

Teaching Journalism & Mass Communication

A journal published
by the AEJMC Small
Programs Interest Group



Vol. 1 (2011), pp. i-ii <https://community.aejmc.org/smallprogramsinterestgroup/publications/journals>

A Note from the Editor

Vivian B. Martin

Welcome to the first issue of *Teaching Journalism and Mass Communication*: A Journal Published by the Small Programs Interest Group of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Although the editorial team has crossed off a number of tasks on the to-do list on our way to this first issue, from recruiting writers to wrestling with the technical details of electronic publication, writing this inaugural letter seems to me to be one of the most difficult tasks to date. I have procrastinated mightily and can't really blame my teaching load or even the recent October snowstorm that knocked out power for nearly a week. I think my footdragging has something to do with the challenge of stepping up and succinctly describing the vision the editorial team, SPIG officers, and I have for the publication, while also acknowledging and hoping this creation grows beyond our initial goals for it. Moreover, part of the challenge is to explain what we tried to do with this first issue, at the same time hoping that the work speaks for itself.

In some ways TJMC is SPIG laying claim to a niche with which we have become more and more identified within AEJMC: practical discussion of what we are doing in the classroom. We are not the only ones dealing with education at AEJMC, but the nature of the institutions represented by SPIG membership means that teaching claims most of our work life. We all engage in research and creative work like our colleagues in Research I programs, but with three, and often four, preps a semester, the emphasis differs. Moreover, we do this work alone or with just a few colleagues. For that reason, it is more important for us, faculty in teaching-intensive colleges and universities, to have a forum to more explicitly engage in scholarship directly aligned with pedagogical concerns, issues not at the forefront of most journal-

ism and mass communication journals. In *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* (JMCE) there is a journal speaking our language; but TJMC differs from that esteemed tradition in a few important ways.

We're providing essays and research from the point of view of small programs. To some people that might sound presumptuous or a little odd. From the outside, teaching in a small program does not seem so different than teaching in a large one: It's a matter of scale, right? Certainly, the size of the student population and resources is part of the matter, but it is much more. When one is responsible for a range of courses in journalism and mass communication, rather than a specialty, one is compelled to keep up in best practices for pretty much the entire journalism curriculum.

At the same time, we often lay out our offerings a little differently than one might find at a Research I university, where large departments and hundreds of majors allow for designated courses on a number of topics. When a small program is tucked inside an English Department, the situation of a number of SPIG institutions, the type and number of offerings might differ. Further, the students we teach are not from the same population as the student body in Research I schools. While some of our small program members teach in selective programs, many of us in teaching-intensive schools teach first-generation college students, a population that is often working near-fulltime jobs while juggling our courses. We are constantly faced with the need for problem-solving and improvisation that we should be writing about as essays and research aligned with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL), an increasingly viable and accepted form of research within academia.

We think this journal, with its easy accessibility on the web, will have an interested readership be-

yond faculty in small programs, because we are in a time when all members of the journalism and mass communication professoriate must be more reflexive about what we do. The industries with which we are aligned need a different type of graduate to work in fields quite different from what many of us worked in or studied. Such changes require not just an expansion in the number of publications speaking to the concerns of journalism and mass communication faculty, they require more of a community built around analysis and discussion of what is happening and how we should respond in our teaching.

Launching an electronic journal allows us to do that. We are not just a journal that has made space for its contents on the web. We are of the internet and intend to take full advantage of what is here. As this issue demonstrates through links to multimedia demonstrations, pdf files to take away, and a call for more comments and essays to be added to this issue over the next couple of months, we want visitors to become part of the publication. Our symposium on “Blowing up Journalism 101” urges such participation. Please jump in with comments, or send essays my way. We’d like to get several more posted as a broader conversation we can archive, or even turn into an e-book. That’s the beauty of new media; there are many possibilities ahead of us. In the meantime, please read the “Call for Papers” for the spring issue and think about how you might contribute.

But we would not have made it here without the work and vision of a number of people, from contributors who submitted on faith, to SPIG’s leadership. Although the idea for a SPIG journal or blog came up during my year as SPIG Head, it was my successor, Ginger Carter Miller (Georgia College), who saw that a committee got working on this during her term. Now, SPIG Head Susan Lewis (Abilene Christian University) is supporting it. My co-editor Mitzi Lewis (Midwestern State University) is more than just a “wingman”; she has been a full partner. Mitzi’s technical prowess and her ability to keep moving despite tricky obstacles has been crucial from the earliest days when we needed a quick survey of SPIG members to see how many people even thought we should put energy into a prototype. Mitzi designed the website and dealt with all the issues involved with building on WordPress and moving to the aejmc.net server. Margo Wilson (California University of Pennsylvania) is a Fairy Godmother of sorts, too. Margo, a former SPIG Head, is the kind of person you call to get you out of

trouble. She is conscientious and good at what she does. With her many years of newspaper work in Wisconsin and California, including two years as a copy editor at the Los Angeles Times, Margo is a perfect choice as Managing Editor and Copy Chief. SPIG members such as Lona Cobb (Winston-Salem State College) and Carol Dykers (Salem College) pitched in with some reviewing on really short notice, and Lona was back to help with copyediting, along with Mary Carmen Cupito (Northern Kentucky University), and Cathy Johnson (a former SPIG head; Angelo State University). Because former SPIG Heads never stray too far, Jim Sernoe (Midwestern State University) helped with copyediting, too. Jim will be editor for the Reviews section we launch in the spring.

Many other people will be on call for support and advice. We have chosen to start building our Advisory Board by including past SPIG Heads and SPIG’s founders, Terry Dalton (McDaniel College) and Kim Landon (Utica College). Our board will continue to expand as we bring on people by expertise, but we feel it important to acknowledge the line of SPIG leaders who have nurtured us to the point where we are ready to take on our largest project yet. A special note of thanks to our founders, Dalton and Landon, and the first Head, Jim Stewart. They saw the need for SPIG and thought about what we might become. That is the spirit with which we begin here.

Vivian B. Martin is an associate professor and directs the journalism program at Central Connecticut State University.

Note: Since our inspired leader, Vivian Martin, is singing our praises here, we would like to commend our editor’s perseverance, dedication to quality, and devotion to serving the needs of those who teach journalism and mass communication. This journal would still be an idea we kick around at the annual AEJMC conferences if it weren’t for Martin’s determination, collegiality, and vision.

— Mitzi Lewis and Margo Wilson