

Communication Technology & Policy

Spring 2005

Midwinter in Georgia; Late Winter in Germany

By David Thompson
CTP Head



On February 11-12, more than 100 participants gathered at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Georgia for the 2005 AEJMC Midwinter Conference. This was the largest Midwinter Conference, so far. Eighty-one papers and four panels were on the program.

With CTP taking the lead, seven other divisions and interest groups co-sponsored the event:

- * Civic Journalism (CJIG)
- * Communication Technology and Policy (CTP)
- * Cultural and Critical Studies (CCS)
- * Entertainment Studies (ESIG)
- * Graduate Education (GEIG)
- * Mass Communication and Society (MCS)
- * Media Management and Economics (MME)
- * Visual Communication (VISC)

I want to thank, personally, all the Midwinter Conference Coordinators for their hard work. They met short deadlines and remained flexible enough to handle last-minute changes. Special thanks go to CTP's Midwinter Conference Coordinator, Mark Tremayne (University of Texas) for handling the paper judging process for CTP and for building the conference Web site.

Our host was Prof. Leonard Witt, who holds the Robert D. Fowler Distinguished Chair in Communication in the Department of Communication at Kennesaw State University. Accommodations and facilities were first-rate. We appreciate his help.

AEJMC President Mary Alice Shaver, University of Central Florida, also participated in the conference. If I remember correctly, this was the first Midwinter Conference attended by an AEJMC president. Thank you, Mary Alice, for your contributions as moderator and lunch speaker.

Of course, I must give credit to all the authors, co-authors, panelists, and discussants. This event would not have happened without your contributions.

I don't think anyone would say I'm an effusive guy. But I am really happy about the success of this year's Midwinter Conference. And I am very proud of everyone who took part.

This annual event is often the first convention experience for graduate students. They go through the



AEJMC President Mary Alice Shaver welcomes Midwinter Conference participants during lunch. She encouraged everyone to become active members of AEJMC.

paper review process. They present their work to an audience for the first time. And they learn from discussants who offer constructive criticism.

The Midwinter Conference is also the first academic networking experience for many participants. It's good to be able to recognize a few friendly faces in the crowd at the big national convention. The Midwinter Conference is a good place to make those initial contacts.

To me, the Midwinter Conference is fun. I enjoy seeing young scholars learn the academic process. And I do my best to help.

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Keep your eyes open for news about next year's Midwinter Conference. If you are a graduate student or junior faculty member, we'll invite you to submit your work. If you're a seasoned veteran, we'll need your help as a paper judge and discussant.

Soon, we'll be looking for a host for next year's Midwinter Conference. To volunteer, please contact me at **david.thompson@loras.edu**

Two weeks after the 2005 AEJMC Midwinter Conference, I was on my way to Germany to begin my one-semester tenure as a Fulbright Senior Scholar. I'll teach two courses (in English) to students majoring in Medienwissenschaft für Informatik at the University of Tübingen, in the Black Forest near Stuttgart. One course is called "Disability and accessibility of online media: Theory and practice"; the other is "Emerging media and the future of communication."

Classes begin the second week of April. I have not met any of my students, yet. I've spent the last few weeks getting settled, learning the bus schedule, and making mistakes speaking a second language.

I'm learning about the differences between the German and American university systems. For example, students "shop around" for classes during the first two or three weeks of the semester. So I've been told not to do too much important work during the first few weeks of the term. There are two semesters here: winter and summer. The summer semester begins in mid-April and ends in mid-July. There are no air conditioners, so I hope for moderate weather.

If you're in my neighborhood this summer, I'll take you on a walking tour of a beautiful medieval university town in southern Germany. In the meantime, take a look at the Webcam at **www.tuebingen.de**. You may see me in the market square.

David Thompson, Ph.D., Loras College, is a Fulbright Senior Scholar at the University of Tübingen, Germany (March - July 2005). He may be reached at david.thompson@loras.edu



Thompson did not sing karaoke at the Midwinter Conference. He did, however, make a few opening remarks.

In Germany, if you can't carry it, you don't need it. Here is Thompson at a bus stop with his new ironing board decorated with the flag of the European Union.



Traditional wood-frame buildings surround the market square in Tübingen.

Campaign 2004: Use of Internet for News and Advertising

By Daniela V. Dimitrova
Iowa State University



The 2004 presidential campaign was long, expensive, polarized, and resulted in a close win on election night. This presidential campaign was unprecedented in many ways, including highest campaign spending totaling \$1.45 billion by some estimates (1) and the increasingly important role of third parties such as moveon.org and Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. American voters were generally satisfied with the 2004 presidential campaign and reported that they felt well informed about the candidates (2). Voters complained about too much "mud-slinging," but still felt they had learned enough about both candidates to make an informed choice (2).

The presidential campaign is over now, but what role did the Internet play in the battle for the presidency? The increasing importance of the Internet as an information source and a medium for candidate-voter communication is briefly discussed below.

The Internet as a News Source in Election 2004

The American voter had a wide array of media to choose from to get their news about the presidential election. According the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2), there was a huge increase in the use of the Internet as a campaign news source. When asked "How did you get most of your news about the presidential election campaign? From television from newspapers, from radio, from magazines, or from the Internet," 21 percent of the voters answered the Internet, compared with 46 percent who said newspapers and 76 percent who chose television. This represents a two-fold increase from the 2000 campaign when only 10 percent of Americans used the Internet as their main news source about the election and a seven-fold increase from the 1996 election.

Not surprisingly, in 2004, the Web remains more popular among younger Americans. Forty percent of those under thirty reported that the Internet was their main news source. Younger Americans were not the only ones using the Internet to get the latest about the

race though. According to the Senior Journal, older Americans - those 50 and up showed the largest increase percentage wise in the use of the Internet for campaign news in the 2004 election (3). The Pew Research Center Report also shows that 41 percent of the American public got some news about the election from the Internet (2).

The Internet as an Advertising Medium in Election 2004

Clearly the use of the Internet for political news surged in 2004. Surprisingly though, there was not much use of the Internet for advertising purposes by the candidates and third-party groups (4).

Experts say that even though the Internet was seen as more important in the 2004 presidential campaign than in previous campaigns, it was still underused by all parties. According to a Pew Internet & American Life Project report, the Internet was "virtually ignored" as an advertising medium in 2004. The highest amount of advertising dollars, not surprisingly, went to television ads. Statistics show that between January and August, 2004 the main players spent only \$2.66 million on online banner ads (4). Despite these low numbers for political advertising online, consultants saw the Internet as appropriate for other types of activities. The Pew Report concludes that the "presidential campaign world today regards the internet as an asset for fundraising, voter-profiling, and insider communication, but not for advertising."

Would these trends continue in the next presidential election? I guess we will have to wait another four years to find out ...

Notes

- (1) TNS Media Intelligence/CMR (2004, November 1) "U.S. Political Advertising Spending Reaches \$1.45 Billion", Retrieved December 20, 2004, from <http://www.tnsmi-cmr.com/news/2004/110104.html>.
- (2) Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2004, November 11). Voters Liked Campaign 2004, But Too Much 'Mud-Slinging'. Retrieved November 30, 2004, from <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=233>
- (3) Senior Journal. (2004, November 12). Older Americans Lead Gain in Internet Use for Election 2004. Retrieved December 20, 2004, from <http://www.seniorjournal.com/NEWS/Politics/4-11-12SeniorsOnNet.htm>
- (4) Pew Internet & American Life Project. (2004, October). Presidential Campaign Advertising on **the Internet**.

Researching on the Web: It's more than just the first five Google returns

By Constance K. Davis, Ph.D.,
Teaching Chair

How many of you give your students an assignment that involves some research and when you see what they have found are appalled? Well, I have learned that a number of professors fall into that category. I am one of them.

When I am in a computer lab with a small enough class I will sometimes give them an assignment simply to see what process they use as they try to find that information. What I have found and what I hear from other professors is that students go straight to Google and use the first few responses they get from Google. The all-powerful Google would not lead them astray, would it? I have observed that some of them literally type in the same question I asked them to research, not putting any quotation marks around any of it. Some of them do not understand the process of searching by key words. Some of them do not know how to evaluate the information that does result from a key word search. And some of them have never learned how much, or how little, Google might find.

Although many students will claim they have heard presentations from the university's librarians about research, too many students see Google as the only way to find information.

The UC Berkeley library has put together one of the most helpful collections I have found as you try to work with your students in showing them about research. Berkeley librarians have compiled information explaining the differences between using search engines, subject directories and searching on the so-called "invisible Web." That is one of the most difficult concepts to explain to students, that much information will not be turned up on a Google search. More information is available at <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/ToolsTables.html>.

Another helpful page discusses "Recommended Search Strategy: Analyze your topic and search with peripheral vision." The five-step process the library recommends includes: 1) analyze your topic and decide where to begin; 2) pick the right starting place (and they provide a table to help you make that decision); 3) learn as you go and vary your approach with what you learn; 4) don't bog down in any strategy that doesn't work; and 5) return to the previous strategies better informed. More on that (including search strategies they do NOT recommend) can be found at

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Strategies.html>.

You can find its discussion of "Googling to the Max" at

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Google.html>. It explains some of Google's strengths and weaknesses and some suggestions for getting the most out of a Google search. Other ways to exploit Google for your purposes is detailed at

<http://www.googleguide.com/>. The Berkeley library also recommends using <http://search.yahoo.com/> and <http://www.teoma.com/> for search engines. Although the Dogpile search is constantly changing, it is sometimes helpful to have the students plug in a search term to see what search engines will find something helpful, which ones will find sites that are not helpful, and which ones do not find anything at all. Once you have found Web sites based on your search strategy, then it is time to evaluate those sites to see if they are useful.

Bloggers have sprung up everywhere and write about any number of topics. Some bloggers do an excellent job of researching and presenting the material while others are extremely biased and do nothing other than rant about the topic of the day. Again, Berkeley's librarians have produced a helpful page for students as they evaluate the worth of a Web page at

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html>. Among its recommendations is that you look at other sites, such as <http://lii.org/>, that have already evaluated many sites.

This collection of Berkeley sites also includes some PowerPoint presentations.

Once you have found Web pages that are reputable, then it is necessary for students to evaluate the value of the actual information in an article. For example, in a recent assignment that called for annotated bibliographies, I had students who found newspaper articles that were at least five years old in which a member of Congress has promised to introduce legislation on the topic the student is researching. That is information that definitely came from a legitimate news source, but I try to get students to understand that tidbit is just a beginning point for further research. They need to find out what happened to the legislation - and that the most recent step is what might be a helpful source.

It is entirely possible that your own university's library has put together a collection of sites designed to help those who are just being introduced to research. At the very least, your library's Web presence likely has an area in which it explains what is available through its Web site and how to use it most effectively and efficiently.

Citizens, Media and Democracy: **Technology Outpacing Understanding** **of Basic Journalism Ethics**

By Peter Morello
PF&R Chair

During the past ten years, advanced digital video technology has significantly accelerated consumer access to equipment which was, until very recently, the domain of the traditional professional broadcast media. Images can now be shot on three-chip cameras costing as little as \$600 and can easily be edited on commodity desk top computers.

Images with enhanced image resolution, more detail and sharper views have resulted in high quality production capabilities at a much lower cost. This has especially been a boon to budget conscious universities and non-profit community agencies. We are now seeing a "decentralizing process" in content delivery unprecedented in US history.

Across the country, many community access channels and a few smaller university-owned PBS stations air content produced by citizens who have otherwise little experience with broadcast or new media.

I am a firm advocate in favor of increased public access to the nation's airwaves. It is no doubt the kind of free and unfettered access the framers of the US Constitution had in mind. Describing the "Great Town Hall Meeting," James Madison wrote in the Federalist Papers about the need for open and boisterous public discourse. What better way is there today to increase public debate on crucial issues than to empower citizens through the use of advanced inexpensive digital video technology?

Through community access channels and the Internet, ordinary citizens can now get their own ideas out there. The Poynter Institute, devoted to examining the fundamental changes now underway in the traditional broadcast and new media, is calling for a "repurposing of journalism." The need for new standards in broadcast and new media journalism has never been greater.

As an assistant professor of broadcast and new media journalism at the University of Missouri in Kansas City, I am often asked by colleagues or community activists to help them produce documentaries

or reports for broadcast on local television stations and for Internet use. Much of the content is produced by those unfamiliar with good practices in journalism.

I can share many examples of problems that arise when working with well-intentioned colleagues or activists who are eager to get their message to the masses, but who do not have a background in journalism.

On a recent shoot at the US Treasury Department's regional office in Kansas City, the camera crew was asked not to take close up images of checks with social security numbers printed on them. We of course agreed to this, but my colleague went further by offering to have our videos examined by federal security officers to make sure we complied. I was compelled to explain that once ground rules were agreed to beforehand, anything else was censorship and a violation of First Amendment rights. My colleague, wanting to stay in good graces with the Treasury Department, replied "This is after all the Federal Government." It was hard for me not to roll my eyes when I heard that.

On a later shoot, another colleague offered interviewees who gave opinions on race relations the chance to review tapes and to make suggested changes to scripts.

Conversely, one community activist who produced a report on animal cruelty walked into a PetSmart store with a digital camera and started taping without asking the manager for permission. Upset store employees reported her to the police. She told them that I was working with her on the project, and it took me several days to clear up the mess with PetSmart corporate public affairs.

What is increasingly clear is that while digital video technology has created unprecedented high quality production capabilities, the public's understanding of content issues and ethics often lags woefully behind. It is easy for citizens to buy all their digital cameras, editing and computer equipment at Best Buy or CompUSA. The great challenge journalism educators face is informing an increasingly technology savvy citizenry on sound practices in basic journalism.

Blogs, Restoring Public Trust in Journalism Among Many Topics at Midwinter Conference 2005

By Mark Tremayne
Midwinter Conference Coordinator

More than 80 researchers presented their work at the annual AEJMC Midwinter Conference this year, held at Kennesaw State University, just north of Atlanta. Holding with recent tradition, CTP took a lead role in organizing the panels but participation was spread amongst eight divisions and interest groups, representing nearly one third of the association.

Kennesaw State was a great location for the event, a beautiful campus and we were blessed with sunny skies and mild temperatures. And local organizer, Dr. Leonard Witt, did a wonderful job coordinating the conference.

The conference got off to a spirited start Friday night with a public symposium on the topic of "Journalism and the Public: Restoring the Trust." CNN's editorial director Richard Griffiths, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution's public editor Angela Tuck and columnist and political analyst Matt Towery took questions from the audience and offered suggestions for improving the field of journalism.

The next day, researchers had their say on a wide range of topics, from a look at the cultural implications of *Girls Gone Wild* to an analysis of

media frames used in Iraq War coverage.

Blogging proved to be a popular research topic across many divisions. A Saturday morning panel on the topic included presentations on the messages inherent in blog site designs and the impact of blogs on traditional media. As the presentations were given, the session itself was blogged by conference host Leonard Witt. His blog, Public Journalism Network (pjnet.org), is an excellent source for information in that area.

The plenary session during lunch provided valuable advice to newer AEJMC members. Panelists Ginger Carter, Randy Miller, David Thompson and Greg Lisby suggested ways to get more involved in the divisions, commissions and interest groups of the association. Some strategies offered: Introduce yourself to big name researchers (they're just people!), hand out business cards, and volunteer for positions in your division.

The Midwinter Conference is a valuable place to get feedback on your research so you can revise it for submission to the large summer conference, and it provides a more intimate setting for meeting colleagues and networking. If you were unable to make it this year, consider attending the 2006 event.

CTP Officers for 2004-2005

Head

David R. Thompson, Loras College
david.thompson@loras.edu

Vice Head and Program Chair

Sri Kalyanaraman, University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill
sri@unc.edu

Research Chair

Daniela Dimitrova, Iowa State University
danielad@iastate.edu

PF&R Chair

Peter Morello, University of Missouri - Kansas City
morellop@amkc.edu

Mid-Winter Coordinator

Mark Tremayne, University of Texas - Austin
tremayne@mail.utexas.edu

Best-of-the-Web Coordinator

Helena Sarkio, University of Florida
hsarkio@jou.ufl.edu

Membership Chair

Yifeng Hu, Penn State
yuh110@psu.edu

Newsletter Editor

Shawn McIntosh, Rutgers
smac55@rcn.com

Webmaster

Monica Postelnicu, University of Florida
pmonica@ufl.edu

Listserv Manager

Robert Magee, University of North Carolina
rmagee@unc.edu