

# MME *Record*

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## Professional Freedom & Responsibility: What is it?

by Ann Hollifield and Cindy Price

When you first come to AEJMC, you hear the term PF&R, but you may not really understand what people are talking about. This issue will give you a little overview of what Professional Freedom and Responsibility means to our organization and how that affects you as a MME Division member.

There are five areas of concern in PF&R: Freedom of Expression; Media Criticism and Accountability; Ethics; Racial, Gender, and Cultural Inclusiveness; and Public Service.

The following are some activities that the MME Division has programmed in the previous year to address each of the five areas:

PF&R includes freedom of expression; media criticism & accountability; ethics; racial, gender & cultural inclusiveness; and public service

### • Freedom of Expression

“Media and Terrorism,” 2002 conference in Miami and the Midwinter Conference in Georgia. Of particular interest was the discussion of the recent changes in the

Freedom of Information Act.

### • Media Criticism and Accountability

“A Multi-Faceted Look at Crime Coverage.” Pre-convention workshop in Miami that examined issues of accountability, the public interest, and irresponsibility in crime coverage.

### • Ethics

“A Multi-Faceted Look at Crime Coverage.” The workshop

focused on how faculty can teach students how to cover crime in an effective and responsible way.

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## MME scholars work on cutting edge in addressing media PF&R issues

by Jerry Condra, Teaching Standards Chair

This is an age of radical change in media management and economics. Many of today’s most pressing PF&R issues are addressed directly by MME faculty in their everyday research and teaching. The solutions to many PF&R challenges could be proactively addressed by media management. I asked 14 MME scholars about three key topics and how they see their role in dealing proactively with PF&R issues. Their comments reveal the reflection, energy, and time that they invest in these challenges.

**Question:** Do MME scholars fully meet their responsibilities by researching media management policies, writing about them, and discussing them with their students? Or, should they take a more proactive stance by publicly commenting on specific media management policies such as diminished or inferior service to their local communities by local stations, cable systems, and Web sites?

*Augie Grant, University of South Carolina:* As a practical matter, most MME scholars work hard to understand current media management policies and discuss them with students; the biggest issue here is the degree to which

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“Managing Disasters: Organizational and Professional Issues that Arise When the Worst Happens.” Miami. Dealing ethically with victims of natural and man-made disasters while covering disaster stories was addressed by Richard Simpson, Director of the DART Center. On the same panel, psychologist Caroline Pyevich, addressed organizational and managerial ethics in preparing journalists and other employees to cover disasters in such a way as to minimize their risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder.

• **Media Criticism & Accountability**

“A Multi-Faceted Look at Crime Coverage.” Miami. The workshop examined issues of accountability, the public interest, and irresponsibility in crime coverage. “Wall Street & Its Impact on the Newsroom.” Miami. The entire panel addressed issues of media accountability and service to the public interest.

• **Racial, Gender, and Cultural Inclusiveness**

“The Spanish Language Media Market in the U.S.” Issues of racial and cultural inclusiveness were the entire focus of the panel.

“Issues of Afghan culture.” Part of the talks during the Midwinter Conference. Leonard Ray Teel, Director of the Georgia State University Center for International Media Education discussed U.S. media’s visual representation of the Afghan culture and the war on terrorism. Sheila Teft, former Southeast Asia Correspondent, *Christian Science Monitor*, discussed the Western media’s interpretation/misinterpretation of the role of women in Afghan and Southeast Asian societies.

• **Public Service**

“Wall Street & Its Impact on the Newsroom.” Miami. The panel examined the ways in which current financial-market expectations are affecting the ability of the news media to meet their public service obligations.

Additionally, in the area of public service, the Division has been working throughout the year with the NAB, BEA and BRI to develop stronger ties between university programs in media management and economics and industry professionals specializing in audience research.



MME scholars (cont. from page 1)

we provide a critical perspective on media management practices. For example, non-compete agreements are a fact of life in most states that teach MME classes, but there are important ethical issues that must be discussed in relation to these agreements. Frankly, I know the issues and the media management practices, but don’t know what is being taught elsewhere in this regard.

*Alan Albarran, University of North Texas:* Probably only a handful of scholars are interested in this topic. Sure, much more can be done in this area, especially in regard to students. Regarding public comments, we’re all guilty of operating under a “spiral of silence.” Sure, we should do more, and encourage others to speak out. We really need media literacy introduced early in the K-12 curriculum, not something given a week or two worth of attention in a media ethics course. I believe we have an obligation to

speak out, but very few of us take the time to do so. For me, I try to do it at the local level where I hope I can have some impact.

*Greg Newton, Ohio University:* I find an interesting tension exists in many programs between the values many of us profess to hold (localism, diversity, public service, etc.) and the goal of trying to adequately prepare students in a management program for the reality of the industries they’re about to enter. It feels like a constant juggling act, and I’m not sure any of us ever get the balancing quite right. I do think it is important to pursue what we understand to be worthwhile goals, even if the methods we think best for achieving these goals contradict much of current industry behavior (and speaking out means that we get accused by our industry friends of “not understanding the real world”.) That pursuit would include any number of specific activities, from

op-eds to FCC comments to academic publications to classroom activities. If we’re not engaged in several of these we’re falling short.

*Glenda Williams, University of Alabama:* Discussion of how federal changes play out at the local level is important for students to understand and specific examples can help illustrate those changes. But MME scholars should avoid soapbox stands or gripe sessions that do not contribute to learning.

*Linwod Hagin, North Greenville College:* I can only answer about me ... I have done some research on local media management policies, have written a case study about one group, and have included that case study in my management class. If scholars see some wrong, then a public comment in the appropriate venue would be appropriate.

*Ann Hollifield, University of Georgia:* My research includes  
MME Scholars (cont. page 3)

management strategies and techniques: what do media companies do? Why do they do those things? What effects do those behaviors and strategies have on organizational performance and the public interest?

I also study the effects of government and corporate policy for media companies on the economic development of the communities served by mass media. I have served as an expert witness on two occasions for the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council in its filings before the FCC on issues of broadcast EEO regulations and just last month,

on minority media ownership issues. I discuss many of these issues in my classes and involve both undergraduate honors students and graduate students in research projects.

*Ken Killebrew, University of South Florida:* We have an obligation to the public just as the journalists who operate within the media should have an obligation to the public. We must be proactive and we must speak out against diminished service, sacrificed voices, and insufficient public service activities all because media companies can't keep their rate of return running at the 30 percent level. It's time to create new models. We are in the best place to do that – the academy.

*Lionel Grady, Southern Utah University:* I can't speak for all MME scholars, but for myself and a few I'm aware of, the answer is we sometimes fully meet our responsibilities – but not always. It's not always easy to access the latest management policies at local media outlets, and sometimes it's easy to rely on past information. At times,

one is wary of offending the very people we invite to speak in our classes by openly criticizing them. Still, I have usually communicated to my classes the concerns I might have about local policies.

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*Ken Killebrew*

*Todd Chambers, Texas Tech University:* While I personally attempt to find, do, and participate in research related to media management and pass it along to students in

lectures, case studies, and projects, it is difficult to stay on top of the issues. But, there are opportunities in almost every market to bring in local media managers to discuss radio consolidation, managing joint ventures, and other emerging issues. Since the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the FCC has issued several calls for comments related to ownership.

As scholars, we should do more to communicate with government officials at all levels to discuss local, regional, national, and global media trends.

*Mary Ann Carroll, Herkimer County Community College:* I don't believe that MME scholars fully meet their responsibilities, but that is not to

say that many do not try. Ideally, researching media management policies should be explored and presented on an individual basis;

that means station/network/cable case studies targeting successes and failures in policy implementation. Successes are always nice to tout, but how daring are we, as professionals, to study what does not work? If we do not balance the research, I believe that we fall short of meeting the overall public need. If the scholars and experts do not come forward to help shape public policies the ultimately lead to excellent service to local communities, then the local communities have only to rely on bottom line sales managers, programmers, and group owners to meet their needs. I don't think that the phrase “community service” is high on the agenda at each manager's meeting.

*Doug Ferguson, College of Charleston:* I hope MME scholars meet their responsibilities; I know I do. Of course, a lot depends on first-hand or second hand knowledge of media management policies. It doesn't exactly help that some academics are socialized by the dominant view that corporations are inherently evil and governments are

**“As scholars, we should do more to communicate with government officials at all levels to discuss local, regional, national, and global media trends.”**  
*Todd Chambers*

inherently wise. I don't agree that group ownership is necessarily bad in most cases, so what purpose is achieved by focusing on the occasional bad apple? For every Adelphia or Clear Channel, there are dozens of responsible owners. But that view is counter

to critical-cultural scholars who sometimes have a Marxist axe to grind. For example, I don't see too  
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many indictments of creeping commercialism in PBS policies (e.g., 30-second underwriting announcements were approved last week, making it harder to differentiate noncommercial stations from commercial stations) because many universities didn't want criticism of their own stations. Some professors are too willing to oblige.

**Question 2:** Does the increase in the number of broadcast stations, broadcast and cable networks, and Internet Web sites excuse and release broadcast stations and networks from their commitment to public service announcements, local news and weather coverage?

*Augie Grant:* Of course not. But again, this may be the wrong question. The best reason to air news, weather, and public service is that it leads to higher ratings. Service to the local community is critical in local media. Obviously, a manager could justifiably claim that the job of providing PSAs or weather is adequately served by other stations. The key is that the station that takes that approach is likely settling for lower ratings.

*Greg Newton:* Absolutely not. Mark Cooper got this right in the ownership rule-making now in progress. All those voices are not equivalent, and there's still nothing with the potential reach of local television and radio. What matters is how many voices a citizen has access to, and broadcast stations are the leader by a wide margin.

*Doug Ferguson:* Wow, loaded question. Broadcasters are not released from their commitment, but I question the need for government regulation at all, when actual spectrum scarcity restricts competition for ideas a lot less than does the de facto concentration of newspaper power. For instance, it makes no sense for public service groups to buy space in print while demanding it for free from broadcasters. Again, why is public service not mandated in the realm of print journalism when every market has more electronic voices than print voices?

*Glenda Williams:* Absolutely not. In fact, local news, weather, and announcements are more important than ever. Viewers need to see that level of commitment and that presence.

*Linwood Hagin:* No, in fact it should increase. Personally, I side with both sides of the issue as a strong

believer in capitalism but also in the belief of the public service aspect by licensed broadcasters.

*Ken Killebrew:* No! I frankly believe that the current crisis in media trust is because the companies have reduced the amount of public affairs coverage in nearly every area. At the same time that broadcast company owners argue for more flexibility with the public, they also threaten that more television newsrooms will "go dark" if their needs aren't met. That approach is an insult to the public and speaks volumes about the current state of affairs in the broadcasting industry. We

have created a new set of robber barons. The attitude (or at least the outcry) can be stopped through balancing the "needs" of the media owners with a bit of re-regulation. The academy should take the forefront in developing new ways of thinking to assure that voices are heard and owners are allowed to grow their companies.

*Alan Albarran:* From a moral standpoint, no. But from a legal perspective, yes. The constant deregulation and liberalization of the various rules concerning editorializing, the Fairness Doctrine,

etc. are long gone. So we can't really criticize the broadcasters when there is no requirement to do anything anymore. Only when the public refuses to view and listen, as well as speak out, will it cause any change.

*Todd Chambers:* Just because there has been an increase in competitors, broadcasters should not be excused from their basic public interest responsibilities of serving their local audience. Some interesting studies from the FCC are available at <http://www.fcc.gov/ownership/studies.html>.

*Michael Ameigh, State University of New York at Oswego:* The perception that media have abandoned certain social and ethical responsibilities in recent times is directly linked to a breakdown in the business model for local broadcast media. The notion that a broadcast station is a local service first presumes that there is a critical mass of advertisers available to sustain that service at a profit, and that residents of the local community will turn to that local medium first and often for news, information, and entertainment. It also



presumes that such stations will employ news gatherers and reporters who will report on community affairs and otherwise give voice to that community. Unfortunately, this model is becoming outmoded. The mom and pop shops that gave communities their commercial vigor have been replaced by chain stores that advertise in national media or pre-print inserts in large metro dailies or on regional television.

As that trend continues, station managers have two choices; create cost efficiencies to protect profits, or sell out. Automated formats sound professional but do not generate the intimacy created by well-known local air personalities and strong local ties. Relaxed ownership rules that were, ironically, intended to protect localism, have allowed large corporate station owners to create the national equivalent of a vast national jukebox that blankets the U.S. via thousands of local transmitters with nary a hint of local concern for the loss of all these community voices. That may be because cable channels and web-based content offer consumers attractive alternatives to local news and entertainment in all categories. For example, The Weather Channel, a cable television staple with a compelling local “hook” virtually everywhere, is arguably the best “local” source of weather information.

In this environment, should we media professors be striving to instill in our students a sense of responsibility toward the communities they will serve as the next generation of broadcast managers? If this is such an important issue

beyond the halls of ivy, why no community outcry? Could it be that other media are filling the void? Given the focus on dominance by chain broadcasters, perhaps we ought to be training our students to think commercially as the first impulse, much as we would if we were training managers to work in auto leasing or financial services. As a former broadcaster who remembers the role of community service at license renewal time (and as a good idea in any context) I prefer to expose my students to key program elements employed by market-dominant stations that do serve the local interest in the face of all these challenges. Let us hope they learn to appreciate the role of media in their communities, and that they come to

know the pleasure of being recognized for exercising the role in the common good.

**Question 3:** Is there a renewed need to cover media ethics in media management courses? Our respondents unanimously agreed that coverage of ethics is

important and most effective when applied on a case-by-case basis in all areas of MME courses. Two samples of the responses:

*Mary Ann Carroll:* As a teacher, I am often reminded that the student heading for the media world as a

professional basically believes that “anything is OK unless I get caught.” I am an advocate of giving young professionals a sense of their

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*Michael Ameigh*

need to take responsibility for their practices in the media. I am especially concerned with the lack of awareness about the need for ethical standards within the media industry. I believe that media management courses should include a challenge that requires students to write out their

own code of ethics and see how they measure up to many of the standard codes and ethics used by media professionals. Think it would be a real eye-opener.

*Doug Ferguson:* It’s hard to even conceive of teaching media ethics to some students who routinely violate the copyright of CD music because it costs too much. Once a person is able to con themselves into believing that it’s OK to download music from the Internet, or get a fake ID to drink alcohol, it’s a small leap to say that it’s OK to focus on the “bottom line” without regard to right and wrong. Good luck making a dent in student values when they become that jaded about ethics.

**Question 4:** Where should the line be drawn between advertising and news stories on local broadcast stations in today’s world? Do the  
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MME scholars (cont. from page 5)

demands of the marketplace excuse a relaxation of the insulation between advertiser pressures and news?

*Doug Ferguson:* Video News Releases should be identified as being supplied by commercial interests. Broadcasters should be more honest about shameless lifting of stories that newspapers dig up. The problem of stealing stories gets worse all the time and it's very seldom a case of newspapers stealing from broadcasters.

*Ken Killebrew:* We need to re-install the firewall. News and advertising are natural enemies. Cooperation is possible, but it is like chaining a lion to the front porch. Eventually someone is going to be eaten that should have been saved.

*Mary Ann Carroll:* The line today is wherever any manager or management group says it is.

*Greg Newton:* I tend to think that rather than explicit interference, either for or against a story, by advertisers, there's actually a much more insidious and consistent problem with "assumptions" by management about the kinds of stories that should be featured (and avoided), and with news holes being used as promotional vehicles for the station's primetime programming.

*Todd Chambers:* Is there still a line? Just kidding. Budget pressures are forcing many small and medium market stations to rely heavily on promotions. When I spent time with a local television news organization this summer, it was refreshing to find that those battles were fought and won by the news side of the building. But, at this year's NATPE, one of the hot topics was product placement. As PVRs come into more homes, it will be interesting to see how product placement opportunities will occur in local TV newscasts. With the assumptions about digital television, the line between television advertising and news will continue to be stretched.

### **Other PF&R issues raised by our respondents**

*Randy Beam, Indiana University:* Diversity is an important aspect of course content. In my media management course, we look at the challenges of managing a multicultural workplace and how diversity might affect the strategy of a media organization. We use a training video that examines how culture shapes an individual's way of looking at the world and how different cultural values can lead to misunderstanding and tension in the workplace. Then we talk about how to prevent those kinds of misunderstandings. To examine strategy issues, we use a case on the challenges facing a daily newspaper that serves an ethnically and racially diverse community. The case pits concerns about profits against concerns about community obligations. It also pits a desire to meet the informational needs of specific segments of the community against a desire to meet the informational needs of the whole community.

*Marianne Barrett, Arizona State University:* One of the key challenges in being an MME scholar is how to prepare students to be responsible, ethical, and humane media managers with the primary constituents of broadcast and the company's shareholders. How does one square the interests of those constituents with the interests of the company's employees and the public? Are those interests mutually exclusive or can one simultaneously maximize profits and operate the business in such a way that employees and the public are treated with respect? I introduce those issues with case studies, and the students then recommend a course of action. The focus of this course is personnel management, including various approaches to management, motivation, discipline, EEO/AA, Sexual Harassment, and other issues related to diversity.

# **Congratulations to all MME midwinter conference presenters!**

**Carlos Ruiz, Doug Mendenhall, Allison Morgan, Melinda Arrington,  
James E. Hearn, Andrew Butler, and Noreen Ahmed,  
all from Middle Tennessee State University**

**Glenn Scott, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**

**Ardyth Sohn, University of Colorado at Boulder**

# Deadline for Picard and Sherman Awards is April 15

by Louisa Ha, Named Awards Committee Chair

Two prestigious awards will be considered for the national AEJMC convention in Kansas City if you meet the April 15 deadline for nomination.

The Robert Picard Award is a MME Division award to honor the author(s) of a book or a monograph published in the past year with significant contribution to the field on media management or economics. The award will be judged by the current Named Awards Committee of the division and will be presented at the MME division business meeting in Kansas City.

Past recipients of the award include Benjamin Compaine and Douglas Gomery's "Who Owns the Media" (2001) and David Croteau and William Hoynes' "The Business of Media: Corporate Media and the Public Interest" (2002).

AEJMC members are welcome to nominate books or monographs worthy of consideration for the award. Self-nominations are acceptable. The current Named Awards Committee members are not eligible for the award. The Committee members will also select books to be considered for the award and reserves the right not to grant any award if no publication last year is deemed making a significant contribution to the field.

The Barry Sherman Teaching Award recognizes excellence and innovation in the teaching of media management and economics.

The award honors the memory of Barry Sherman, who at the time of his death in May 2000 was Lambdin Kay Professor in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. Sherman was director of the prestigious Peabody Awards from 1991-2000. He was author of "Telecommunications Management: Broadcasting/Cable and The New Technologies," and was co-author, with Joseph Dominick, of three editions of "Broadcasting/Cable and Beyond: An Introduction to Modern Electronic Media." During his 19 years at Georgia, the university honored Sherman twice for teaching excellence. In 1995, the International Radio and Television Society Foundation named him a Stanton Fellow for his "outstanding contribution to electronic media education."

Past recipients of the Barry Sherman Award are Richard Gershon of Western Michigan University and Sylvia Chan-Olmsted of the University of Florida.

## **Guidelines for the Sherman Teaching Award**

Eligibility for the award: Any member of the MME Division, except the current chairs of the Teaching

Standards Committee and Named Awards Committee, and the previous year's winner. A division member may not nominate himself or herself. The nominator only needs to provide the name, affiliation and contact addresses of the nominee with a supporting letter.

Once the nomination deadline has passed, the Named Award Committee chair will contact each nominee and ask if he or she would like to be considered for the award. To be considered, nominees must submit four copies of the following:

- Syllabi from one or two courses (graduate or undergraduate) devoted primarily to media management or economics.
- Up to three examples of supporting instructional materials in media management or economics. The supporting materials should demonstrate evidence of teaching excellence or innovation.

Judging: Once nominations have closed, there will be three judges from three different colleges or universities to review materials from nominees, consisting of the current Teaching Standards chair, the current Named Awards Committee chair, and a senior faculty member at a university not affiliated with any of the nominees. Each judge will independently review materials from all nominees and send the Named Awards Committee chair his or her top three choices for the award. The winner will be the nominee with the highest aggregate ranking from the three judges.

The award will be presented at the MME division business meeting in Kansas City.

If you would like to nominate a book and its author(s) for consideration for the Robert Picard Award, send your nomination with full citation (title, author, publisher, and year of publication of the book) and a short statement on the book's contribution to the field of media management and economics to Louisa Ha, the Named Awards Committee Chair, by e-mail at [louisah@bgsu.edu](mailto:louisah@bgsu.edu) or postal mail at 108 West Hall, Department of Telecommunications, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403.

If you would like to nominate an outstanding teacher for the Barry Sherman Award, please send all nominations and supporting materials to Louisa Ha at the above address.

The division reserves the right not to give out any award if none of the nominees met the awards' standards.