



Journalism & Mass Communication

Student Review

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 4

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The experience of a lifetime

By: Teresa Taylor Moore, Ph.D.

As I prepared for the trip to San Diego, I was excited about what awaited me. My husband and I were like two children as we counted down the days to Commencement Weekend. It was as if we were the ones who were about to receive our degrees from Ashford University. While he does not work for Ashford and is not a student, *my* excitement spilled over onto him.

Little did I know that what was ahead was an event that would change my entire perspective on commencement celebrations.

As the pilot announced over the speaker that we were preparing to land, I felt butterflies in my stomach, which is normal for me with takeoffs and landings. However, this was different; it was sheer excitement that caused me to flutter. As we descended, I looked to the left out of the window and there it was: the Bridgepoint Edu-

cation building.

As we see time and time again when the M&Ms see Santa in person in the commercials, I turned to my husband and said, "There it is...they *do* exist!" As he chuckled at

my antics, I sat in amazement marveling over the fact that I had finally seen my other "home", the place where I work and have a family of colleagues and students. As I visited the AU site and attended all of the events, my excitement never waned. As I talked to students and parents and finally watched them walk

across the stage, I was full of pride in my University and my students. Of my many graduation experiences, there were simply none like this. Students, you have a lot to look forward to!



Dr. Taylor Moore at Ashford University in San Diego, CA

[View my slideshow!](#)



SPJ conference is a valuable experience



“From discussing the new frontiers of freelancing to the 12 best apps for journalists, EIJ14 proved that journalism is only growing in today’s world of rapid technological development.”

-Rachel Gribble

By: Rachel Gribble

Journalism students spend a lot of time discussing the future of journalism. Their instructors ask them to predict trends, their parents try to convince them to switch majors, and the students themselves wonder if they can find a job after graduating. The Society of Professional Journalists’ Excellence in Journalism 2014 conference in Nashville, Tenn., played host to many more discussions about the future of journalism—but it wasn’t the usual doom and gloom students are used to hearing. From discussing the new frontiers of freelancing to the 12 best apps for journalists, EIJ14 proved that journalism is growing in today’s world of rapid technological development.

Michael Koretzky—editor, freelancer, and general conference rabble-rouser—hosted a session on freelancing, which I found very inspiring. Despite the reductions in staff at media organizations across the country, there are still plenty of journalism jobs. Koretzky encouraged attendees to think outside the box.

“Plenty of non-media companies hire journalists to do journalism,” he said. Journalism students shouldn’t limit their job searches to just news organizations. Find out if any companies are hiring content creators, even if the company isn’t media oriented. You might be surprised with what you find.

Kevin Smith and Doug Haddix of the Kiplinger Program in Public Affairs Journalism at Ohio State University introduced attendees to the Digital Dirty Dozen—12 apps that should be part of any journalist’s toolbox. Smith and Haddix reached out to professional journalists and asked them if they could pick one app for a specific task (research, note-taking, social media, news gathering, crowd-sourcing, photo and video, data mining, video editing, mapping, and sharing stories). Most of the apps are free and are iPhone and Android compatible. To view the presentation, go to www.mediafire.com/haddix.

For those who could not attend the conference, SPJ’s website offers online tutorials for journalists, and the organization hosts training sessions in cities across the country. These events are also great opportunities for networking. As the organization that represents our future professional interests, these resources and connections are invaluable. SPJ also makes decisions that affect the entire profession, such as rewriting the Code of Ethics and giving support to journalistic causes like Freedom of Information Act requests. The more members a chapter has, the more votes the chapter gets at the national convention, which means a greater opportunity to influence these important issues.



Learning new things, meeting new people

By: Ernie Scraggs

If you did not attend the 2014 Excellence in Journalism conference held September 4–7 at the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Conference Center in Nashville, Tenn., you blew it.

I had never been to a journalism conference before, so I had no idea what to expect. When I read about EIJ14, I thought it seemed interesting, and I might learn something about contemporary journalism. Although I had been learning many new things in my online classes at Ashford University, I felt that I might be enlightened even more face-to-face with journalists from various organizations and platforms. I especially wanted to learn any new tricks of the trade in online and freelance journalism because I want to start my own news website.

Because I wasn't sure attending the conference would be worth the hundreds of dollars it would cost, I asked Dr. Lisa Rollins, my favorite journalism professor at Ashford and the adviser of our new SPJ student chapter, if she thought it would be beneficial. She enthusiastically encouraged me to attend because it would be a unique learning experience, and she wanted to meet me.

I studied the EIJ14 website and schedule, which listed workshops, boot camps, meetings, receptions, concerts, super sessions, and breakout sessions. The breakout sessions were specialized seminars on various journalism topics. There were many topics to choose from,



AU senior Virgil Ernest Scragg (left) and Dr. Lisa Rollins join Bill Cody and Charlie Mattos of the WSM-AM morning team in the Opryland studio.

and since several were held simultaneously, choosing was not easy. A few that I was interested in overlapped—making the choice more difficult. However, any journalist should have had no problem matching at least one session to his or her interests.

I only made it to a few sessions. The Opryland is enormous, and my legs do not work as well as they used to, but it was well worth the walk. I learned about new Internet search techniques and some tricks of the freelance trade—skills I intend to use often.

I met Ashford's only other SPJ student member in attendance. Rachel Gribble wrote the winning essay in a scholarship contest that paid for her trip.

I imagine the 2015 conference, scheduled for September 18–20 at the Orlando World Center Marriott, will be just as exciting and educational.

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-Ernie Scraggs

Research and writing: key journalism skills

By: Teresa Taylor Moore, Ph.D.



The field of journalism is an exciting one, to say the least. As students, you may have a good idea of what area you want to serve in upon completion of your degree. Or perhaps, you are the student who will explore various career opportunities. No matter what area you chose, understanding the importance of research and writing is paramount to your success.

For many, the very idea of having to take a research course for any subject can be quite stressful. Maybe that is because when we think of research, we immediately think of numbers, statistics, and charts and graphs. While these are certainly elements of research, there is a much bigger picture, especially for the journalist.

Serving the public interest by delivering timely and accurate information means that you should not only be able to gather information, but that you should also be skilled in helping the audience interpret the information that is presented to them. This requires that you have the ability to not only explain the statistics and visual representations, but if you intend to be a skilled journalist, you should also understand how those numbers and charts were derived. This is where solid research skills come in handy.

In his textbook *News Reporting and Writing*, Melvin Mencher devotes an entire section to Reporting Principles, where he explains how to find the stories, make

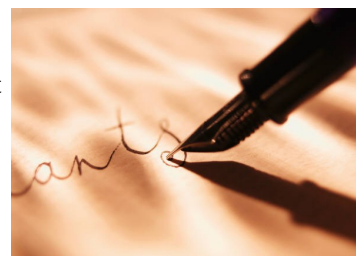
observations, and use sources, speeches, and other elements. He explains that no matter how well you write, research and reporting are key to becoming a good journalist. Mencher, Professor Emeritus at the Columbia University School of Journalism, has taught and mentored some of the top journalists in the country.

It may seem that a discussion on the importance of writing would not be necessary. After all, a student in journalism and mass communication *probably* likes to write. The concern in the mass mediated world that we live in is not about the desire or the ability to write; it is more about the ability to write effectively in the various forms of media that are available to us.

News reporting has grown into a business that is not the same as it was decades ago when there were very few media outlets that “owned themselves,” so to

speak. Then, it was easier to write to an audience because it was one large group that came to the same places to get its news and information.

Today it is a bit more challenging because of the fragmentation of audiences and the new ways journalists must communicate to and with them. No longer are these the days of one-way communication. Journalists are increasingly having to continually engage their audiences and learn to write in different forms of media.



5 interesting resources to hone your skills

Becoming a skilled journalist reaches beyond learning in the classroom and submitting required assignments. Using resources that are available to you can help you to hone your journalistic skills. Consider exploring these five areas as you work to enhance your skills.

The Ashford Writing Center

The Ashford Writing Center is a great resource where you can receive guidance related to every aspect of basic writing. In addition to tips on everything from APA formatting to creating headers and adjusting margins, you can also request tutoring in areas that your instructors have noted need strengthening. You can link directly to the AWC from any of your courses under Student Resources.

The Writing Reviser

The Writing Reviser is another resource that is available in each of your courses under Student Resources. It helps by suggesting different ways of presenting your ideas when you upload your work. The Writing Reviser is free and will help you to really think about the organization and structure of your work. **(Continued on page 5)**

5 interesting resources to hone your skills

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Extra Course in Creative Writing

Journalists must be able to capture the attention of their readers. For that reason, consider taking an additional course in the English program that focuses on creative writing. Better understanding the aspects of this genre can help you build a stronger connection to specific audiences.

Take a Course in Linguistics

Linguistics is the study of language. When you understand the different conventions of language, you are able to consider how your information is presented to the public. We are fortunate to have a Linguistics program right here at Ashford University!

Read, Watch, and Listen

Every student of journalism and mass communication must become a *student* of journalism in mass communication. In other words, you must read, watch, and listen to the news and other sources of information. When you engulf yourself in the study of media outside of the classroom, you will begin to understand the true power of journalism and media, and be able to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of other reports which, in turn, will make you a better researcher, writer, and journalist.

Journalism and Mass Communication Student Review

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Do you have a story to tell?

The *Journalism and Mass Communication Student Review* exists to provide you with information about the department, and place to showcase your work. If you have a story that you would like to write for the newsletter, please send an email to JMCStudentReview@ashford.edu. We publish every quarter, and the next publication will be in January. In late November, we will send out a call for stories for specific sections of the newsletter.

This is an opportunity for you to develop your research and writing skills, offer stories that are important to you and your peers, and add to your portfolio! We look forward to hearing your story ideas and receiving your entries!



We encourage you to contact us with any questions, concerns, or feedback about your journey with Ashford University at JMCStudentReview@ashford.edu.