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Fall 2022 Newsletter

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From the Officers

2022 Conference Notes



Division Chair

Michael Fagans

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submitted and it took a phone call to narrow things down with their division. I again want to thank the people who took the time to submit thoughtful and well-designed panels. It reflects well on our group and your efforts; so kudos and thank you.

TEDx Talk

Almost a year ago to-date, a colleague of mine nominated me to give a TEDx talk with our campus chapter. I was then asked to submit a 1-2 minute video elaborating on my proposed title. Little did I know what I had gotten myself into.



The discipline of narrowing down a talk/presentation to 12-14 minutes and TED-ifying things is more daunting than it might seem. Fortunately, our student-run committee's panel that reviewed my first draft was more than kind in offering feedback for subsequent efforts. I am also thankful for my community of peers and mentors who looked at images and helped me edit things down, as well as helping me carefully choose my terms and words. The original, and far too long talk idea, will be rolled out in a different venue with our Center for Southern Studies and their "South Talks" series of lunchtime presentations.

A colleague in our school commented to me that I was going to be a "public academic." I am still not sure if that was a compliment or a dig. None-the-less, sharing ideas and thinking from the academy with larger circles of ideas is well worth our time and effort.

While the editing and pairing down process is similar to my efforts in writing, photography, photojournalism and documentary editing, it is also a process of find that "one thing" (City Slickers reference) and filling out complimentary lines of thought that support your singular concept. In many ways it is a very unacademic process and that is one reason that I appreciated the effort.

<https://youtu.be/77CdYGTSYW0>

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2022 Excellence in Teaching Awardees



Teaching Chair

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Two visual communication teacher-scholars received the Division's Excellence in Teaching Award, which was renamed this year to the Dr. Sandy Utt Excellent in Teaching Award. Read more about the award's namesake in this edition, below. Both recipients spoke about their work and were recognized with a plaque during a special teaching session at the AEJMC annual conference in Detroit.

The winners were:

Elio Leturia (tenured category)



Leturia is an associate professor in the Communication Department at Columbia College- Chicago, where he teaches multimedia journalism and graphic design. A native Peruvian, he was a Fulbright Foreign Student (1990-1991) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign pursuing a master's in visual journalism. In 2022 he taught at Universidad de Málaga, Spain, as a Fulbright Senior Scholar. Leturia is also a bilingual writer, theater actor, and documentary storyteller.

Q: What's your favorite part about teaching?

Leturia: "When I see them evolving as younger professionals. When I see them succeeding. I recently learned from an ex-student who got her second Emmy. She took Reporting in Spanish, and Travel Writing Peru with me. I know all is

due to their efforts, but if I was able to inspire them, it means the world to me."

Robin Hoecker (non-tenured category)

Hoecker is an assistant professor of journalism at DePaul University where she teaches photojournalism, journalism history, and mass communication classes. She recently co-edited [Virus City](#), an anthology of Chicagoans' stories about living through the COVID-19 pandemic. The book, published by Big Shoulders Press, includes six student photo essays. Before earning her Ph.D in communication from Northwestern University, Robin worked as a multimedia editor at the *Stars and Stripes* military newspaper in Germany and Washington, D.C. She also has a master's degree in photojournalism from Mizzou. She would rather be outside right

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Q. What's your favorite part about teaching?

Hoecker: "I love learning alongside my students. I like going to museums and reading books about Chicago, and then incorporating those materials into my courses. I learn from my students as well, and I enjoy seeing what the world looks like through their eyes. It's great to see students succeed by having their work published and being successful in their careers.

That feels really good to watch them grow. Learning photojournalism was transformational for me when I was in college. I hope I can provide that spark for some of my students."

The Innovation in Teaching competition winners presented their teaching tips during a special teaching session at this year's AEJMC annual conference in Detroit. The contest was sponsored by the Visual Communication and Magazine divisions. If you're interested in learning more about some of the presentations, check out our division's resources page [here](#).

This year's entries covered a variety of topics, from successful collaborative work and podcasting to adapting assignments to the pandemic and rethinking grading.

Engaging Virtual Discussion Groups with SnapChat; Podcasting with Virtual Guests
Jason Porter, University of South Carolina

Creating Collaborative, Crowd-sourced and Interactive Documentary Projects for Students to Collaborate Around the World
Susan Cardillo, University of Hartford

The Simple Self Evaluation: An Ungrading Technique to Increase Risk Taking and Creativity
Shannon Zenner, Elon

PJ & Jam: Jamboard as a Medium for Peer Critique Sessions
Tara Mesyn, Michigan State University

Social Network Webbing
Rebecca Cooney, Washington State University

Survival Entrepreneurship
Sarah Fisher, University of Florida

Using "This is America" to teach visual analysis
Jeremy Sarachan, St. John Fisher College

Teaming up in Zoom – Visual Communication in Synchronous Online Classes

PhotoVoice for Social Change
Sumitra Srinivasan, University of Toledo

A Talk with Dr. Sandra Utt

By Natalia Mielczarek



Even though Dr. Sandy Utt retired from the University of Memphis in 2019, she talks about teaching and students as if she were still in the classroom. Utt, who spent 34 years (1984-2019) at Memphis teaching advertising, rattles off story after story about working on advertising competition entries with her students over spring break, former students running their own companies, or a former student moving in three houses down from her and finally calling her by her first name. Her passion for students, teachers and teaching remains intense, so much so

that Utt donated a portion of her retirement funds to AEJMC to support the Visual Communication Division's annual teaching competition. Beginning with the August 2022 AEJMC annual conference in Detroit, the award has been renamed the Dr. Sandy Utt Excellence in Teaching Award, which recognizes visual communication teachers for their innovation, excellence and contributions to the field.

Utt got involved in the division in the 1980s, she said, shortly after the Photography and Graphics Design groups merged to form the current Visual Communication Division. She spoke with me in early October about her love for teaching. Here's an edited version of our conversation.

Q: What is it about teaching that excites you?

When I finished my master's and moved to Norfolk/Virginia Beach, I worked in a research firm and decided to get back to the classroom at Norfolk State University. It was really good to be in a classroom. I just felt that it's really what I wanted to do. It was fun to try to get [students] excited about what I was teaching, the same excitement that I had when I was working and was a student. (...) When I went back to get my Ph.D. at Ohio University, because I had taught for three years at Norfolk

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)**Q: What do you think makes for an excellent teacher?**

There has to be a point at which you are challenging, to the point of [students saying] “Oh my God, what more can she possibly ask us?” and challenging to the point of being understanding and kind. There’s this nice coming together of those two. You have to position what you’re doing as: “Whatever you’re exposed to is for your benefit.” Nobody likes going to the dentist, but it’s for our benefit. (...) It’s about understanding where your students are, and what they need and being honest with them about what they need to do. It’s about trying to make them realize that all of this is about career building.

When I was at Texas A&M University, the school had both male and military tradition and history. When I got there in 1981, the Department didn’t have “Women in Communication, Inc.” group. There just wasn’t anything for women, and we immediately got a group going. I was able to take students to various regional and national meetings away from campus. So, I had been gone from that university maybe 28 or 29 years, and out of the clear blue, I get a thank you card from a woman who’s in Chicago. She is thanking me for when I was an advisor for Women in Communication, Inc. and taught classes at Texas A&M because I was such a wonderful mentor to her. She just went on and on; it was amazing. I had it framed. That’s how much it affected me. I just couldn’t believe it. The impact you can have on people’s lives, just wow. That’s why I’ve always enjoyed being in the classroom.

Q: What lessons throughout your career have helped you to become a better teacher?

It’s really important to understand that not everyone who walks into your classroom is as excited about the material as you are. Your responsibility is to try to make them. If they’re not as excited, I have to try to stimulate them. The other lesson is, you have to learn to realize that not everyone thinks like you do about a lot of things. You have to be comfortable in your own skin and learn to deal with everyone.

Q: What would be the one piece of advice you’d have for college professors?

What teachers need to know, I would think, is: “Don’t be surprised by anything that happens.” I would even emphasize it more now because people are so different now from what they were even 10 years ago. You need to adjust to 2022, 2023 and the future.

Matthew Haught | Research Chair | University of Memphis
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The iconic Whitney Houston once sang “I believe the children are our future; teach them well, and let them lead the way.” As scholars, we’ve been taught that we are standing on the shoulders of the giants who came before us. But sometimes, we are the giant, and sometimes we need to stand tall and let the children stand on our shoulders.

As such, I’m bringing on a junior scholar, A. Kix Patterson, a Ph.D. student in the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida, to have a conversation about being a mentor and mentee in research. I had the responsibility of being Kix’s mentor for his undergraduate and graduate studies in the Department of Journalism & Strategic Media at the University of Memphis.

We write this as a conversation worth sharing with mentors and mentees across the field, but also specifically within visual communication. Matt will first ask Kix three questions, with Kix’s reply, then they swap.

MH: Kix, what is your biggest expectation for your research mentor?

KP: To be a judgment-free person to ask questions about academics that might feel embarrassing or dumb. Most often, these are questions we all have and are important to our academic growth but imposter syndrome makes you feel small for asking. You were always a great person to run ideas by and ask those questions. You gave clear, no holds barred answers and were ready to back them up with articles or personal stories when I inevitably asked “But, why?”

MH: We have a mutual friend (in a different field) who has a really toxic research mentor. What lessons have you learned from this situation and what advice do you have for our friend?

KP: Picking the right person makes the entire grad school experience enjoyable. Just because a person matches your research area does not mean they are the best option for your mentor. Ask prior mentees or department and college admin about the mentorship record of the individual. For our friend, stick it out. This is only a short part of your long academic career. Learn from the experience and use it for good when you become a mentor one day.

MH: What’s one thing I did as your mentor that helped the most, and one you wish I did differently?

KP: You took time to learn how I learn. I’m hard-headed and need proof before I’m willing to change directions on a project when my mind is set. You observed how I took critique and understood that I need you to show tough love with evidence. As for what I wished could have been different, I wished that I would have joined the

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level and to implement research into the standard curriculum. It is an opportunity to create more well-rounded professionals and more prepared graduate students.

Now let's flip the table and have Kix ask the questions.

KP: Matt, we've worked together since I was in undergrad, though we never had an "official agreement" that you were my mentor. From your perspective, how did our mentorship connection come together so naturally? Were there signs that I was looking for guidance in academia?

MH: Another student had recruited you to our program, and she told me to look out for you. But I could see your creative talent right away, and because I was advising all of our creative students then, you became my academic advisee. So, in that way I had an official role as your mentor. Our connection came together so naturally because you wanted to learn and I did everything I could to show you that you could trust me. I think that's a part of mentorship: the mentor needs to build their credibility to the mentee. I tried to be transparent and to listen just as much as I talked.

You definitely had signs, too. You asked questions and you stuck around. You put in the effort to learn in class but you engaged outside of class, too. That's really how you ended up in graduate school; I suggested a master's degree when you switched more to "why" questions instead of "how" questions. Of course the answer to those are research, and that's why you're getting your doctorate.

KP: I know from our past conversations that you also had a mentee while you were a junior scholar. What lessons did you bring forward to our mentor/mentee relationship?

MH: My first graduate student mentee said upfront that he wanted to get a doctorate and teach, so when you made that turn, I had a very direct conversation with you about research, doctoral programs, expectations and more. I recall I encouraged you to go seek other opinions, too. I think that's the biggest lesson for me: manage expectations. It's easy to get discouraged in academia, and to get lost, too. I tried to always set you up for what to expect in every situation so you could know what to expect. Hopefully that's minimized your discouragement at the grind of academia.

KP: How has being a research mentor helped you grow in academia and personally?

MH: Teaching someone else to do something is always a great way to learn it yourself, of course. But I think the biggest reward is the questions you and my other mentees ask. In explaining things to you, I understand a little better how our theories and methods work, how our discipline fits within the field and how our research can address the gaps in our knowledge. Plus it makes me proud watching you succeed and knowing I played a role in it.

Matt Haight is the research chair of the Visual Communication Division.

Navigating the Professional Tenure Track

Robin Hoecker | PF&R Chair | DePaul University | rhoecker@depaul.edu

As visual communication scholars, many of us are interested in creative and visual approaches to research. Creative research can mean different things to different people. Depending on your background and department, it can include projects like journalistic essays, infographics, websites, books, exhibits, short films or full-length documentaries.

For those of us on the tenure-track, getting this creative work to “count” for tenure can be a daunting and confusing process. In 2015, the AEJMC VisCom Division put together a [statement about the value in creative work](#) and the criteria for which such work should be evaluated. These criteria include:

- Contribution to the creator’s field.
- Venue and audience reach.
- Innovations in presentation style.
- Leveraging the strengths of visual communication.
- Professional development of the creator.
- Advancement of the field of visual communication.

As photojournalists on the tenure track, we have spent a lot of time thinking about this. I have talked to a number of people about tips and best practices. Here are our main takeaways so far:

1. Read your faculty handbook very, very carefully.

Whether or not creative work counts for tenure depends on the type of institution and the culture of your department. Are you at an R1, R2, or teaching-focused college or university? Does your faculty handbook include a section about creative work? These statements can vary widely across disciplines and universities. So be sure you’re working with the specific guidelines at your school.

If your tenure guidelines do not include a section about creative work, consider advocating that one be added. You can use the AEJMC statement mentioned above as a starting point.

2. Make sure your creative work is peer-reviewed.

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competitions and festivals. The [creative research competition](#) at AEJMC offers a venue for peer review for visual work. You can also look up national [calls for entry](#) for artistic competitions.

3. Network. Network. Network.

Because of the external review portion of the tenure process, you will need reviewers who recognize the value in creative work and who can evaluate it appropriately. Start thinking early on about who could evaluate your work.

4. Talk to others about their experiences.

This can be tricky, because everyone's experiences are different. Some people have had a hard time getting their creative work to count and will counsel you against doing similar projects. Others have been successful and will tell you everything is fine. But ultimately, it comes down to tip #1: know the guidelines that apply to you.

Let's hear from you! What does your institution's faculty handbook say about creative work? Do you have examples of creative work that has "counted" for tenure? Do you have tips for how to approach creative work? Please share them with me at rhoecker@depaul.edu. We will compile this information and share it on the VisCom website.

SouthEast Colloquium Call for Submissions

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The deadline is approaching for submissions for AEJMC's Southeast Colloquium. The Visual Communication Division will once again be part of the colloquium, which will be held March 2-4, 2023, at Middle Tennessee State University.

The Colloquium presents an opportunity to present and get feedback on research you might be working on before submitting to the AEJMC convention.

There are multiple options for participating in the colloquium. You can submit completed research papers, research in progress or proposals for a panel. Requirements for completed papers are similar to the requirements for submitting to

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Completed papers must be no longer than 30 pages, including references, tables, illustrations or other additions. Authors also must include a 250-word abstract. All identifying information must be removed from the submission.

Scholars working on research that won't be complete by the submission deadline can submit as Research-in-Progress. Research-in-Progress submissions require a title page and a longer abstract that briefly addressed the conceptual idea, background and literature, research questions and/or hypotheses, method(s) used and either a plan for findings or an outline of preliminary findings. The abstract length is limited to 1,000 words. Submissions must also include a reference list that is not included in the 1,000-word limit. All identifying information must be removed from Research-in-Progress submissions as well.

Another option is to submit a panel proposal for the colloquium. Proposals can address topics of specific interest to the Visual Communication Division or topics that would be relevant more broadly to everyone participating in the colloquium. Panel proposals should contain a proposed title and brief description of the panel along with the names and affiliation of the organizer, potential panelists and the moderator. Confirm that people will be on the panel before submitting. Panel proposals do not have to be anonymous.

In addition to submitting to the Visual Communication Division, there is an open division for completed paper submissions. Research-in-Progress submissions can only be made to the division. Papers that are presented at the colloquium can be revised and submitted to the AEJMC conference paper competition.

The deadline for submissions is **5 pm central time on December 12, 2022.**

This also means I will be contacting people soon to line up reviewers for the colloquium submissions! Visual Communication division members have been so generous with their time and expertise as paper reviewers. I hope I'll be able to count on some of you to review colloquium submissions over the winter break. The deadline for the reviews will be January 10, 2023. I'll do my best to limit the number of submissions I ask you to look at.

You can find more information about the colloquium, including a preconference session on data analytics, and links for submissions

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