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## THIS 30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION HIGHLIGHTS AN OUTSTANDING SPIG MEMBER

# Catherine Strong

**Shaping journalism  
education across  
continents**

**SEPTEMBER 2025**

By Jackie Incollingo, PhD, Rider University



**Cathy Strong**

Longtime TJMC editor and  
SPIG member

Longtime SPIG member Dr. Catherine “Cathy” Strong was at the helm of the interest group’s peer-reviewed journal, Teaching Journalism and Mass Communication, from 2017 to 2024.

Her career has included print and broadcast journalism, launching her own public relations firm, and even a stint as a snowboard instructor. She most recently taught journalism and public relations at Massey University in New Zealand. After Massey conducted downsizing and faculty buy-outs, she returned to freelance journalism focusing on agriculture.

TJMC Current Issue

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Strong fell in love with journalism while an undergraduate student at the University of Washington, and later earned a master’s degree in journalism from Kent State University. She worked as a journalist at the Akron Beacon Journal in Ohio and then on radio and television in New Zealand, where she began training colleagues at Radio New Zealand. She began teaching in higher education, including in the United Arab Emirates, and earned her Ph.D. from Massey.

She volunteered to become editor of TJMC at a SPIG member's meeting during an AEJMC conference, inspired in part by her Ph.D. research into a lack of women in news editing positions, and their frequent hesitation to volunteer for these roles.



Photo courtesy of Cathy Strong

Strong was appointed a life member of the Journalism Education Association of New Zealand in 2022. SPIG awarded her the Dalton-Landon Foundation Service Award in 2020, and in 2013 she won AEJMC's first prize for Great Ideas for Teaching.

She has dual American and New Zealand citizenship, still skis and snowboards (she says jumping off fewer cliffs than previously), and proudly speaks of her 12 grandchildren. She has two dogs who compete in agility. Recently, Strong answered questions about her leadership with TJMC and her involvement with AEJMC and SPIG. The transcript has been lightly edited for clarity.

**Q: Can you talk a little bit about what you miss about teaching since leaving it?**

**STRONG:** Oh my gosh, I miss the students. You know, so I'm out doing interviews now, I love interviews with my freelance journalism, but I miss the students. I think there's something magic about students who actually elect to go into journalism. They're not going for the money. They're not going for the fame. Yeah. And they want to learn. I miss the students tremendously. I do have 12 grandchildren, so that might fill the void!

**Q: How did you get involved with AEJMC and SPIG?**

**STRONG:** There's a big connection to my career. So I can't remember when I started at AEJMC, but I know that I helped Massey get accreditation in the early 2000s. I was attracted to AEJMC mainly because it's the biggest professional journalism educators association, but also because of my long-term friend Pam Creedon - I had worked with her in Ohio so you know that sort of attracted me [to AEJMC], because it was the personal connection. And when I worked in the Middle East, I got the job because Pam Creedon recommended me. Then while in the Middle East, I connected with Kim Fox [SPIG's current social media editor]. She's in Egypt, I'm in the United Arab Emirates, but we were in professional journalism groups, professional educators groups. And since we both were in broadcasting, we were both radio people, and we both had the Akron connection, we just connected straight away. So I think her influence got me involved with SPIG. Every time that I went to a conference ... I was going to see friends.

**Q: As someone with lots of professional journalism experience and as an educator, what advice do you have for current SPIG members?**

**STRONG:** I guess do what makes you happy. Find out if it's the students, if it's the colleagues, like I really enjoy my colleagues too. And that's why I love SPIG is ... [the people] that you get to know, even though you're not personally with them, same sort of people, same sort of motivation.

It's really nice to work with people with the sort of the same ethos and agenda that you



have. And that's what I enjoyed about SPIG. And that's what I hope people continue is that they find their strength to help other SPIG members and enjoy it. ... You know, every organization wants volunteers. Every organization is looking for free work and stuff. So it's a matter of surrounding yourself with people that when you're volunteering, it's people who you like and you enjoy being around. And that's what I found at SPIG. I feel like I'm such good friends with so many people there that I've never met in person.

Does it relate to the horrible discussions that we're having now, about whether there's a future in journalism? Yes. And you can get down in the dumps thinking about, 'is is my profession going to continue?' And the thing is of course there is of course there's completely going to be journalism and don't get stuck in the old ways of things and it comes back to staying joyous.





Photo courtesy of Cathy Strong

**Q: How do you believe that TJMC serves SPIG and serves educators like us?**

**STRONG:** Vivian Martin started it in 2011, I think. And straight away, it was robust. And it had high standards. And I think that's important. I think the fact that it wasn't like a little newsletter, that it had double peer reviews, reviewers, and fairly high standards. And then over the years, I think all of the editors kept to that. The research had to be robust, but it also had to be relevant. So there's nothing overly esoteric about it. Relevant to our particular audience. And I think that was a great niche to it. But also I think because we had some great reviewers, double reviewers, that the articles were something you could depend on. The research was something you can go, 'aha, that is that relates to my teaching.' That was one thing.

The other thing is that one of the things that I worked on [through my editorship] was to help new researchers. These are not just young people, a lot of our members got their



teaching job because they had the industry experience. ... They can get into a job that was looking for experience, [but] the universities wanted more research. ... So these were experienced journalists, experienced educators, not having jumped into research before and even understanding how to send in a blind copy, or the format and things like that. What we did with the reviewers is that the feedback had to be kind no matter what, even if it was rejected, and helped [authors] learn. So we would sometimes get people that would then rewrite it, completely go and get some help, and they would resubmit it another year or the next issue. We felt that that was a really big strength of it is helping people along their career path.



Photo courtesy of Cathy Strong

**Q: What advice do you have for someone who is looking to publish in TJMC the first time?**

**STRONG:** Read some past issues. Sometimes we have had people who just jump in throwing in and writing out stuff. But that's not the style, that's not the way we do it. Look at past issues and see just what we're looking for. So some people put in articles as though there's sort of a op-ed, without realizing that we want academic articles. They have to have an element of research in them. So my first advice is to just read what we've done in the past. Second of all, realize it's an international journal. Our readers are from all over the place, and so we need to be inclusive of that. ... We really have spanned the international market.

We've got people from Australia and lots and lots of readers from India because India is really building up their journalism programs, ... and we've got lots that regulars that are Americans working in other parts of the the world. We've got a global global team that's involved, but also our readership [is global], ... because a lot of countries do not have the robust journalism that [Americans] enjoy, or even the journalism education so this actually fills quite a nice void there.

**Q: How was SPIG meaningful to you and your career?**

**STRONG:** It's a comradeship. For me, honestly, what I miss about no longer being editor [of TJMC] is the stimulation. ... I think just the academic and collegial stimulation more than anything else.

Design by Kate Stepaniuc



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