someone’s “F.” At Northwestern in the 1990s, we once sent a group of reporting students in a pool car to a far suburb where then-presidential candidate Michael Dukakis was scheduled to speak. One student decided the fast track to an “A” was to take the car back by himself and leave the others stranded while he got the “scoop.”

That experience and others have led me to do away with curve grading and to add to my syllabus the warning that no one will get extra points for being the Lone Ranger. The path to a good grade must come through helping each other with support and at times a bit of constructive criticism.

My third lesson had to do with the main function of any coach, holding practice.
We learn through repetition. Any coach will tell you that he or she never has enough practice time. This is because the way to get better is through repetition, and not just mindless swings of the bat or shots at the basket. Youth coaches are constantly on the lookout for drills that maximize repetition while teaching proper technique. Often these drills came from watching other coaches at work.

Like youth coaches, those of us who teach photography, design and other forms of visual communication are always looking for new wrinkles in the classroom. To that end, I invite you to attend the Teaching Marathon at 1:30 p.m. Aug. 4 during the AEJMC Convention in Minneapolis. It’s co-sponsored by the Magazine Division.

Michael O’Donnell, Teaching Chair
This was a very competitive year, with the top finalists competing with minor point difference between them. As someone born in Chicago, I found many of the logos captured the spirit and image of the city.

To the right, below, are the top five entrants, and the winning logo is displayed here, from Peter Smith of the University of Kentucky. His faculty supervisor, Adriane Grumbein, also had a student take second place.

The other top entrants are displayed on the following page.

And a final thank you to the volunteer judges: Debra Kelly, John Freeman, Adam Peruta, Eric K. Meyer, Philip Loubere, Shawn McKinney, Michael O’Donnell, Jeremy Sarachan, Keith Graham, and Joe Gosen

The judges all took their time and thoughtful comments, and I’ll leave you with judge Michael O’Donnell (Associate Professor, University of St. Thomas) words on the winning logo:

“This is at least the third Chicago go-round I’ve experienced for this contest where the silver bean was used as a centerpiece for a logo entry. The problem is incorporating the shape so it is recognizable while incorporating other elements of the Chicago cityscape. In this year’s entries, we had more than one successful “bean logo, including two finalists. The winning entry is by far the most successful at breaking down the bean into a simple but recognizable element. An area of improvement would be in spacing the text vertically for a more relaxed look to go with the relaxed feel of the bean element.”
The Visual Communication Quarterly invites submissions for a special issue celebrating 100 Years of Dada co-edited by xtine burrough, Frank Dufour, and Dean Terry. All areas of research and creative activity are welcome, including but not limited to visual analysis, design history, graphic recombinance, manifestos, and absurdist reviews. Complete submissions of scholarly or creative works are due by August 1, 2016. Please email submissions directly to the editors, xtine@utdallas.edu, dean.terry@gmail.com, and frank.dufour@utdallas.edu.

“100 Years of DADA” will be published in early 2017 (yes, we know, by then it will be 101 years, let’s call it the anti-math).

In other historic news, the VCQ would also like to recognize the progress former editor, Dr. Paul Martin Lester has made towards a historical marker for the Migrant Mother photograph by Dorothea Lange. Contributors to the Migrant Marker fund will help erect a plaque in the Jim O. Miller Park in Nipomo, about a mile from the location of where the photograph was taken. http://nppf.org/dorothea-lange/

Finally, the Visual Communication Quarterly website has been redesigned: vcquarterly.org.

Christine Burroughs, Editor of Visual Communication Quarterly
The job hub is nearing

David Staton
Graduate Student Liaison

The advice I offer is a whole lot of common sense, but may present one idea or two that hadn’t occurred to you or one or two things you really don’t want to say/do. I was fortunate in that I was able to interview with several universities at the San Francisco conference and one of them wants me to work for them this fall and I’m thrilled to begin my career with them. Here is my list from that experience:

Do not “fake it ‘til you make it.” If you have skills, talk them up; if you’re lacking, don’t pretend or present yourself as having them. Take weekend workshops, use Lynda.com, look at YouTube videos to grow your skill set.

I once heard someone say “Your one job is to make them like you.” Wrong. Your one job is to be yourself, actually your best self. How do you be your best self? Start early in contacting the universities that will be at the jobs hub. The AEJMC website will begin publishing the open positions in aejmc.org/events/mpls16/job-hub. Read them closely and make sure you’re a good fit before sending a letter or email inquiry to schedule. Also, tailor your letters of introduction individually – if you do a group letter for all the schools you want to interview with, the search chairs will sense that you didn’t put in the time and the homework.

Homework? Yes. Learn something about the department, the curriculum, the staffing, the funding, and so forth so that you come across as knowledgeable in your letter. Be aware someone or someones may take a look at your social media presence. What does your Twitter feed look like? Your Facebook page? I don’t know how many times I heard in grad school that no university would ever look at your transcripts during a hiring process. That’s simply not true. The folks that hired me wanted to look at what I brought to the table in terms of coursework and, yes, grades. It may not often matter, but it an matter … a lot. So does communication. In all correspondence whether email, phone call, or letter, be professional. Get the names, titles, spellings, addresses and all such details right. And for heaven’s sake, don’t use an emoticon or emoji in your correspondence. It’s all about striking the right tone.

Once you’ve landed the interview(s) is when the being your best self becomes really important. Be present. Be aware of the clock; you won’t get much time, so use it wisely. If the first words out of your mouth are “What’s the teaching load?” you are NOT being your best self. Watch for social cues. Be engaged not only with eye contact but by your body language. Be formal, be precise, don’t ramble, you’re likely only got 15 minutes to stand out from the crowd. And, importantly, it’s not just what you bring to the table, but how you bring it. You can go big, and that’s going to turn some prospective employers off or you can go small and meek and that’s not going to get it done either. You need to straddle that line between the personal and the professional. Rehearse in front of a partner, create sample questions, have your game (research agenda, aspirations, etc.) down solid. Once you’ve dazzled them with confidence and professionalism, offer sincere thank yous and be sure to follow up via correspondence of some sort.

There are a lot of clichés here, but there’s something to be said about a grain of truth present in each of them. So I’ll leave you with one final one: dress for the job you want, not the one you have. It was slightly more than awkward when I showed up for an interview at the San Francisco jobs hub in sport coat and tie and my interviewee was clad in jeans and a sportswear shirt meant for hiking. I didn’t feel uncomfortable, but he did. Better to feel a little over dressed than entirely under dressed.
May 3 marked the World Press Freedom Day. As usual, a variety of international events were held in many different countries to mark this important occasion. For example, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) hosted a conference in Helsinki, Finland from May 2-4. I hope journalism schools use this day as an opportunity to help students better understand the status of freedom of press and speech around the world.

Working closely with nongovernmental organizations promoting press freedom across the globe, I have been disheartened to see still how frequently journalists in many different parts of the world are physically harassed or even put in jail for holding authorities accountable. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, for example, more than 60 journalists in Ecuador were killed in the line of duty in 2015 including those murdered in reprisal for their work. In addition, hundreds of journalists and bloggers were jailed or abused for their reporting in the same year. In Malaysia, there were multiple arrests and detentions in 2015 of journalists who were seen to be critical of the government. Just in April 2016, journalists protesting for freedom of speech in Maldives were met with police force and pepper spray.

According to the Freedom House report published in 2015, about 32% of the 199 countries rated were classified “free,” 36% “partly free,” and 32% “not free.” The Freedom House Index is based on a series of items in legal, political and economic areas. Similarly, the World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders shows that about 70% of the 180 countries rated were considered “noticeable problems,” “difficult situation,” or “very serious situation.” The World Press Freedom Index by Reporters without Borders takes into account pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency and infrastructure. Reporters Without Borders also considers their own monitoring of violence against journalists.

One of the recent trends in oppression of freedom of press and speech is government censorship of online content. With the growing availability of different digital communication technologies, this is an important topic to monitor as we make efforts to enhance press freedom around the world.

There are many different activities journalism classes can do to make the World Press Freedom Day an important educational opportunity. First, students could explore and discuss datasets about this topic made available by relevant nongovernmental organizations. Freedom House’s website (https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/freedom-press-2015) offers complete reports and interactive maps on press freedom from 1995 to 2015. Both Reporters Without Borders (https://index.rsf.org) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (https://www.cpj.org) also offer relevant longitudinal data and up-to-date information on the topic.

Second, students could be part of an international celebration of the World Press Freedom Day. The UNESCO website (http://www.unesco.org/new/en/wpfd/) shows what types of events are held worldwide, and many of them can be followed online. #PressFreedom is the hashtag the UNESCO promotes for the occasion.

Finally, students could launch their own mini campaign on press freedom to help college students be more aware of challenges faced by many journalists in different countries and how citizens can contribute to addressing the problem. An example would be to ask fellow students to paint a world map based

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on their understanding of which parts of the world journalists are free and where they face significant restrictions. This can be a conversation starter for discussing the status of press freedom around the globe. Both student organizers and participants could write reflective essays on the topic after the campaign.

Such hands-on activities might help students to think critically about press freedom on the May 3 World Press Freedom Day and beyond.

Hyunjin Seo, PF&R Chair

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Vis Comm Resources

- aejmcviscom.org
- AEJMC Visual Communication Facebook Group
- AEJMC Visual Communication Twitter Feed
- Join the VisCom listserv by sending a message with SUBSCRIBE in the message line to AEJMC-VISCOM @LISTSERV.MIAMIEDU

Send us your news

Articles, submissions, and ideas are welcome to be published in VIEWPOINTS. Please send them to Newsletter Editor, taram@sc.edu, as an attached Microsoft Word document.