

# CTEC

**Fall 2007**

**Communication Technology  
Division Newsletter**

## Come to Pittsburgh for another Midwinter

MARCUS MESSNER  
Mid-Winter Coordinator



The deadline for submissions to the 2008 AEJMC Midwinter Conference is just around the corner. Point Park University in Pittsburgh,

Pennsylvania, is hosting the conference from February 29 to March 1, 2008.

Paper and panel proposal submissions are due on December 7, 2007.

The Midwinter Conference is traditionally run in a relaxed atmosphere, which allows extended time for networking and discussions. It is an excellent opportunity to connect with other scholars from a variety of mass communication areas. The details regarding registration, special events, travel and lodging will be posted shortly at [www.aejmc.org](http://www.aejmc.org).

The detailed paper call is included on the last page of this newsletter. Please post it in your school and let your colleagues and graduate students know about this great opportunity to present their research. The special rules of the Midwinter Conference allow authors to present a study at this conference, use the feedback for revisions, and then submit the study for the national AEJMC Conference, which will be held in August 2008 in Chicago.

In addition to our division, several other AEJMC divisions are participating in the Midwinter

Conference. All submissions to the Communication Technology Division should be sent to me via e-mail to [mmessner@vcu.edu](mailto:mmessner@vcu.edu) by the deadline. The paper chairs for the other division can be found in the detailed paper call.

The Midwinter  
Conference is  
traditionally run in a  
relaxed atmosphere

### **How to submit paper proposals:**

Do not submit full papers. At this initial stage, authors should only submit a 300-to-500 word abstract as a Microsoft Word document. The scope of the research, hypotheses or research questions, and the methodology should be clearly described. If the research is already completed, also present the findings and conclusions.

Remove all identification from the document as the abstract will be evaluated in blind review. Only write your name(s), affiliation and contact

information on the title page. Include running heads with the proposal title on all pages.

All authors will be notified about the status of their submission by January 10, 2008. Two weeks before the conference, all accepted authors have to submit their full papers, which should be no longer than 30 pages, to a designated discussant.

### **How to submit panel proposals:**

Proposals for panels should also be submitted as a Microsoft Word document. The proposal should include a panel title, a description of the focus and issues of the discussion as well as a list of confirmed and potential panelists with their academic or professional affiliation.

Again, for more details on the submission process, please take a look at the detailed paper call on the last page of this newsletter. Please contact me, if you have any questions regarding submissions to our division. I hope to see many of you in Pittsburgh!

*Marcus Messner is assistant professor at the School of Mass Communications at Virginia Commonwealth University and can be reached at [mmessner@vcu.edu](mailto:mmessner@vcu.edu).*

**2008 AEJMC Midwinter Conference**

February 29 - March 1, 2008  
Point Park University, Pittsburgh, PA

# Hot Topics in Communication

MARK TREMAYNE  
Division Head



In this column I'd like to suggest three trends in mass communication practice, each with implications for industry, teaching and research. Each trend

has a history but recent developments have elevated each to new importance as we head into 2008.

The first has come to be called "social media" which Wikipedia (as of this writing) defines as "the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into content publishers. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism to a many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people, and peers." Of course Wikipedia itself is an example of social media along with blogs, YouTube, Second Life and Facebook.

Just after the Thanksgiving holiday, ABC News and Facebook announced a partnership that will integrate ABC political coverage into the social networking site and allow users to access and interact with the content. Another news company taking the social networking plunge is Gannett which re-launched USA Today this year with new social media tools including commenting abilities on each individual story. I have been working with Gannett on some social networking research this year as they and other companies are putting a renewed focus on user-generated content.

A second trend that promises to continue into 2008 is the use of the Web as a platform for video. While short clips of video have been available on the Web for more than a decade, only in the last 2 years have large numbers of users begun watching television shows, movies and personal videos this way. This is partly

due to the popular video-sharing site YouTube.com which offered individuals and companies alike an inexpensive way to store large video files.

The trend toward use of video on newspapers websites has accelerated. I recently completed a consulting visit at a small newspaper in Texas. The main issue was video which the company was committed to producing more of but needed a strategic plan for video coverage including ideas for monetizing it. Increasingly, newspapers are potential employers for students with television news skills. As broadband penetration continues to rise, video via the Web can be expected to rise as well. Another trend in this area is the use of user-contributed video which both newspaper and local television news companies are beginning to explore.

A final trend I'd like to highlight is the growing popularity of mobile media devices. Again, while these have been available for years, the recent success of the video iPod and iPhone and growth in the availability of media for these devices have altered the communication landscape. They represent one more step in the rise of convenient electronic media. When one has access to everything on the Web anytime, all the time, it is tough to go back to computer-only web use. And online social networking, once a "virtual" activity, takes on new meaning when mobile devices are used to connect to those who happen to be in proximity to the user.

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*Mark Tremayne is an assistant professor at University of Texas at Austin and can be reached at tremayne@mail.utexas.edu.*

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# Virtual Worlds Will Be the Real Deal at AEJMC 2008

JAMES D. IVORY  
Vice Head



The slate of panels for the 2008 AEJMC convention has yet to be set, as I write this, we are on the eve of the AEJMC

Midwinter Meeting, where we'll start putting the schedule in place. Still, it already looks like the virtual world phenomenon will have a big presence. Past AEJMC presentations have examined online worlds, such as Second Life. CTEC co-sponsored a panel at the 2007 convention on "massively multiplayer" online video games. This year, though, the number of preliminary panel proposals on the topic suggests that we may be poised to hear a lot more about the comings and goings of the millions of avatars — and the millions of dollars they spend — socializing, playing, and doing battle in cyberspace.

In case you're not familiar with virtual worlds, they're the vast three-dimensional online spaces where users interact with one another and the environment via avatars they create to represent themselves. In some, such as World of Warcraft, users create warriors and somewhat Tolkienesque creatures to battle computer foes and one another, while chatting via text and voice (and pay a monthly fee in addition to the software cost). In others, like the aforementioned Second Life, avatars stroll through "real" cityscape environments, such as a replica of Seattle's Space Needle or a virtual Amsterdam (ostensibly for free, though there are heaps of goods and services, including real estate, to be purchased with real money.)

If you think that virtual worlds are merely a new incarnation of the 1980s video game arcade or the ubiquitous chat rooms of the 1990s, you may want to log in to a virtual experience. Virtual worlds boast big populations (there are reports that World of Warcraft's customer "population" reached nine million) and big money (more than \$200,000 USD change hands daily in Second Life.)

These virtual worlds may soon impact the way in which all of us use the Internet. Robert Hof, writing in a BusinessWeek article titled "The Coming Virtual Web," argues that three-dimensional virtual worlds may one day become a favorite Internet interface for day-to-day online tasks. Hof acknowledges that the virtual world format is not likely to altogether supplant the World Wide Web because not all online activity would be enhanced by a virtual world interface. Would you rather conduct a Google search in a virtual Google world or just bring up that list of results on the good old white background? For some, online shopping and social activities, though, the virtual world interface could eventually be the default. It may take a while, but there's no harm in all of us getting ready by logging on now.

The 2008 AEJMC convention schedule is not yet ready, but I expect you'll see virtual world presentations in Chicago next August, and that some of these will be in CTEC sessions. I hope to see you there — and maybe soon our avatars will have a visit about it.

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*James D. Ivory is an assistant professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and can be reached at [jivory@vt.edu](mailto:jivory@vt.edu).*

## The 2008 Convention is Coming and We Need Your Help

JIM BENJAMIN  
Research Chair



It is that time of the year -- leaves are falling, turkeys are very nervous, and plans are already in place for the 2008 AEJMC conference in

Chicago.

As usual, we will be sponsoring programs at the conference, and we need your help. Each submission is reviewed, ranked and rated by several of our members. We need your assistance in the selection process.

We expect a great turnout, and we need to be sure that our reviewers are ready to participate in April. Here is a quick description of the process. AEJMC will be using the All Academic online system. Reviewer accounts will be created by March and research papers will be submitted by Sunday, April 1. Our work begins. We will log onto the system, download the papers, and post the review forms between April 2 and May 1. Depending on the number of submissions and the number of reviewers, we will try to assign no more than three or four papers to each reviewer.

We don't utilize student reviewers, but students should plan to send their submissions to the Jung-Sook Lee student paper competition. The award honors the division's 1997-1998 research chair, Jung-Sook Lee of the University of Southwest Louisiana, who died soon after the Baltimore convention in 1998. Authors of the top

- please turn to page 4

# Caution signs ahead

## Tips for changing your classroom

AMANDA STURGILL  
Teaching Chair



As technologies change, the ability to teach students on the programs they will use on the job is a definite plus. Your administrators will make decisions based on what you can afford. Here are

some things I have learned about didactic concerns in making a switch.

### To switch or not to switch

A fundamental concern is whether learning the software is what you are hoping to teach. In some cases, it is important that students learn particular packages. For example, photojournalism students probably need to know how to use Photoshop before they graduate. But in other cases, the skills you are teaching require technology, but not a particular program. For example, we teach a small amount of video editing in our beginning editing classes, but use iMovie instead of FinalCut Pro. Because the goal is to introduce the idea behind including video, we concentrate on the ideas, not the technology.

A major concern is your university's ability/willingness to provide technical support for the software you choose. Although you may feel pretty comfortable with learning the software, if your university has rules about who can install software and who can alter configurations, this can become a problem. When we switched photo editing software a few years ago, our department, student publications and two graphic artists in university development were the only ones on campus who made the switch. This meant that not only did the instructors have to teach themselves the software, but also we had some conflicts with memory allocation and other technical issues that ultimately affected classroom

time.

Another concern is learning curve. Students have an easier time learning software that is similar to what they are already familiar with. For example, students who are comfortable in Photoshop will have an easier time learning InDesign. There are cases where the professional-level software is sufficiently important that a good amount of class or lab time learning software is justified. But there are other times when you will cover concepts better with a program that is easier to use. If your total class time on a particular technology isn't going to increase, you may find that students leave your class knowing less about concepts because of a steep learning curve on the technology.

### After the switch

It seems trivial, but giving the new technology a trial run before class is always important. You may need to negotiate for an earlier install time from your IT center to make this happen. I find it helpful to work through the assignments I will give the students, manual in hand, and to take notes on what steps I needed to take to accomplish each task. Sometimes, I can type these notes up into a usage guide that I pass out to the students.

If your goal isn't in-depth knowledge of a particular application, consider how you can simplify the learning for the students. With Quark, I was able to truthfully tell my beginning students that they only had to learn 8 things in order to complete the projects. With InDesign, it is 14, but that is still a manageable number.

Teaching with technology is daunting, even for the most tech-savvy. But planning and evaluation can help ensure better outcomes for your learners and for you.

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*Amanda Sturgill is an assistant professor at Baylor University. She can be reached at [Amanda\\_sturgill@baylor.edu](mailto:Amanda_sturgill@baylor.edu)*

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*"Teaching with technology is daunting, even for the most tech-savvy."*

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### - 2008 Convention, continued

three student papers will receive a cash award and be recognized at the Chicago Convention. In addition, the author of the best student paper will have his or her conference registration fee paid by the division.

If you can help, please contact me, Jim Benjamin, at [jbenjam@utnet.utoledo.edu](mailto:jbenjam@utnet.utoledo.edu). Please put "CTEC 2008 Review" in the subject line and include the following information in the message:

- Your name and e-mail address
- Your current position and employer
- Your area of specialization
- Your preferred methodologies
- Whether you plan to submit a paper to CTEC in 2008 (this does not disqualify reviewers)
- Whether you plan to attend the 2008 conference in Chicago (this is not a requirement for reviewers)
- Whether you are interested in serving as a moderator/discussant

I'll add your information to our reviewer database and get in touch with you in early 2008. Your help will make sure our submitters will receive the highest quality feedback. Thank you in advance -- I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

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*Jim Benjamin is professor and chair of the Department of Communication at the University of Toledo and can be reached at [jbenjam@utoledo.edu](mailto:jbenjam@utoledo.edu).*

# (Re)thinking and rating [ratemyprofessors.com](http://ratemyprofessors.com)

JACOB GROSHEK  
PF&R Chair



With the end of another semester at hand, student evaluations will once again be circulated throughout departments around the country. These institutionally-based evaluations, which act as important sources of feedback for instructors and administrators, are typically kept private and anonymous regardless of their content. However, with the widespread popularity of [ratemyprofessors.com](http://ratemyprofessors.com) and other similar websites among college students, the evaluation process has become constantly ongoing, uncensored, and publicly shared. As a result, there is increasing debate (and angst) within universities about the impact such sites have for administrators, instructors, and students.

Much like other technologies, online student evaluations have the potential to benefit academic freedom and diverse viewpoints in the field of communication. However, they come with pitfalls: anonymous posts written by students and also by non-students who write derogatory or fictitious evaluations. Readers are left to wonder if the evaluations found on such websites are, in fact, an accurate reflection of instructors' teaching abilities or the musings of students venting displeasure, veiled personal attacks or, in rarer instances, praise.

Still, instructor evaluation websites open up a public sphere of sorts for students to participate in a peer-to-many community where they can assess their instructors' performance on a numerical scale based on competency, clarity, helpfulness, ease of coursework, and

(of course) physical attractiveness. The fact that blind reviewers are able to openly post their opinions and academic experiences for others to view serves at least two important functions: feedback and impromptu course counseling. Indeed, online student evaluations may not only present instructors with constructive feedback but also provide a valuable

Readers are left to wonder if the evaluations found on such websites are, in fact, an accurate reflection of instructors' teaching abilities or the musings of students venting displeasure, veiled personal attacks or, in rarer instances, praise.

tool that helps students select courses based on teacher ratings and class information.

Importantly, these websites provide incoming, transfer, and current students with information that can help them choose the courses and instructors that best meet their needs. Online evaluation sites open up the possibility that students select courses taught by highly rated professors. However, students could just as well pick a course led by "easy" or physically "hot" instructors.

Critics of online evaluation sites argue that negative evaluations may only reflect student dissatisfaction with a grade. The credibility of such websites is further called into

question because they sometimes sexualize instructors, students, and the learning environment with a focus on the physical attractiveness of instructors. Research into this area has shown that overall quality scores are positively correlated with instructors' sexiness and easiness scores, but not with their competency scores. Precisely because of such flaws, many scholars argue that such data should not be used by students, instructors, or institutions to gauge an individual's teaching ability.

Despite such critiques, the fact remains that websites where students can evaluate their instructors anonymously will almost certainly continue to exist in an educational environment that is increasingly technologically savvy and consumerist. Many instructors will also continue to participate in backlash sites, such as <http://rateyourstudents.blogspot.com> or [ratemyprofessors.com](http://ratemyprofessors.com), where rebuttal and complaints can be filed and archived in a postmodern university teachers' lounge. Students seem inevitably inclined to rely on and post to [ratemyprofessors.com](http://ratemyprofessors.com) or similar websites with impunity, in spite of instructors' dismay or the actual usefulness of the content.

There is a long history of new technologies influencing the university environment. In the end, online student evaluations seem best positioned to provide honest feedback and avenues for students and instructors to feel academically informed. Yet, they ought not be considered defining benchmarks to judge the efficacy of university instructors by administrators, students, or instructors themselves.

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*Jacob Groshek is a doctoral candidate at Indiana University and can be reached at [ogroshek@indiana.edu](mailto:ogroshek@indiana.edu).*

# Fear and Loathing in New Newsrooms and Newer Classrooms

SAM TERILLI



So you want to bring your students into the 21st century world of converged media – the world of journalists running around with video-cameras and audio-recorders to complement their 19th century notebooks (the spiral kind, though they'll need the electronic kind, too)?

Don't assume these digital era children, who spend as many hours on social networking sites as their parents once spent on the telephone, are as enamored of and comfortable with new technology as Apple or Microsoft might have one believe.

Our experience at the University of Miami is that new technology is just that: new. It is foreign and perhaps even a bit frustrating and frightening when one must use it not for fun, but for think work or a grade. This is true, we have learned, no matter the decade of one's birth.

We found that even Generation Y or whoever came after the Ys ask why. That is, they ask why they must learn this technical stuff when they just want to write (on their laptops). I will come back to this cross-generational fear, but first a few words about the context.

For a few years at UM we have been experimenting with new ways of infusing new technology and related skills into our journalism curriculum. CNJ 595, entitled In-depth Reporting & Media Convergence, is part of that experiment. I have taught it for two years. My chief qualification is that I am not a natural when it comes to technology (or even a fan when it comes to having to use it myself), but I appreciate its value. I also understand the fear.

The course is designed to enhance the critical thinking

and analytical abilities of our upperclassmen. It occupies the end of the journalistic spectrum opposite breaking news stories and celebrity news. The emphasis is not on writing long, but writing clearly about issues that are not easily digested.

We are not fools tilting at digital wind farms, however. We recognize that few, if any, students will be masters of all of these new skills. They certainly cannot hope to obtain even solid journeyman status in just one semester. I am not there, either. I team teach the course with

Suddenly, all of these children of Facebook fame and the iPhone culture wanted to run back to the security of paper and ink.

Professor Kim Grinfeder of our Visual Journalism program and one of our doctoral candidates, Paola Prado, who has a broadcasting background. They have a second life filled with technology, software and visuals – a world to which I have a visa, but no claim to citizenship.

Together we push the students to explore selected stories and projects in greater depth. We teach them to ask questions, evaluate mounds of information, conduct more detailed interviews, and search for ways to present the information across many platforms. Everyone must capture and edit audio and video and learn to communicate with Web designers, photographers and other aliens in the print world of old-style reporting. We do not expect them to

become experts, but we do expect them to develop an understanding of new storytelling strategies and pick up the basics.

Now back to the fear. We saw something surprising and also refreshing the first day we saddled some of our best print students with audio equipment and started teaching them to record and edit. Near anarchy ensued in the lab as students who had achieved some success as writers faced the unknown – an unknown they would have to master to turn in the next assignment.

Suddenly, all of these children of Facebook fame and the iPhone culture wanted to run back to the security of paper and ink. They are the children of the new digital era, but they acquired their comfort with technology when it was not threatening to them. Technology is threatening when one must learn it or die – professionally speaking, that is.

They learned. Some learned more than others. They fumbled with batteries and hard drives. They learned to listen to visual people about different story ideas. They occasionally grumbled when they could not spend hours polishing a quick video stand-up for a Web report. But at least they were exposed to this new world of storytelling.

We have not reached the promised land of converged media at UM, but then again neither has the professional press. We are still experimenting and still trying to push the students into the digital darkness.

Why is all of this refreshing? I once thought one had to be alive during the Watergate era to truly loathe and fear technology. Now I know that isn't true. The problem is not generational. It is situational.

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*Sam Terilli is an assistant professor at the University of Miami and can be reached at [sterilli@miami.edu](mailto:sterilli@miami.edu).*

# New at Colorado State University: Ph.D. Program in Public Communication and Technology

PATRICK LEE PLAISANCE

Colorado State University is launching a doctoral program in Public Communication and Technology to train researchers interested in the role of information in the public's understanding of contemporary issues and the impacts of new communications technologies at the individual, organizational and societal levels. Applications are now being accepted for Fall 2008 enrollment in the new program, which is housed in the university's Department of Journalism and Technical Communication.

Accepted students will join with top-quality faculty all across a renowned research campus who are addressing communication issues involving science, technology, the environment, health and other applied human sciences.

The channels for public communications have been radically altered with the emergence of Internet- and cellular-based technologies. The ever-increasing array of traditional and new communication media provides exciting opportunities to communicate with the public – but much more needs to be understood about how to do so effectively. Similarly, changing patterns of information sharing alter individual behavior, organizations and society as a whole.

The new Ph.D. program at Colorado State is intended to prepare students for research-related careers in two areas:

□ Teaching/Research. Universities and colleges worldwide seek colleagues who are knowledgeable about new and traditional media and how they can be applied in practical contexts. Students pursuing this path receive a solid grounding in communication theory and research methodology. As appropriate, students learn how to apply their own professional skills

and develop instructional skills in the classroom by teaching in the department's undergraduate program or by working as a research assistant.

□ Research/Management. The program also trains students to pursue communication research and related management positions outside academia. Students can augment their formal training through assistantships, research projects within the department or with other employers on or off campus.

The world of communications is exploding with new technologies and research careers and opportunities – in academia as well as the private sector. Ascend to the next step in your career and reach new intellectual heights while living and learning in a scenic community nestled in the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

Graduate assistantships are available for students. The deadline for applications for Fall 2008 enrollment is December 15. For information about application requirements or about the program in general, contact Dr. Patrick Lee Plaisance at (970) 491-6484 or by e-mail at [patrick.plaisance@colostate.edu](mailto:plaisance@colostate.edu)

The world of  
communications is  
exploding with new  
technologies and research  
careers and opportunities  
– in academia as well  
as the private sector.

# 2008 AEJMC Midwinter Conference

## Call for Paper Abstracts and Panel Proposals

February 29 - March 1, 2008 • Point Park University, Pittsburgh, PA

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The AEJMC Midwinter Conference is an annual forum for the presentation of research and the discussion of germane topics relevant to the AEJMC divisions and interest groups sponsoring the conference. The Midwinter Conference traditionally follows an informal structure allowing for presentations and extended discussions in a relaxed setting.

### Paper Submissions

Authors should submit research paper proposals in an approximate 300- to 500-word abstract. The abstracts should give a clear sense of the scope of the research, its relevant hypotheses and/or research questions and the method of inquiry used. Conclusions should be highlighted for works that have been completed by the submission deadline. Do not submit full papers to the paper chairs; abstracts are all that is required in order to be considered for presentation at the Midwinter Conference. However, authors of accepted abstracts must submit complete research papers, not exceeding 30 pages, to their discussant two weeks prior to the conference. Papers presented at this conference also are eligible for presentation at the national AEJMC convention.

### Panel Submissions

Panel organizers should submit proposals indicating the panel title, a description of the session's focus, the issues to be

discussed, and a list of potential or confirmed panelists, including their university or professional affiliation.

### Info for Paper Submitters and Panel Organizers

Identify the paper's author(s) or panel's organizer(s) on the title page only, and include the mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address of the person to whom inquiries should be addressed. The title should be on the first page of the text and on running heads on each page of text. Send your abstract or proposal as an attachment in a standard word-processing format (preferably Word or RTF). Also, please ensure that you remove any identifying information from your document (with the exception of the title page). All abstracts and panel proposals must be e-mailed to the appropriate division's midwinter paper chair (see below\*) by December 7, 2007. Send abstracts and proposals to the appropriate division contact below. Please include an e-mail address so that the midwinter paper chair of the division can notify you. Authors will be notified by January 10, 2008 as to the status of their paper. You may submit a paper to only one division.

### Additional Info

Questions about paper proposal submissions to specific divisions and interest groups can be directed to the appropriate contacts below. General questions about the conference can be sent to Dr. Anthony Moretti, Point Park University, 412-392-4311; amoretti@pointpark.edu.

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### Communication Technology:

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