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NEWSLETTER

A note from Carrie Brown, Head of PJIG

In these chaotic and challenging early days of 2026, it has never been more clear how important it is to build a strong infrastructure around participatory, community-centered news and information. Thank you for the work you do and for being part of the Participatory Journalism Interest Group.

- **A note from the Head of PJIG**
- **Call for Papers**
- **Meet the 2025-2026 Officers**

Call for Papers

The Participatory Journalism Interest Group (PJIG) invites your research paper submissions for the upcoming 2026 AEJMC Conference, scheduled for Tuesday, August 4 – Saturday, August 8 in New Orleans. The conference will be hosted at the New Orleans Marriott, 555 Canal Street, New Orleans, Louisiana.

aejmc
PJIG

A note from the Head of PJIG, cont.

My heart is with colleagues in Minnesota who are facing so much disruption and suffering, as well as those staring down threats to academic freedom elsewhere. I hope that we can build lasting solidarity to support each other.

Seeing the outpouring of care, community, and connection in the streets of Minneapolis reminds me of why most of us developed this research and teaching interest in the first place - the belief that people can and must come together to share information and solve problems to build healthy civic life.

Dr. Carrie Brown

I hope everyone is staying warm and safe. If you have any ideas or thoughts to share regarding PJIG, please don't hesitate to reach out.

2026 Call for Papers

We encourage you to contribute your insights and research on participatory journalism and engaged journalism at this vibrant meeting of scholars, journalists, and leaders in the field. The submission site opened on January 15, 2026.

Submission Deadline: Mark your calendars to submit your papers before April 1, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. (CDT).

Conference Theme & Scope: The conference theme for 2026 is "Jazz & Jambalaya: Nurturing Harmony and Health in Higher Education."

This year, PJIG invites all manner of research into the roles journalists and news organizations play when engaging actively in communities. Participatory journalism is and has been a dynamic field of study that examines news practices and organizational policies that integrate the public into meaning-making processes from story selection to content creation and dissemination. As political and industry powers shift, we must continue to examine the role of journalists and news organizations as collaborators creating shared understanding about communities. The publics engaged or invited to be engaged may be as small as the population of a rural town or a niche fandom; or, they may be as large as the world.

To underscore, we are looking for studies that delve into how journalism continues to evolve with the active involvement of "citizens," "users," "audiences," "fandoms," "followers" and/or other types of engaged "participants." (*continued on p. 3*)

Call for Papers, cont.

Whether the research focuses on digital platforms, analog means of communication or both, we're interested in how participatory practices are shaping the news landscape and fostering a more collaborative environment for Journalism.

Suggested Research Topics: Your research may address, but is not limited to, the following areas:

- Participatory journalism in political coverage and elections
- Building trust through participatory journalism
- User-generated content and its impact on news reporting
- Citizen media and community engagement in journalism
- Collaborative elements in entrepreneurial journalism
- Legal, ethical, historical, and philosophical perspectives on participatory media
- The interplay between participatory journalism and "traditional" journalistic norms
- The role of social media and other communication technologies in participatory journalism and other forms of engagement between news organizations and their communities
- Economic aspects of participatory journalism, including entrepreneurial efforts
- Educational approaches to teaching Journalism in participatory contexts
- The role of AI in supporting or thwarting efforts to engage audiences in the co-creation of news and shared meaning

Awards: Submissions will be considered for five awards: two faculty paper awards (first and second place), two student paper awards (first and second place), with prizes of $150 and $75 respectively, and a dissertation competition, with a $150 prize. Paper submissions should be submitted through the AEJMC All-Academic submission site. Student submissions should be clearly marked as "student papers" to qualify for the student competition.

Those interested in submitting a full dissertation for consideration for the dissertation award should directly contact PJIG co-research chair Mark Poepsel at mpoepse@siue.edu for a short list of submission requirements. Dissertation award submissions (and only dissertation submissions) are handled entirely by email.

Submission Guidelines: Papers should not exceed 25 double-spaced pages, excluding references, tables, figures, and appendices, and should adhere to the AEJMC uniform paper call requirements. Use a 12 pt. Times New Roman font with at least 1-inch margins. Include a cover sheet or an abstract of 75 words, not counted in the page limit. You may use any academic formatting style. Submissions must be original and not under review elsewhere.

Research-in-Progress: Research-in-progress submissions are new for 2026. They are replacing the call for extended abstracts some may be familiar with from years past. A research-in-progress submission provides scholars with a venue to workshop developing projects, whether early-stage studies, pilot data, or emerging theoretical ideas, and receive constructive feedback from the AEJMC community. Submissions should be anonymized, 1,000–1,500 words (plus references), and clearly outline the project's purpose, grounding, methods, and anticipated contribution, demonstrating strong potential for future scholarly development.

Questions? Contact Research Co-Chairs **Dr. Mark Poepsel** at mpoepse@siue.edu or **Dr. Nisha Sridharan** at nisha.sridharan@temple.edu

Meet the 2025-2026 Officers

Carrie Brown, Head
Montclair State U

Carrie Brown is an associate professor of journalism at Montclair State University, where she specializes in community engagement. Her courses focus on understanding and meeting community information needs and building trust, particularly with groups undeserved or ill-served by traditional media. Her work also often involves partnering with New Jersey local news organizations to help fill information gaps and using a variety of creative strategies to make sure people get the news they need, whether it is via social media or newsletters or WhatsApp groups or other means. Previously, she was the founding director of the engagement journalism Master's program at the Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY. Her research and recent book, Transforming Newsrooms, co-authored with Jonathan Groves, centers on how news organizations can change their cultures and adapt to the changing media landscape. Brown also worked as an associate professor of journalism at the University of Memphis and as a daily newspaper reporter and editor. She has a PhD from the University of Missouri, a Master's degree in communication from the Annenberg School at Penn, and an undergraduate degree in journalism and conservation biology from the University of Wisconsin.

Antoine Haywood, Vice-Head
U of Florida

Antoine Haywood is an assistant professor in the Journalism Department at the University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications. Before earning a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, he worked extensively as a community media practitioner in Atlanta, Georgia, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. With collaborative support from practitioner networks like the Alliance for Community Media and News Futures, Antoine's research focuses on local media landscapes, community-engaged journalism practices, civic communication systems, and community media history.

Mark Poepsel, Research Co-Chair
Southern Illinois U

Mark Poepsel is an associate professor of Mass Communication at Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville, near St. Louis, Missouri. Mark's research interests include engagement journalism and threats against journalists. He teaches media writing, publication design, media management, advanced broadcast writing, and graduate research methods courses, among others. Mark recently won a Department of Education grant, administered by the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois, to develop The OER Guide to Media Writing, an open access textbook. Mark is a former local television reporter and was educated at Mizzou for his undergraduate and PhD degrees and the University of Arizona for his master's in Latin American Studies.

Meet the 2025-2026 Officers

**Nisha Sridharan,
Research Co-Chair**
Temple U

Nisha Sridharan is an Assistant Professor at Temple University's Klein College of Media and Communication. Her research centers around the role of media in society, with research interests in journalism studies, organizational communication, community and participatory journalism, and DEIB in media. Her dissertation explores the journalistic and organizational practices of non-profit monothematic news organizations within the evolving media landscape. Nisha received her PhD from the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University and her Master's degree from the University of Nevada, Reno, and has prior experience reporting for The New Indian Express in Chennai, India.

**Damilola Oduolowu,
PF&R Chair**
U of South Carolina

Damilola Oduolowu is a journalism researcher and educator who earned his Ph.D. in Journalism at the University of Missouri. He is currently a faculty member at the University of South Carolina's School of Journalism and Mass Communications. His research agenda centers on media sociology, with a focus on digital journalism, citizen journalism and environmental/climate change journalism. His work examines how citizen journalism and traditional news outlets cover environmental and climate issues. He is a 2024 Pulitzer Center Crisis Reporting Fellow and a 2024 AEJMC-MCSD Diversity and Inclusion Career Development Fellow. Damilola has ten years of extensive experience in professional journalism. Before pursuing his PhD and entering academia, Damilola worked as a senior journalist reporter for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Service.

**M. Fahad Humayun,
Teaching Chair**
U of Evansville

Dr. Fahad Humayun is a communication researcher and educator who earned his PhD in Media Research and Practice from University of Colorado Boulder. His research has been published in prestigious journals such as Digital Journalism and Journalism Practice and he is also a recipient of research awards from International Communication Association (ICA) and Association for Education in Mass Communication and Journalism (AEJMC). He has also taught at multiple universities in past and brings experience of teaching both undergrad and graduate students. Dr. Humayun is an avid sports fan and as a child he used to stay up all night to watch NBA games on ESPN while living in Pakistan.

Meet the 2025–2026 Officers

**Nina Kelly,
Communication Chair**
Temple U

Nina Kelly is currently a postdoctoral research fellow with the Center for Community-Engaged Media at Temple University. She graduated in December 2025 with a dual-title Ph.D. in Communication and Urban Sustainability from Wayne State University. Before pursuing her doctoral studies, Nina worked as an urban and regional planner for over 15 years in Georgia and Michigan. Her experience in government agencies, non-profit organizations, and as a private sector consultant shapes her interest in using participatory approaches to understand how the practices, policies and messages from local public institutions and media organizations might empower people and encourage their engagement in processes that shape civic society.

**Daiyi 'Sherry' Jiang,
Graduate Student Rep**
U of Connecticut

Daiyi (Sherry) Jiang is a doctoral student in the Department of Communication at the University of Connecticut. She earned her master's degree in Journalism from the University of Missouri School of Journalism. Her research focuses on how people's cognition, attitudes, and behaviors are shaped in AI-driven information environments. In particular, she is interested in highly interactive contexts where users actively engage with technologies, examining how psychological processes, attitudes, and behaviors are influenced through interaction. Her work seeks to bridge traditional journalistic values with contemporary AI-driven content production, with the goal of promoting more human-centered information environments. She has presented multiple research papers at AEJMC. Currently, she is conducting studies at Human–Computer Interaction Lab and Social Media Lab at UConn, and she welcomes opportunities to connect with scholars who share similar research interests.

Connect with us!

linkedin.com/company/aejmc-participatory-journalism-interest-group

@aejmcpjig.bsky.social