CTEC

Mobile Reporting: Welcome to the New Age of Journalism

Cindy Vincent
Web/Social
Media Chair

CTEC member, Dr. Julie Jones, recently received a prestigious grant from the Knight Foundation to create the mobile reporting app StormCrowd. With colleague John Schmeltzer, Jones has transformed the Ushahidi platform technology to create an app that will allow journalists to not just submit text-based updates on stories but also fully utilize the technology for mobile reporting capabilities. "Our goals were to utilize the Knight Foundation grant to develop the app and to bring the app technology into journalism classes in a practical way for students," Jones said.

Jones and Schmeltzer have developed a team of undergraduate students and one graduate student, Jared Schroeder, at The University of Oklahoma

through the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication to help implement and improve the application. They have also partnered with Weather Decisions Technology Inc. and the NOAA National Weather Service to utilize weather radar technology, meteorology map technology, and other resources for the development and implementation of the app.

Through this app, students merge traditional journalism skills with mobile reporting technology. The way the app works is students are assigned times to report on storm activity; they receive a mobile kit that consists of an iPod Touch, wide angle lens, shotgun mic, portable wi-fi, a power pack, and chargers; in post-storm activity the students report through their mobile kits (or other personal technology devices) storm damage and coverage from the storm area. In a meeting held

Chicago Here We Come

Mid-Winter features a variety of scholarship

Amanda Sturgill
Mid-winter Conference
Coordinator

Once again, AEJMC's ComTec division had a strong representation in Norman, Okla., at the Midwinter Conference.

The division had 4 panels this year with work on subjects ranging from Twitter use by celebrities to on-line advertising to ramifications of question design in completion of on-line surveys and questionnaires.

Elmie Nekmat, a doctoral student from the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, won the top paper award for his work " Drowning of minority opinions in website-based forums: A Spiral of Silence perspective."

You can see the conference program at: http://bit.ly/IQqL2T and I hope to see many of the papers at the annual meeting in Chicago.

Many thanks to those who acted as reviewers for this conference: Julie Jones, Steven Dick, Bart Wojdynsky, Carmen Stavrositu, Homero Gil de Zuniga, Laurie Lee, Tara Buehner, Sangki Lee, Monica Chadha, and Jessica Smith

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Digital Interactions, Innovation and 'Best of the Web'

Kim Komenich

Diego Mazorra
Best of the Web Competition Chair

Technological and cultural evolution constantly redefines our interaction with information. In recent years, we have observed the emergence of a new form of interaction-- touch screen computing in mobile devices. Where once we simply clicked, now we squeeze, pinch and shake. This tactile advance in mobile phone and tablet devices has spawned a revolution in design and development, as well as in storytelling.

These advances are changing communication technologies in general, but they promise to have a profound influence on journalism and visualization. This added dimension in the organization of information and digital content is nothing less than a new frontier in which a wide variety of disciplines find new ways to intersect.

Thousands of applications and eBooks enter the market each year, and news consumers are evolving a sense of taste about interactivity based on all the apps they own. They expect higher levels of functionality, usefulness and depth from journalists at a time when most news organizations are struggling to survive. Our challenge is to create compelling content delivered in an intuitive, interactive way, that is based on innovative, elegant programming.

Our daily interaction with screens or the Web now equals or surpasses our exposure to print or television information. Whether we're in class or waiting for a plane or a bus, information seeks us out. And in each case, screens we see are creative digital projects based on Web technology.

AEJMC members are uniquely suited to inspire and empower the

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generation of journalistic innovators and we hope the Best of the Web competition continues to evolve as a showcase for the best in innovation and journalism. The 'Best of the Web 2012' contest responds to these challenges. The Communication Technology Division and the Visual Communication Division (http://aejmc.net/viscom/) join to encourage participation and greater knowledge in these rapidly evolving fields.

The JOURNALISM PROJECTS, category is directed toward "news, mass communication or mass communication education sites that contain documentary or news content."

The INNOVATION PROJECTS category rewards advancements in the "use of new media in an innovative way to fill a new function or provide a new utility not necessarily related to journalism". This category excludes commercial sites.

As this edition closes, we would like to announce that although we received fewer projects than in previous years, there is a wide variety in both categories and we are about to send the entries out for evaluation by this year's judges.

It has been an exciting experience to see how innovators in visual communication and journalism are tackling these new challenges with Web-based interactives as well as tablet-based projects. We look forward to the judges' decisions.

We look forward to seeing you in Chicago!

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Technology, Identity, and Privacy

Bart Wojdynski
PF&R Chair

At present it seems that it's tough to research or teach communication technology without spending time pondering information privacy.

Changes to Facebook's and Google's privacy policies always draw a lot of coverage and social media criticism. Despite widespread availability of relevant horror stories, we still encounter otherwise savvy college students who don't grasp the long-term accessibility or potential impact of content they post on online.

Most of the examples that we come up with most readily involve poor decision making on the part of individual who deliberately share or post some content, even if they do so poorly or haphazardly. More insidious, perhaps, is information that can be obtained without the individual needing to post it.

One area of technology in which advancements have brought ethical and practical issues to the forefront is that of facial recognition algorithms which can identify the specific individuals in a photograph. Recent acquisition of facial recognition software companies by Apple and Google underscores the attention being paid to this area. Like augmented reality technology, the facial recognition software is capable of merging online data with individuals' offline lives, ostensibly portending a future in which one can use online databases to identify people encountered in real life.

A 2011 study by Alessandro Acquisti, Ralph Gross, and Fred Stutzman (link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZQ7Th9L5ss) garnered attention by using publicly available images from Facebook in conjunction with facial recognition software to identify students by name (about a third of subjects). When combining the images with other identifying information from Facebook profiles, the authors were able to correctly predict the first five numbers of subjects' Social Security numbers in more than a quarter of the cases.

While that doesn't exactly validate the dystopian fears of some privacy advocates, it does show the potential of technological advancements to bridge online and offline information.

Regardless of your individual views on privacy vs. transparency, you'll likely agree that greater attention to the subject in popular discourse is a good thing, in that it should help individuals make informed content-sharing decisions. What's less clear is what ought to be the role of us, as teachers and researchers, and as an academic body, to incorporate issues of technology and privacy into our work.

The issues with respect to teaching issues of privacy and information security to undergraduates are not necessary new on the basis of facial recognition technology, but they are exacerbated by it. Part of our role as educators in communication should encompass making students aware of how some of this technology works, giving them the understanding of how it might be used for "good" and "evil" purposes, and equipping them with enough knowledge to take some control over their digital information footprint.

From a research perspective, integrating concerns about privacy into experimental and survey research is challenging for a few reasons. First of all, the method in many studies of online content revolves around participants using fictitious Web sites – and often only screenshots – to avoid biasing the results with the influence of pre-existing attitudes toward real companies and sites.

On the other hand, testing variations in privacy settings within a real social networking environment – by having students sign in to their actual Facebook accounts, for instance – is made duly difficult because of concerns for the privacy of the information students may have on their account pages. If the research involves any sort of tracking or harvesting of Facebook content, it is likely to raise flags at institutional review boards, and may even scare off some participants.

There are certainly innumerable ways in which continuing technological advancements and their implications for how we conceptualize privacy, identity, and self-representation can be integrated into our classrooms and research work. What's important at this stage is that we recognize that these issues are not only germane to the domain of mass communication, but that they may be essential to the way our communication media evolve over the next decade.

Bart Wojdynski is an assistant professor at Virginia Tech University. He can be reached at wojdynski@vt.edu

Teaching Resources You Can Use

Jessica Smith
Teaching chair

We're all sprinting for the finish line to finish the spring semester. Grading and student concerns fill much of the remaining days of the term.

So a dozen notes-to-self sit in the back of my mind to be addressed when other teaching needs aren't so pressing: Modify *this* assignment next year. Add *this* to the syllabus next time. Find a better example of *this*.

Summer can be a good time for course revision because a few focused hours (or days, if a course must change significantly) go a long way in preparing for a semester.

Sometimes I'm looking for inspiration to refresh my assignments and strategies when I get to this point. AEJMC provides many online resources to help us prepare for classes and be better teachers.

The organization's teaching resources page (http://www.aejmc.org/home/resources/teaching-resources/) links to the following resources.

Several "Best Practices in Teaching" booklets might be particularly useful to faculty teaching in communication technology areas: visual communication, critical thinking, and information gathering. Articles in each booklet provide specific advice about a teaching method or assignment.

The "Doctors Are In" has become an annual roundtable session at the conference. Resources from the last three years are posted so that members who didn't attend the session can still reap the benefits. The 2011 edition provides tips on the following topics: writing a syllabus, building a teaching portfolio for tenure, balancing work demands, using social media for teaching, incorporating diversity into classes, and teaching abroad. Documents from the 2010 and 2009 events have many more ideas.

Information from plenary sessions at previous conferences addresses grade inflation and issues in dealing with students of the Millennial generation.

Another treasure trove of innovative assignments that can be adapted to many situations is the GIFT booklets. The winning submissions in 10 years' worth of the Great Ideas For Teachers competition are posted online. More than 200 ideas are available here for classes across the mass communication spectrum.

The final link, "Teaching Tools for Web Based Courses," is misleading. The page contains great sources for any teacher looking for online examples, readings, and organizations.

This page provides a great starting point to address many teaching issues. You're likely to find something useful here whether you're in the process of course creation or revision, and learning from our colleagues' tried and true methods can make us all better teachers.

Jessica Smith is an assistant professor at Texas Tech University. She can be reached at jessica.e.smith@ttu.edu

Mobile Reporting: Welcome to the New Age of Journalism

April 13, the day of the first major tornado in Norman, OK for 2012, Schmeltzer instructed students, "If you see something interesting, be a reporter first. Go to where a storm has hit, talk to people and follow up."

Students are able to upload mobile reports directly to the website or through mobile phone apps, which are compatible with most smart phone operating systems except Blackberry. Through the website viewers get overviews of storm coverage, meteorology maps, photos, and videos that correlate to current storm reports. According to Schmeltzer, "Social media beats journalism with regard to timeliness of information—this mobile app solves this problem. It also provides a mobile reporting app for news agencies."

To see StormCrowd in action, visit their website at http://stormcrowd.wdtinc.com, YouTube site at OUstormcrowd, or follow them on Twitter at @OUstormcrowd.

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Bridging bonds between technology researchers

Monica Chadha
Membership Chair

Any graduate student or faculty member will attest to the overwhelming experience AEJMC can be. You see and would like to meet people who wrote the books you read, conducted the studies you cite, presented papers you want to learn more about and converse about research you would like to participate in. The problem is, you do not know them, do not quite know how to approach them, neither have a clue about how you can join in the conversation. Here is where joining a division comes handy and joining the Communication Technology division, particularly so.

Not only does membership of CTEC provide you with a sense of joining a team but also opportunities to meet like-minded scholars and start having the conversations that can lead to ideas for papers, collaborations or simply new friendships. Technology is changing the world as we know it and most scholars who study the effects of these technologies across a range of areas currently are or have been members of CTEC. The division grows in strength every year and enjoys the support of members based in and out of the United States.

A visit to our website, http://www.aejmcctec.com, will inform you not only of the work we currently do but also any upcoming events, conferences and award opportuni-

ties. Membership with the division will allow you to provide suggestions to the division officers, make recommendations and have a say in helping make CTEC a stronger division. You can join us on Facebook or LinkedIn to get a sense of the conversations already underway. Look for Communication Technology Division in either of these social networks.

What makes the idea of a membership with the division even more appealing is the membership to the CTEC list serve that comes with it. Members can pose questions of other subscribers related to research, teaching in the classroom as well as learn of employment opportunities and happenings around the world that

"...a network of contacts and friends who could last a lifetime."

they may not have come to know of otherwise. Most importantly, it serves as a rich resource for tips on incorporating new media in the classroom or initiating new courses and building syllabi that prepare students and scholars for the present because the future is already here.

The division is currently exploring the prospect of starting a journal;

as a member, you get the chance to participate in the process and give your opinion that would help shape a publication you would want to read and publish in. I strongly urge you to join us during our business meeting in Chicago later this year or email me on monix3@gmail.com to learn more about CTEC and whether it is the division for you.

For those who already know this is where they would like to be, only a few clicks separate you from joining the division and becoming a member of this vibrant community: First step involves clicking here: http://aejmcctec.com/about/membership/ This will take you to the main AEJMC membership site and when you enroll as an AEJMC member, you have the option to join various divisions housed under its aegis. I do hope you will check the CTEC box and join us or continue your patronage. You will get all the benefits listed above for the next year at $10 if you are faculty and a mere $7 if you are a student.

It is a small price to pay for belonging to a group that could possibly provide you with a network of contacts and friends who could last a lifetime.

Monica Chadha is a doctoral student at the University of Texas-Austin and can be reached at: monix3@gmail.com.