



EDITOR'S NOTE:

A Happy Ending and Beginning: TJMC Gets a New Editor

Vivian B. Martin

I am in a lighthearted, optimistic mood as I sit down to write this, my last Editor's Note, and not just because this experiment in academic publishing that we launched in fall 2011 has survived small bumps along the way. Putting the journal into the capable hands of a successor fuels my elation, of course. But I also just returned from a panel of my program's recent graduates, who discussed their jobs in print, TV and online newsrooms. In addition to giving students advice about working in campus media, being smart about internships, and even paying attention in class, they gave further encouragement. "There are jobs out there," they assured the students, who have had their doubts.

The message of a future in journalism that is available for those who are willing to prepare was also welcome confirmation for faculty that we are getting students ready for the media world after graduation. As I think other JMC faculty can agree, such assurances are needed every now and then. Sitting at Open Houses where parents aggressively question the value of the degree we are there to promote, or coming across yet another listicle citing journalism as a worthless degree, or reading another screed about how journalism and mass communication educators are doing it wrong, can raise doubts in our own minds. When we are looking at the big picture, we know the students are building skills and mindsets that they will be able to take to many fields beyond journalism or public relations. Sometimes, as we are faced with

assessment reports, calls for recruitment and retention plans, budget cutbacks just when we need to upgrade equipment to keep our programs up to date, or trying to launch some new partnership with industry or other venture that helps push us and our students into the future, the pieces to the puzzle don't come together so smoothly.

In 2010, when the Small Programs Interest Group (SPIG) created a committee to explore whether we might launch a publication, the thought was that a venue focused around the many teaching issues members and other JMC faculty confront in their day-to-day responsibilities would allow us to give more attention to best practices, pedagogical research, and demonstrations of curricular innovations in the classroom. These latter pieces, typically essays in the scholarship of application, have been part of SPIG's branding, as this type of research and writing does not always fit so easily in traditional journals in our field. It wasn't that there weren't good journals dedicated to teaching in JMC; AEJMC's *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* addresses issues related to practice for a number of us. But we were looking for something that focused on some of the concerns of those in teaching-heavy institutions, where smaller faculties, including those within liberal arts colleges or in minors housed in English departments, must do more across a fewer number of courses or adjust to a student majority that might not be directly focused on careers in journalism or other

practical media fields. Moreover, we saw on the Internet many possibilities for publishing examples of faculty projects with examples of student work, as well as interactive fora.

Nearly four years later, we have seen much of the original vision for TJMC come to life. We've shown that we can mix rigorous peer-reviewed research and embed student work as part of articles in which faculty discuss the challenges of servicing learning or teaching a mobile reporting course. We are logging an acceptance rate in the mid 40s and are on the radar of researchers from small and large institutions who need a place to examine teaching. The journal is the main engine driving traffic to the SPIG website, logging 12,300 of the 17,500 views on the SPIG website, which has had visitors from 129 countries.

There are projects on my wish list that did not materialize—a series on the state of various courses, content and outcomes, across small programs; collaborative research between faculty around the country—but with each issue, the editors and contributors have shown new possibilities.

In this issue, Joseph Treaster, writing in an area that has become increasingly important for programs large and small, takes us inside a summer program in the Galapagos, where he and a colleague in music engineering work with students to explore culture and the environment through writing and acoustics. (Make sure you check out the audio of a giant Galapagos tortoise hissing.) Peer-review research by Kehbama Langmia and Amy Glass on smart phone distraction and Sarah Maben and Kathleen Whitson's work on the benefits of student-run public relations firms are the kind of articles people can read thinking about their own teaching or programs.

In the Teaching+ column, Ted Peterson shares lessons learned from a First Amendment Wall at Florida Institute of Technology, while in the Industry column, Darren Sweeney discusses the need to prepare students for newsrooms' increasing demand

for journalists to bring social networks with them to a job, and keep growing them. The symposium focus in this issue is textbooks, something we seem to love and hate. Lisa Carponelli-Lovell shares the results of a SPIG survey on textbooks and introduces other pieces in the package. Further, in our efforts to keep the conversation going after publication, we feature two book reviews on Eric Newton's digital textbook, *Searchlights and Sunglasses: Field Notes from the Digital Age of Journalism*. Aaron Chimbel and Butler Cain consider the possibilities the book might have for the classroom. We encourage readers to submit their own experiences, which we will post.

I am proud of this issue, and I am honored that Brian Steffen, chair of Communication & Media Studies at Simpson College, has agreed to be the next editor of TJMC. Brian has given much to SPIG. Not only do he and Simpson host the listserv, he is a former SPIG head, who, like most former SPIG heads, is always willing to come back for more service. Brian helped to get this issue ready and has reviewed manuscripts and helped with copyediting for this and previous issues. Staying on to work with Brian is Mitzi Lewis of Midwestern University's Department of Mass Communication, TJMC's Design Director and Production Editor, and my co-editor since the launch of the journal. She downplays her role, but the elegant design, as well as rigor in the reporting of statistics and APA style are among her signatures.

This is an important time for SPIG as the journal passes from a founding editor after three years to a new editor, who will now guide it through a more mature phase. I wish Dr. Steffen and his team the best of luck.

Vivian B. Martin is professor and chair of the Department of Journalism at Central Connecticut State University.