

DIVISION HEAD

Using our Vis Comm Resources

EVERYTHING involves visuals. So where to begin?

December is for celebration, but also preparation. As our semesters come to a close, it's easy to forget how much work is currently happening for the big ticket events to come.

Right now we're hitting the first major milestones of the Viscomm season. Vice Chair Matt Haught has nailed down the panel sessions for AEJMC 2016, and Second Vice Chair Gabriel Tait is collecting submissions for the 2016 Midwinter Conference. The call for research submissions will go out soon for that April deadline, which isn't as far away as you might think (or hope). The work to be submitted for our Best of Digital, Creative Projects, and logo competitions is likewise nearing completion, though its creators may not yet have thought about contest entries.

It's a time for finishing things and a moment to breathe before starting something new. For those starting to get antsy about spring research submissions, just look at the visual stories from this fall alone.

- At the University of Missouri, black students and their allies protested systematic oppression,



BOB BRITTEN
WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY

and in their protests blocked photographers from access to public property. Is this a straight-up legal question, or was there ethical reason for the photographer to back off?

- News agency Reuters issued a worldwide ban on the RAW image format. Their reason? Speed and ethics: RAW photos allow a greater degree of flexibility in post-processing, and thus (Reuters fears) a greater temptation for manipulation.

- Portrait photographer Annie Liebovitz is driving the Pirelli Calendar, known for its nearly (or completely) nude photos of celebrities, in a new direction. The latest edition will include women of the arts and business (most of them

Continued RESOURCES | 2

The official newsletter of the Visual Communication Division of AEJMC

INSIDE

AEJMC Vis Comm Resources	2
MidWinter Conference	3
National Conference News	4
Stop, Look, Listen and Think	5-6
2016 Logo Contest	6-7
The Freelancing Student	8-9
Positioning Ourselves as Focused Researchers and Versatile Teachers	10
Multicultural Balancing of Journalistic Rights and Responsibilities	13-14

RESOURCES

Continued from 1

Using our VisComm Resources

clothed), as well as semi-nude images of non-model celebrities Serena Williams and Amy Schumer.

It's amazing the raw material that comes out of the visual world in any given span of a few weeks. By turns, I feel fortunate and overwhelmed by having so much to choose from – EVERYTHING involves visuals. So where to begin?

What I'd like to see from our division this year is a greater use of our resources to answer exactly that question. We've got a Twitter account, a Facebook page, a website, a listserv, and this humble newsletter, yet we're still working on developing meaningful activity on each of these. Every member of this division has something to say, but it often feels easier to stick to the channels we already know.

The problem is, many of us are the only people studying viscomm in our department. Alternatively, you might be part of a handful that each study very different areas. What our division provides is resources, primarily through connection and communication. I'd love to see more of us using the division as more than just a source of Visual Communication Quarterly and the reason we have to sit through a meeting every August. Our collective organization should be working for you, but we can't do that without hearing from you.

This year, why not show us who you are? Our online addresses are peppered throughout this newsletter. Post links you care about. Show us your portfolios. Seek out research partners on ideas you love but can't pull off alone.

By using the tools we have, our division becomes less, well, divided, and that makes things better for every member.

Bob Britten
Chair, Visual Communication Division

Resources

- aejmcviscom.org
- AEJMC Visual Communication Facebook Group
- AEJMC Visual Communication Twitter Feed
- Join the VisCom listserv by sending a message with SUBSCRIBE in the message line to AEJMC-VISCOM @ LISTSERV.MIAMI.EDU

Send us your news

Articles, submissions, and ideas are welcome to be published in VIEWPOINTS.

Please send them to Newsletter Editor, taram@sc.edu, as an attached Microsoft Word document.



TARA MORTENSEN
UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

AEJMC 2016 Midwinter Conference

Midwinter Chair: Gabriel B. Tait, Arkansas State University

In just about two-months, over one hundred scholars, practitioners, and students are expected to attend and participate in the 2016 AEJMC Midwinter Conference. The midwinter conference is an annual forum for the presentation of research and academically significant discussions about topics in areas relevant to the 10 AEJMC groups (divisions, interest groups and commissions) sponsoring the event.

Papers and Submissions:

There were a total of 165 paper/abstract submissions for the conference. Conference organizers believe this is one of the highest number of submissions since moving the conference to Norman. Our visual communication division has just fewer than ten submissions. We want to increase our 2017- abstract/paper submissions to at least 25. There is some good research being done and we want to showcase this research.

Authors of accepted abstracts must submit complete papers (not exceeding 30 pages) to the discussant of their conference session by February 12th (two weeks before the midwinter conference). The midwinter chair for the relevant group will send authors the names and contact details of the discussant for their session. Papers presented at the



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2015 - 16 OFFICERS

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Midwinter Conference

midwinter conference are also eligible for presentation at the AEJMC national convention in Minneapolis, MN in August.

At least one author of each accepted paper must register and attend the conference to present the paper. Failure to register by the deadline will result in authors' names and papers being removed from the program. NO onsite registration will be available.

Again, the 2016 conference will be held February 26-27, at the University of Oklahoma's Gaylord College of Journalism

and Mass Communication in Norman, OK. Norman is 20 miles south of Oklahoma City and has easy access to the Will Rogers World Airport. Details on conference registration, hotel accommodation and airport transportation will be available at <http://www.ou.edu/gaylord>.

For more information, contact Elanie Steyn, Conference Site Host (elanie@ou.edu). We are looking forward to our time Norman.

Gabriel Tait, Second Vice-Head ■

AEJMC 2016 | MINNEAPOLIS

Visual Communication Division Schedule

Wednesday, August 3

1-5 p.m: Preconference workshop

Thursday, August 4

8:15-9:45 a.m: TEACHNG PANEL:
Technical Thoughts: Making Purchase &
Teaching Decisions in a Fast-Changing
Technological World
(cosponsored with EEND)

10-11:30 a.m: PF&R PANEL: Inside the
Empathy Machine: Virtual Reality, Race and
Reporting (cosponsored with CCSD)

1:30-3 p.m: Teaching Marathon
(cosponsored with MAGD)

3:15-4:45 p.m: Top creative research

5p.m.-6:30p.m: Best of Digital
(cosponsored with CTEC)

Friday, August 5

8:15-9:45 a.m: Refereed research

12:15-1:30 p.m. Luncheon

1:30-3 p.m: Scholar-to-scholar refereed research

3:15-4:45 p.m: TEACHING PANEL:
Seeing the Message: Public Relations
and Visual Communication Strategies
(cosponsored with PRDV)

5-6:30 p.m: Refereed research/Top Papers

8:30-10 p.m: Members Meeting

Saturday, August 6

12:15-1:30 p.m: PF&R PANEL:
What really is social photojournalism?
(cosponsored with NOND)

3:30-5 p.m: RESEARCH PANEL: Presidential
"Show" down: Visual dramas and spectacles in
Campaign 2016 (cosponsored with ADVD)

5:15-6:45 p.m: Refereed research

Sunday, August 7

9:15-10:45 a.m: TEACHING PANEL:
Engaging Students with Community-Sourced
Photojournalism (cosponsored with SPIG)

Stop, look, listen and think

Mario Garcia once told me that we could teach design “under a palm tree.” Garcia had come to the Medill School of Journalism in fall 1993 to consult with the faculty on incorporating visual communication into the curriculum. He needed a quiet place to take a break and make a phone call or two, so we ensconced ourselves in my office in ancient Fisk Hall.

But Garcia isn’t a person who can keep his ideas in check for long, and soon we were deep in a discussion about the place of technology in teaching design.

The problem teachers faced more than 22 years ago were not so different from what we see today. In 1993, newspapers had awakened to the idea that visual presentation was important to the product. At the same time, digital processes promised publishers huge savings over chemical and mechanical production. Schools such as Medill faced increased pressure from industry to turn out computer savvy graduates. “Must know QuarkXpress (or PhotoShop or FreeHand or Illustrator)” became a standard line in job ads.

Students were eager to learn those skills as well. Demand was intense for Medill’s one lab equipped with Macintosh II’s and suites of graphic software. Advertising students working to come up with dynamite presentations for their campaigns classes went through laser printer cartridges like cups of yogurt.

Garcia’s comment about teaching under a palm tree was his way of saying that solving software problems isn’t the same as solving design problems. An effective design requires knowledge of the creative brief, observation of the client’s environment and a thought process for bringing the two together.

The same is true for the graphic artist and the photographer. Digital tools make the production part fast and accurate, but learning

to think takes time and practice.

All of this came to mind on Nov. 1 when I received an email through the division listserv from Paul Lester of the University of Texas at Dallas. He was soliciting ideas from those of us who teach “production” courses.

“I’m curious about the NON-production assignments you have, can think of, or would love to try but haven’t for some reason,” Lester wrote. He gave the example of having his photojournalism students “go outside, sit somewhere and write all they notice in three minutes.”

Lester’s exercise is an effort to get them to stop, think and observe, unfiltered by a computer lens. I’ve used a similar exercise in my digital imagery and sound class. Students are asked to find a quiet place in a comfortable spot where they can sit for 10 minutes listening, without saying, writing or recording anything. They are to produce a list of sounds and their properties, breaking down the total sound into whatever threads they find.

David Burns of Salisbury University responded with a similar assignment for his beginning video students. He has them “listen for 5 minutes to a conversation in which they are not participating” then recreate the conversation, including “accents, pauses, idioms, slang, poor grammar, incomplete sentences, non sequiturs, false starts, stammers.” His goal is to help them understand natural conversation when writing screenplays.

At Arkansas State, photojournalism teacher Gabriel Tait has each student bring in one of his or her first photographs. Tait instructs students to write out descriptive details of their photos, then reflect on “why they took the photograph and what is most important about



**MICHAEL
O'DONNELL**
UNIVERSITY
OF
ST. THOMAS

TEACHING Continued from 5

the photograph.” He also asks them to write out their memories of the photo and how it preserves history.

Tait employs the “think, pair and share” model of critical thinking. First, the student contemplates the question alone, then discusses it with another student or two, and then they share their observations with the class as a whole.

Think, pair and share has the goal of encouraging and supporting higher-level thinking in students. The process can continue after students complete an assignment. A part of every project I assign asks the students to write a short paper describing their answer and reflecting on the decisions they made.

Those of us teaching visual communication skills constantly face the challenge of getting students to think and reflect before they act. Today’s students are different from those of 22 years ago in that many come to the college classroom with prior experience using graphic software.

Some even think they already are “designers” or “photojournalists” or “graphic artists.” They let it be known directly or indirectly that they are in school because they need the credential or simply to have their greatness confirmed.

Other students believe that once they

master the software, they will have all the tools necessary to compete for jobs in visual communication. Those lacking experience with graphic software can develop a kind of tunnel vision, shutting out the distraction of having to think critically or creatively.

If we let it, computer software can dominate a classroom because the skills needed to make the programs work are far from simple. But a few simple assignments can compel the students to stop, look, listen and think — maybe under a palm tree.

Michael O’Donnell, Teaching Chair ■

2016 Teaching Marathon

Do you have a great teaching tip?

The Visual Communication Division will again participate in the popular Teaching Marathon panel at the 2016 AEJMC conference Aug. 4-7 in Minneapolis. Think about your top teaching tip that can be shared in five minutes. The 2016 Teaching Marathon will be co-sponsored with the Magazine Division.

If you have a teaching idea to present in five minutes, send a title and a one-paragraph summary to me at mjodonnell@stthomas.edu.

LOGO CHAIR

Encourage Your Students To Take Part in AEJMC Logo Competition

Submissions are open for the annual AEJMC logo completion. Our 2017 destination is once again the city where the AEJMC Conference began, Chicago (August 9-12, 2017), and we hope you will encourage your students to take part.

Right: 2016 Logo competition winner, by Ethan Ireland at Virginia Commonwealth University.



LOGO | Continued from 6

The deadline for submissions is March 31, 2016.

We had a very healthy competition last year, and we hope the same for the coming year. The winning student's logo will appear on all the convention and promotional materials, and he/she will receive \$100. A logo entered in the contest should represent the diversity of AEJMC and also visually suggest "Chicago." The logo should communicate immediately, effectively and be memorable.



ALIA YUNIS | ZAYED UNIVERSITY

A logo entered in this competition must:

1. Include the following type elements: AEJMC; August 2017; Chicago
2. Feature AEJMC as an integral part of the logo. Be adaptable to multiple uses, i.e., program book cover, nametags and promotional material. The logo should not lose impact or legibility when substantially reduced.
3. Retain a sense of balance and internal integrity when typographical elements are removed.
4. Reflect the diversity of interests within AEJMC.
5. Be reproducible in solid tones using one color (black). No tints, no blends, no gradations are allowed.
6. **DO NOT INCLUDE COPYRIGHTED ARTWORK.** This means no clip art files of Chicago landmarks, etc. The student must create those elements.

For a logo entry to be eligible, it must be created in vector format. Entrants are required to submit digital copies of each logo as both an EPS file (.eps) and as a JPEG file (.jpg). The JPEG version of the logo must be identical to the EPS version in terms of design, dimensions, proportion, etc.

File names must bear the last name of the entrant (for example: SmithLogo1.eps). The EPS file format is required because it is a vector-based format that provides better reproduction. The EPS version must be a vector graphic with the type converted to outlines (this step is important!).

Entries must be the work of students enrolled in classes taught by AEJMC members. Each school may enter a maximum of 10 logos per instructor. Logo entries must be submitted by a faculty sponsor (this step is also important!).

Faculty sponsors must also include a list of file names (such as: entrants.doc) with the entrants' names, addresses, and email addresses, plus their own full contact information (office phone, email address, campus address, etc.) Winners should be notified before May 15, 2016.

Entries must be successfully submitted no later than March 31, 2016.

Please submit each logo entry's EPS (.eps) and JPEG (.jpg) files to the competition email address for the AEJMC Logo Competition (which will be received by logo competition chair, Alia Yunis). The address isviscomlogo@gmail.com (File size limit for attachments is 25mb.)

The Freelancing Student

No matter how hard we (faculty) try, we aren't going to be able to cover everything our students need to know about Visual Communication in four short years of school. There is a Chinese proverb that states, "Give a man a fish, and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish, and he will eat for the rest of his life". I believe we need to encourage our students to pursue professional activities outside of our classrooms—particularly in encouraging our students to freelance.

Before you get freaked out or too fired up about the idea of encouraging your students to freelance, I would ask to suspend your judgment for and cautiously entertain the idea for a moment. Nobody wants to learn to swim by being thrown in the deep end of the pool, but one might argue that where there is risk there is often reward. I would offer that with a little pre-planning and class discussion we (the informed faculty) might be able to minimize the chances of a less than successful outcome, and in the process foster some very positive learning experiences.

Most visual communication programs seem to try to cover the most important aspects of graphic design and then touch upon specialties that might interest the students, or focus on a particular aspect of graphic design and help students become extremely proficient in this area (i.e. website design, print design, advertising design). In either case, students are going to have to exert some self-initiated projects to deepen their graphic design skills, portfolio, and resume.

Freelancing is a great way for students to test the waters for a potential career in graphic design, to make a little money, and to fill in the gaps in their education. The key is to keep it simple, start slowly and build momentum over time. By freelancing, students gain experience and begin to understand how the projects they are working on in your

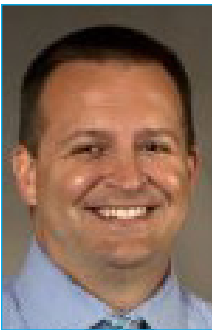
classes have been designed to prepare them for scenarios they are likely to encounter in the profession. Additionally, it's my hope that students will begin to bring their freelancing experiences back into the classroom and share them in order to enrich everyone's academic experience by grounding our discussions in professional practice and reality.

I've noticed that an odd thing happens when students get paid for their design services—they start acting like professionals. Even if it's five dollars, the perception is that a deal has been struck, and an expectation established. I always recommend that first time freelancers work with a "safe client" like a family member, church, or civic organization that the student is already familiar with. I ask my students to fully disclose that this is their first freelance experience and that they might mess up—and I also require my students to use a contract. You might be surprised how engaged your students become and how your class lectures and exercises suddenly become "relevant" when "real money" is involved.

While there are many paths to success (and failure), freelancing can be anything but formulaic. The best advice I feel I give to my students is to keep an open mind, to be honest with themselves about their strengths and weaknesses, and to seek the advice of people they trust along the way. Ultimately the decisions are theirs to make, but taking the time to look at their freelance endeavors through the eyes of people whose opinion they respect can be invaluable.

Don't Wait Until They Graduate

Freelancing while in school provides students with a means of making money, developing business skills, and generating industry contacts. When students



**BEN
HANNAM**
ELON
UNIVERSITY

FREELANCING

Continued from 8

graduate they may potentially have less debt, a good client base, and a more thorough understanding of the graphic design profession. Business in its essence is about relationships, and your students are going to be ahead of the game if they begin to build these relationships while they are still in school. One never knows when a relationship might manifest itself as a recommendation or as a job lead at a strategic time.

There are no shortages of problems that will stump, frustrate, confuse, and make students feel afraid, but they can be solved through creativity, ingenuity, and perseverance. Overcoming these problems (and your fears) is part of the adventure and why I think it's so much fun to freelance; I am always exploring ways to be more efficient with my time, to save money, to communicate my ideas more clearly, to become more creative with my solutions, and to grow as an individual.

Businesses want to work with people who have the tools to help them be more successful, so it's important for students to know their strengths and weaknesses. It's a good idea to encourage students to focus on freelance jobs in the areas where they are strong, while working to improve their self-identified weaknesses. A student almost always asks if they can "make a website" to which I reply,

"Are you good at making websites? If you've never made a website before, then probably isn't the best time to commit yourself to creating one."

I encourage students to start simply and do a great job with a small project and add in complexity when they feel comfortable doing so. As the jobs get become more complex, the amount of money that students make is also likely to increase, but it's extremely important to emphasize starting slowly and making good decisions along the way. It's important to not agree to work on jobs that are too big, have deadlines that are too tight, or work with people whose expectations may be too high—I stress to my students that it's not all about the money. Each freelance job is a marathon, not a sprint and students should under promise and over-deliver instead of the other way around.

The experiences students gain through freelancing can help them understand the profession a bit better, challenge them to work more efficiently and creatively, and help them realize how important it is to establish boundaries. They will undoubtedly know their strengths and weaknesses much better by having worked with clients, and it is my hope (and I'm sure yours also) that they will have found a profession that will be personally rewarding, fulfilling, and challenging.

Ben Hannam, Creative Projects ■

VisCom Idea Exchange

This section of the VisCom Division newsletter is a place where people can post tips for teaching, ideas for research, thoughts about viscom education, changes in programs, and general VisCom news.

Posts will be limited to 200 words and should be signed by the author and their affiliation.

Send your article to the newsletter editor, Tara Mortensen (taram@sc.edu) for inclusion in the next idea exchange.

Positioning Ourselves as Focused Researchers and Versatile Teachers

We need to give some thought to how our specific expertise as researchers informs our teaching across various subjects.

in the gaps in the teaching schedule. So for those of us heading toward the job market, we need to give some thought to how our specific expertise as researchers informs our teaching across various subjects.



**JENNIFER
MIDBERRY**
TEMPLE
UNIVERSITY

As a graduate students, particularly at the doctoral level, we spend years gradually narrowing our research agendas to cover a few, specific areas. This process enables us to develop expertise on certain topics and to distinguish ourselves as researchers. Focusing on the intricacies of an issue is usually essential to crafting hypotheses and research questions that lead to compelling and relevant scholarship. Indeed, it is through a careful exploration of details that we are able to move visual communication research forward, ever so slightly.

From what I have gleaned from recent conversations with professors who have served on hiring committees, it is essential for job applicants to be able to articulate a narrow, clearly defined research agenda. It sets a candidate apart from others, and demonstrates a promising trajectory for future research that will be vital to tenure. This focus is crucial to being taken seriously as a researcher. It seems safe to say that most of us have been refining our research identities as we have moved through our graduate programs.

Yet, when it comes to teaching, the same hiring committee that expects specificity in research will want to see that a candidate is also a generalist. Junior faculty members are usually expected to be able to teach a wide variety of classes since they are the ones filling

One advantage that many visual communication scholars have, especially in our AEJMC division, is that we have backgrounds as professional visual journalists. We can present ourselves as scholar-practitioners, who can deftly weave together theory and practice in the classroom. Being able to teach skills courses as well as communication and journalism theory classes is a valuable commodity.

Yet, I think that as visual communication scholars we offer much more to prospective departments than just a working knowledge of multi-media, design, video, or photography production. The students we teach are already immersed in an intensely visual media landscape, and most of them are actively engaged in visually representing themselves through social media. All students on a college campus, not just those interested in visual communication or journalism, engage with visual messages on a daily basis. As visual communication scholars, we have the ability to make students aware of the ideologies embedded in various media and help them to become critical consumers of the visuals they encounter and produce. In this way, our specific knowledge is applicable, and significant to the general education of all students in a prospective department.

Jennifer Midberry, Graduate Student Liaison ■

Multicultural Balancing of Journalistic Rights and Responsibilities

How can we teach journalism students to be better prepared to cover events involving distressed individuals in different cultures or countries?



**HYUNJIN
SEO**
UNIVERSITY
OF KANSAS

Video of Concerned Student 1950 with student journalists at the University of Missouri-Columbia went viral this past November. While the occasion served as a reminder of constitutional rights journalists enjoy covering protests in public spaces in the U.S., it also sparked discussions on responsibilities of journalists covering those in grief or pain. The two topics are, of course, closely interconnected. However, the former is arguably more straightforward for journalism schools to teach than the latter in that prior experience, cultural understanding, situational awareness, and empathy, among others, play a significant role in determining what's "appropriate" in covering events involving distressed individuals.

The issue becomes more complicated when one is assigned to cover events involving people in other countries with different cultural norms of grieving or expressions of pain. In fact, the topic of journalism practices around the world is one of my main areas of interest, especially as I analyze press freedom and responsibilities across the globe as a contributor to Freedom House's annual Freedom of the Press index.

The first time that I was forcefully confronted by the issue of multicultural

understandings of journalistic practices was when I covered international issues as a diplomatic correspondent and interacted with journalists from many different countries. A particular moment of realization came when I reported on reunions of families separated by the Korean War (1950-1953). Those inter-Korean reunions permitted select family members, who had not seen their loved ones in the other half of the Korean Peninsula for more than 50 years, to have three days together. Given the significance of the event, journalists from around the world covered the event interviewing family members who, for example, just learned that their parents or siblings had died on the other side of the border years ago. The last day of the reunion was often considered the most difficult to cover as South and North Korean families had to bid farewell without knowing when, if ever, they might be reunited again.

Both during and after reporting on the inter-Korean family reunions, I had conversations with journalists about our experiences covering those events. Some journalists, myself included, expressed concern that while coverage of these events was essential, we might at times be inappropriately intruding on intimate and private moments of the short reunion of long-separated family members by being too aggressive in taking photos or interviewing them. This was particularly the case because North Koreans

Multicultural Balancing

Continued from 11

often turned private conversation into propaganda for their regime when cameras or journalists approached them. Interviewing individuals who just received the news that their loved ones had passed away is not an easy task either. Moreover, journalists unfamiliar with Korean norms of grieving indicated that they weren't sure what to make of some expressions exhibited by family members.

Most of all, empathy—an ability to see the world as the other sees it—is something I began to develop covering reunions, disaster situations, and other human stories. Some might argue that empathy is not an important quality for a journalist or that it can even be an impediment to “getting the story.” However, I believe empathy helps the journalist better understand what she is observing and thus write a more nuanced story.

How can we teach journalism students to be better prepared to cover events involving distressed individuals in different cultures or countries? One of the first steps would be to encourage students to become more knowledgeable about rights of journalists in different countries. These rights are not universal with different laws and regulations in different countries. Do our journalism schools provide sufficient education on

journalistic rights in different countries?

Case study and thought experiment approaches should help students understand challenges and dilemma journalists face in covering distressed individuals of different cultures or countries. Theoretical and empirical analyses of how people in different cultures deal with emotional situations should also be helpful.

The University of Missouri-Columbia case has provided an important opportunity for journalism schools to consider journalistic rights and responsibilities in the U.S. I hope such discussions will be extended to cover situations involving other cultures and countries.

Hyunjin Seo, PF&R Chair ■

The next issue of
VIEWPOINTS will come out
mid-April.

