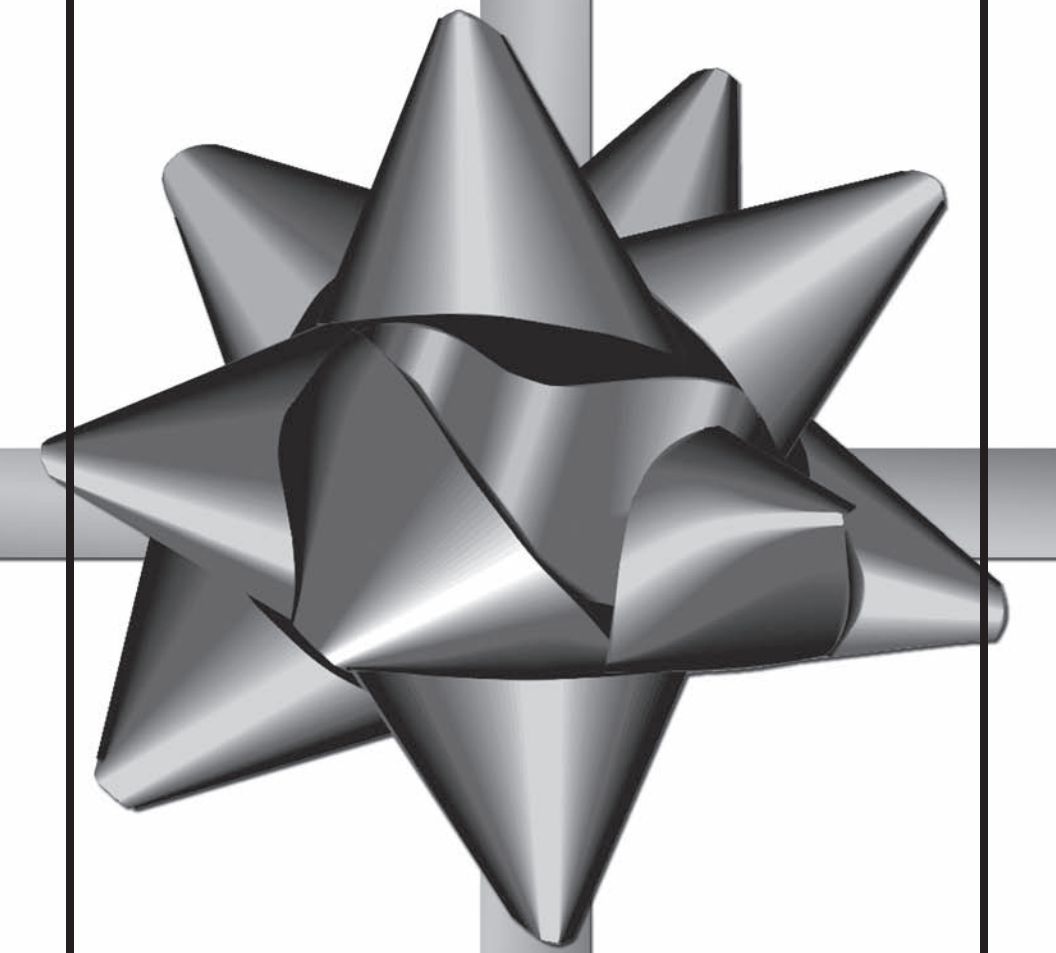
Community College
# The Journalist

*Summer 2008 Special Issue*

*The Official Publication of The Community College Journalism Association*



# GIFT 2008

**Great Ideas For Teachers program now in its ninth year!**

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**Summer 2008**
**Vol. 36 No. 2**



*The Community College Journalist* is published quarterly by the Community College Journalism Association, a non-profit organization (Federal ID #954433853).

Membership is open to any journalism and mass communication educator or professional interested in teaching and advising student media at the collegiate level. Annual dues are $40.

Article queries, reprint permissions, advertising and other publication matters should be directed to Dr. Edna R. Bautista, CCJA news editor, at *ebautist@chaminade.edu* or *aejmcgift@yahoo.com.*

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Hard copies of this publication, if issues are available, may be purchased pre-paid at $10 each for delivery within the United States or $15 each for international delivery. Please add $5 for postage and handling.

Excerpts from the current publication may also be featured on the CCJA Web site at *www.ccjaonline.org* or on the auxiliary CCJA News site at *http://ccjanews.bravehost.com/*.





*The Community College Journalist* is indexed and annotated by the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges in Current Index to Journals in Education. Back issues are on microfilm from University Microfilms International.

# "Transform" your teaching with GIFT

The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) is undergoing a "transformation" at this year's summer convention in Chicago, Ill. Following this theme, the ninth annual Great Ideas For Teachers (GIFT) program encourages journalism and mass communication educators to transform their teaching with innovative pedagogy.

The GIFT program was established in 2000 to provide colleagues with fresh ideas for creating or updating their lessons—just in time for the new academic year. The competition culminates in an interactive mega-poster session at the annual AEJMC summer convention. Its main sponsors are the Community College Journalism Association and the Small Programs Interest Group. This year's co-sponsors are the Scholastic Journalism and International Communication divisions.

Sixty-three GIFT articles were submitted by AEJMC's uniform deadline on April 1 from journalism and mass communication professors teaching at community colleges, small programs and large research universities. Only 25 (40% acceptance rate) GIFTs were selected to be featured at the convention and published in this special edition of *The Community College Journalist*.

Log on to the official GIFT Web site at *www.geocities.com/aejmcgift* for winners' and scholars' GIFTs, photos and more information about the program throughout the past nine years.

We sometimes view teaching as a "load" but good teaching is truly a gift. May these GIFT articles inspire and challenge you to transform your teaching techniques. Thank you for your continued support of this worthwhile, practical pedagogical program!

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# Hit or Miss: Tracking Media Releases from Conception to Publication

## *How to use an oral poster board presentation assignment to teach public relations students the value of possessing good news judgment and illustrate how journalists turn media releases into news articles*

By Lori Baker-Schena
California State-Northridge

*Lori Baker-Schena, M.B.A., is an assistant professor in the Department of Journalism at California State University-Northridge. She teaches introduction to public relations, public relations writing and editing and advanced public relations techniques. She has also run her own health care public relations firm for more than 20 years.*

**Introduction**

Without a doubt, a significant number of articles in newspapers both large and small are generated by media releases. This is due to the fact that successful public relations professionals have become expert in identifying the news value of a client's product or service, and then creating a media release that closely resembles a news article, complete with traditional journalistic inverted pyramid style writing and quotes from key executives. This assignment gives students the opportunity to identify firsthand which articles in the newspaper were generated by a media release and better understand the news angle that prompted the reporter to write the article. I have also created a rubric that facilitates the grading process.

**Rationale**

Freshman and sophomore students often question why the public relations emphasis is placed in a journalism department. They also have a difficult time understanding how media releases are actually used by journalists to generate stories. This assignment helps provide the rationale for a journalism-based public relations program, and gives students a vivid example of how journalists use news releases to generate story ideas. The assignment involves hands-on research, creation of a poster board, delivery of an oral presentation and the opportunity to respond to a series of questions that help critically analyze the public relations process.

**Implementation**

At the beginning of the semester, students receive the written "Hit or Miss" assignment, which includes the following directions:

- Read the local major metropolitan newspaper throughout the week prior to

your assigned presentation date.

• Locate a news story (not sports, business or entertainment) potentially placed by a public relations professional.

• Conduct research that includes identifying the client who placed the story and locating the news release generated by the client.

• Clip out the story and print out the news release. Paste or tape both of these items to a poster board in a professional and graphically creative manner.

• In the article and the news release, use a color highlighter pen to identify which parts of the article were taken directly from the news release, including quotes.

• Deliver a 10-minute oral report that answers the following questions:
-*Where* was the clip located?
-*Who* placed the article?
-*Why* did the article get published (which "news" angle was used)?
-*What* was accomplished by the placement (which strategic public relations goals were fulfilled and did the client benefit (for example, was awareness raised about the client)?
-*How* did the client benefit?
-Did the placement reach the ideal target audience?
-Is this clip a "hit" or a "miss" in terms of an overall strategic public relations plan and why?

Two to four students are assigned each week to deliver an individual presentation to the class. Students may earn extra credit by actually contacting the public relations professional who generated the media release and/or the reporter who wrote the news article. The students are encouraged to share any additional information they gather from these sources.

**Impact**

This interactive assignment requires that students read a daily newspaper, conduct an Internet search to discover the exact media release which generated the article, create a poster board presentation, deliver an analytical presentation to the class, critically determine why the article was printed (an exercise in understanding news value) and evaluate whether the exposure was successful for the client.

# Question Yourself

## *How to engage students in a conversation about ethical values*

By Paola Banchero
Alaska-Anchorage

*Paola Banchero, M.S.J., M.B.A, is an assistant professor at the University of Alaska-Anchorage. She teaches reporting and writing news, editing, magazine writing and design and media ethics in the Department of Journalism and Public Communications, and she advises the campus newspaper,* The Northern Light. *She has 15 years of experience in journalism.*

**Introduction**

Before students tease out how they would navigate through an ethical dilemma in the media industry, they must first uncover the hidden beliefs upon which their own opinions may be based. As they identify and sort the underlying issues by category, they come to recognize the inevitable conflicts among their own values and how their personal values conflict with professional values. As they discuss with a partner, they may discover how others define the same issues quite differently. At the end of the exercise, they are invited to change their minds.

**Rationale**

A problem students in a media ethics class face is that they are unfamiliar with the processes of journalism, advertising and public relations. This is partly because the ethics class is part of the core curriculum, and is taken before students do much work at the campus media or in internships. Students typically have passed the introductory reporting class, but larger challenges of dealing with a demanding editor, a powerful source and a quest for information are understood superficially. This exercise asks students to think about their own opinions on a range of issues (not all of them centered on journalism and mass communications) and then defend those opinions to a classmate based on their moral values.

**Implementation**

- Give students a questionnaire with 20 to 25 yes-or-no questions; some or all of them should be about the media. For example, my most recent questionnaire asked students, "Should reporters be required to reveal their sources of information when government or law enforcement agencies believe it is in the public interest for them to do so?" It also asked, "Should slower vehicles move out of the left lane when faster traffic is approaching?"

- Give them 10 minutes to answer the questions and evaluate how strongly they feel about the issue, with 1 being strongly agree, 2 being fairly sure, 3 being less sure

and 4 being ambivalent.

• Have students work alone to develop four to six categories among which the questions could be sorted. Then have them place each of the questions in one category.

• Instruct students to find another student who answered directly the opposite on one or more of the questions. Students then discuss why they feel differently and try to understand (if not necessarily agree with) the other's viewpoint.

• Allow students to change their answers and then ask them to explain why. How did their partner's answers or categories influence them?

• Invite students to discuss what questions they found most difficult to answer or to settle satisfactorily how strongly they felt about it.

**Impact**

This exercise pushes students to distinguish between values they may hold dear, such as loyalty, and more universal concepts, such as responsibility.

Students are introduced to key ethical dilemmas we discuss during the semester. Often, they find they already have a stance about an issue, even though they've never confronted it professionally or haven't been introduced to some of the valid journalistic reasons why professionals would do something different.

Students start to see where their personal values stop and professional values begin, and to see that in some cases, ethical dilemmas are not easily reconciled, even among people who aspire to be journalists (or public relations practitioners, or advertising account representatives…) As one student said in response to a question about interviewing the families of soldiers killed in combat: "I don't want to be that kind of journalist who invades people's privacy when they are most in pain." Others piped in about how telling these stories are vital to understand the world.

Another student said this exercise was the most broadening of the semester: "The day when we did the partner activity in class, where we had to question ourselves on bias and stereotypes, made me reconsider my initial reaction."

I've found this is a helpful exercise to elicit diverse views and voices early in the semester in a class that demands discussion. Students learn to develop effective arguments and specific situations that benefit from deliberation.

Long term, students gain comfort dealing in rhetorical arguments—precisely the place where citizens with divergent values formulate policies.

# Headline Hunter

## *How to get copy editing students to use social networking to critique headlines*

By Dr. Susan Brockus
California State-Chico

*Susan Brockus, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at California State University—Chico. She teaches writing for mass media, public affairs reporting, news editing and copy reading and new media courses in the Department of Journalism. Prior to academia, she worked for 12 years as a reporter, editor and publisher at newspapers in Montana, Nevada and Indiana.*

**Introduction**

I try to ensure that my journalism students engage with some form of new media in every course I teach. For this assignment, students are asked to join and contribute to a class blog on headlines. It's a one-class assignment that requires them to search for good and bad headlines on the Web and to use course content to guide their critique of them. The students also are required to comment on other students' headline choices and, again, to support their opinions by citing course readings and class discussion.

**Rationale**

Blogs should be of significant interest to journalism students, yet many don't have a working understanding of how easy it is to set up a blog, contribute postings and offer constructive, fact-supported comments. Headline writing is a critical skill for copy editors, one made even more important by the short-attention span nature of the Web. This assignment combines elements of blogging, social networking and headline practice in a fun, practical way. It also encourages copy editing instructors to learn new media programs and integrate them into course content.

**Implementation**

• Using Blogger (*www.blogger.com*), instructor creates an account, then creates a new blog.
-Under "Permissions," enter e-mail addresses for all students under "Authors." On the same page, under "Blog Readers," click on the button that says "Only blog authors," which means that only the students participating view the blog (telling them this also opens the door to a brief discussion of the value of setting social networking pages to "private").
-Students are told to be expecting an e-mail inviting them to join the blog.

• For the assignment, students must find:

1. Two exceptionally good headlines, and
2. Two exceptionally bad headlines using *four separate newspaper* Web sites.

• Students then must make four individual postings on the course blog that include:
1. The headline (under "Posting," "Title")
2. A brief explanation of why it is good or bad, using criteria for headlines discussed in class and in their readings.
3. A live hyperlink to the story on which the headline appeared, which allows students to assess whether or not the headline accurately reflected the story's tone.

• Finally, students must read the postings of other students and comment upon two, explaining why they disagree with the conclusion on the headline.

Instructor Notes

• This is conducted as an out-of-class assignment, which means that a computer lab is not necessary. Students are told that all entries must be made during class time. This allows the instructor to monitor the blog in real time and grade as students post.

• It is helpful, however, to have students make an initial test blog entry (for a few points) in advance to be sure everyone has successfully accessed the blog.

• Because it is possible to alter the time and date on blog entries, it is the students' responsibility to be sure that their entries and comments are posted and show up by the end of class. It also is helpful for the instructor to include a welcoming message for the students and to post a headline entry and a few comments for students to model.

• Each blog post is worth 20 points (5 points for headline choice and 15 points for explanation). Each comment is worth 10 points. Points are deducted for spelling, grammar and AP errors, as well as for failing to follow the assignment (using CNN or posting four headlines from the same newspaper site, for example.)

**Impact**

Most students are surprised to have a blogging assignment in a copy editing class. In several semesters of doing this assignment, I've found that very few students know how to set up a blog or make a blog entry.

Not only do they hone their headline skills, but their attention is also drawn to the importance of headlines on the Web and many learn a new Web skill. Doing this assignment once each semester also makes me revisit Blogger and refresh my own skills with the site.

Perhaps most importantly, this assignment allows the instructor to address a variety of issues relating to journalism trends and copy editing skills. The students, most of whom regularly use social networking, seem to enjoy the novelty of the assignment. Several have commented that knowing that other students would be participating and reviewing their work made them engage with the material sooner and remember the lessons better.

# Covering a Diverse Audience

## *How to train reporters to think about different communities*

By Dr. Johanna Cleary
Florida

*Johanna Cleary, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the University of Florida. She teaches investigative and arts reporting, media theory and ethics in the College of Journalism and Communications' Telecommunication Department. Cleary was a news director, reporter and producer at Alabama Public Television and various radio stations and newspapers for 25 years.*

**Introduction**

This exercise asks reporting students in a course on arts journalism to interact in class with poet Ben Bloom and write a feature story on the artist. During the class, Bloom, who has cerebral palsy, conducts a poetry reading, then participates in a press conference with the students about his work and life. After approximately 45 minutes of interaction with Bloom, the students have one hour to write a feature story.

During the same three-hour class, and while the students are engaged in a conversation about defining and reaching diverse audiences, Bloom reads the stories. He then returns to the class and provides feedback to the student journalists through a follow-up discussion. Among the topics he discusses with them is his perception of how they handled his disability in their stories.

This exercise encourages students to increase their comfort level with dealing with people who are "different." Students are prepared prior to the class by reading articles and tips on covering people who are disabled, by discussions examining our comfort levels with issues surrounding disabilities and by conversations about the role of journalism in our society. We also talk about reasons for developing an inclusive definition of "the audience" and discuss practical strategies.

**Rationale**

As journalism educators, we talk about covering a broad variety of people and stories, but do we really train our students to do that? Journalists may shy away from covering people who are different because we don't know about them, perhaps don't understand their concerns or fear we will "say something wrong." However, this in-class exercise requires students to examine those fears and figure out how to overcome them.

In some ways, this is a simple idea: inviting a guest speaker to class and asking the students to write a story. Based on two semesters of conducting this exercise, however, I believe that it goes beyond that. First, it allows the students to think about and discuss their concerns about covering people who are different. It seems to push them to consider the definition of who the audience is and could be, and it offers them a chance to get feedback on how they

did in writing their stories and capturing the essence of the subject. To a person, the students in both my classes have told me afterwards how much they enjoyed the experience and how much they got out of it.

This exercise requires a guest speaker who is willing to share honestly with the students and who can provide a fair critique of their work. In that way, I am very lucky to have teamed up with Ben Bloom. However, there are many advocacy groups for minority communities that have speakers who are qualified and willing to provide this kind of service. There are also excellent guides and tip sheets available for journalists to help in covering various minority communities sensitively and fairly. These resources can easily be built into this assignment.

**Implementation**

- Poet Ben Bloom conducts a poetry reading and press conference with reporting class.

- Students write a 500-word feature story on Bloom in one hour.

- Bloom reads the stories during the time while the students discuss what constituencies are overlooked by the media and develop strategies for addressing them.

- Bloom leads a discussion with the students, critiquing their pieces and answering follow-up questions about his life as a person with a disability.

**Impact**

My students continue to talk about how interesting and inspiring this assignment was to them. Several told me that prior to their interaction with Ben Bloom, they were nervous about it, especially about having their stories critiqued in public. However, by the end of the day, they were enthusiastic and generating their own ideas for stories they could and should be doing. In an article published in the College's alumni magazine, one student remembered that a classmate described Bloom as "suffering from" cerebral palsy. "[Bloom] said, 'I don't suffer from anything. I don't suffer at all,'" said student Meredith Cochie. "He was really passionate about it and it made you so much more aware of the exact wording you're using when you're talking about people with disabilities."

I have been very pleased with the outcome of this assignment. It's rare that students continue to bring up a class experience more than a year later, but that has been the case with this. They have told me that they really believe that this assignment taught them some important lessons about how to do their jobs as reporters and future news managers.

# The Village People

## *How to use a role-playing simulation to teach public affairs reporting and freedom of information*

By Dr. David Cuillier
Arizona

*David Cuillier, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of journalism at the University of Arizona and chairman of the Society of Professional Journalists' Freedom of Information Committee. He teaches news reporting, public affairs reporting, computer-assisted reporting and access to public records. His research focuses on access to government information, and prior to academia he worked for a dozen years as a newspaper reporter and editor.*

**Introduction**

This course-long simulation brings to life the ideals of public affairs, freedom of information and the watchdog press. Students play the role of villagers, led by a council that operates in secrecy. Villagers face two competing goals for the term: 1) Work together as a well-functioning society to amass communal wealth; and 2) Retire with enough personal savings to enjoy the golden years. Students must balance individual and community needs, all within a world of secrecy.

**Rationale**

This exercise, combined with lectures and readings, resonates with a variety of learning styles, particularly hands-on kinesthetic learners who comprise about half the population. Research shows that role-playing simulations enhance learning by connecting emotion to teaching points. Students remember feeling betrayed by a secret council, angered by village corruption and elated by overcoming obstacles.

**Implementation**

- Preparation

This exercise works with a class of 10-25 students, or a larger class divided into teams. Gather 20 felt drawstring bags (6 cents each online), tags to label students' bags, beads from a crafts store, a $4 small wooden chest (drill bead-sized hole in top) and a kitchen timer.

- Congregation at Dawn

At the beginning of the term, elect or randomly select five council leaders (chieftain, war general, peacekeeper, elder, and shaman). The other students randomly draw citizen roles (artisan, hunter, gatherer, etc.). Give each person a small drawstring bag and write their names on the attached tags.

- Village Objectives

The village goal is to amass enough beads in the communal chest by the end

of the term to represent a functioning economically successful society, earning everyone extra credit and a pizza party. Also, villagers who collect a predetermined amount of personal beads in their bags can earn additional extra credit, and the person with the most beads wins a gift card. So there's incentive for the class to succeed as a whole, but also for individuals to hoard personal wealth, illustrating the conflict between individual and communal needs.

- Income and Taxes

Set aside 10 minutes (using the kitchen timer) at each class to conduct "village business." Hand out the bead bags and give each villager two beads for income. Each student deposits one of those beads in his or her own bag and then secretly pays one bead in tax at the back of the room, dropping it in the communal chest–or secretly slipping it in his or her bag (cheating the system). Villagers also can earn beads by doing well on quizzes. Set the communal goal to allow for some personal hoarding, and individual bead goals to require doing well on quizzes and attending class. Retrieve the bags at the end of class.

- Event Slips

Tie the exercise to course objectives through event slips. Each class the instructor hands the council a dilemma related to a public affairs issue to decide in secret. The paradox hurts or helps the village treasury at the expense or benefit of individual villagers. Someone's ox gets gored. Also provide an event slip to a villager to choose between personal wealth and communal wealth, also in secret.

- Mid-semester Elections

At mid-terms hold elections to allow the village to oust its leaders and pick a new form of government (democracy, perhaps?). As with other parts of the simulation, instructors can integrate as much or as little detail as they like.

- Judgment Day

In the term's last week, count the treasury beads to see if the village amassed enough wealth, tally the beads in each individual bag to determine who achieved the required personal wealth and determine who collected the most beads.

**Impact**

Students really get into this simulation, treating it as a "Survivor" competition. They meet outside of class to discuss strategies and alliances. Students learn the importance of government transparency after experiencing secrecy and not knowing if others are cheating the system. They also learn the importance of the media's role in informing citizens about public affairs. Here are some anonymous student comments:

- "I love the village people. It gives incentive to learn more about how government functions and it's hands-on."

- "It's motivating for quizzes and makes us accountable for coming to class."

- "It makes you realize the essence of government–the basics–which helps better understand the complicated parts."

- "It shows us how corrupt people can become when they get a bit of power, which is important to know when covering government."

# It's Jeopardy!

## *How students can give the answers (in the form of a question) for an exam review*

By Dr. Eileen Gilligan
SUNY-Oswego

*Eileen Gilligan, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the Journalism Program at SUNY Oswego, located on the shores of Lake Ontario in upstate New York. A former newspaper reporter, she directs the school's Center for Community Journalism and teaches Copy Editing, Investigative Reporting, Opinion and Analytical Writing, among other courses. When her kids allow, she tests her skills for "Jeopardy!" from the sidelines of the living room couch.*

**Introduction**

This format for an in-class "Jeopardy!" game requires students to study before the review class and during the review class, and ideally gives them more information to use in studying for an exam. It also makes reviewing for an exam fun rather than drudgery or dreaded regurgitation (by the instructor). This format is described for a copy editing course, but could be applied to any course with multiple areas of study.

**Rationale**

Students report having a difficult time determining which topics and information to study before an exam. Going beyond a review sheet, this fun, interactive review format helps students put information in meaningful categories that they will use throughout their careers in mass communication. It also requires them to think of how the information will be sought—through question phrasing—during an exam. The process of asking and answering questions before the exam should help improve retention of material and successful test-taking.

**Implementation**

- For an exam review day, ask students to e-mail ahead (or bring to class) three questions and the answers pertaining to material covered for the upcoming exam. With a class of 15-20 students, that should total 45-60 questions, although some may be duplicates. The instructor should prepare a list of questions as well from which to fill in or cover any topics not addressed by students' questions. Diverging from true television "Jeopardy!" style, questions are asked and student contestants must give answers.

- On the review day, the instructor sorts the questions by topic into six to eight categories, such as Grammar, AP Style, Dozen Deadly Errors; Survey/Polling Info;

Headlines; and Libel. The instructor also orders the questions by difficulty with the easiest questions first.

• The instructor lists the topics on the board and writes 100, 200, 300, 400 and 500 in a column beneath each topic heading. I usually don't tell students in advance that they're going to play "Jeopardy!" I just tell them to prepare the questions for a review. Then when the numbers start going up on the board, the "oohs" and "ahhs" begin as they realize they're going to play a game they all know—and never associated with copy editing.

• Divide the class into two teams. One student is assigned to keep score for each team. A coin toss determines which team will go first. One student from the team must select a number in a category and then tackle the corresponding question on his or her own for full points. After 30 seconds or a wrong answer, a teammate may respond; if correct, the team would receive half the points. If the individual and the team do not answer the question correctly, the other team has one chance to give the correct answer for full points. When a student answers correctly, the instructor tosses a small candy to that student as a joke prize.

• If no one answers the question, the instructor then provides the answer. The instructor may contribute additional information to any answer at any point.

• When every category is completed, scores are tallied and one team declared the winner.

• The exam is given in the next class session with more candy—but no games.

**Impact**

Students enjoy this exercise! They pay close attention to each question and answer because of the incentive to get more points for their team and to see whose questions were selected by the instructor for the game. They also enjoy watching their classmates try to catch the candy thrown by the instructor after each correct answer. As instructor, I enjoy the change in format, too, and I look forward to the teachable moments as students debate answers and when I provide additional explanation to answers.

# Ethics Lesson Plan

## *How to teach journalism ethics using Megan's Law on campus*

By Dr. Tamara Gillis
Elizabethtown

*Tamara L. Gillis, Ed.D., is an associate professor and acting chairman of the Department of Communications at Elizabethtown College. She teaches journalism, public relations, organizational communication and capstone research courses. She is also a communication consultant with a firm in Falls Church, Va., where she specializes in strategic communication and change management.*

**Introduction**

Simulations/roleplay approximate the realities of professional communications challenges and provide a tool for creating common ground, explaining complex issues, examining the connection between concepts and creating group cohesion that are necessary for successful completion of professional projects.

**Rationale**

This simulation is for an entry-level journalism class. It challenges student journalists to make an ethical judgment regarding whether or how they should report about campus community members identified by Megan's Law as child sex offenders.

The details of the scenario are modified from a 1996 case. The situation is set on our college campus in real time. The students play the roles of the editorial board of the newspaper and beat reporters. Instructor is the narrator and provides details as they become available or are requested. The scenario unfolds in one 75-minute class meeting after the students have studied the SPJ code of ethical conduct, the Potter Box[1], the college's code of integrity and a unit on legal issues.

**Implementation**

On the white board: a diagram of the Potter Box; the students use it in their discussion of ethical options and outcomes. Text of Megan's Law is also available online for all to see.

- Instructor: "You are the editorial board and reporters for the student newspaper."

Students: They quickly determine their roles: managing editor, section editors and reporters.

- Instructor: "One of your reporters was browsing the Web and obtained a list of child sex offenders registered under the provisions of the state's Megan's Law...a local list, which is public information."

Students: A student volunteers for this role.

• Instructor: "You start checking the names and find that two convicted child sex offenders are living in the residence halls here on campus."

Students: The most common questions and a summary of my responses to them follow:

*Does the school have a policy about Megan's Law or about admitting/housing students who have a criminal record?*

"They don't have a policy about this." A common student decision thread includes: "These two individuals are probably least harmful living on campus with adults than they would be living in the community near kids."

*Does the school administration know that these two individuals are on campus?*

"This comes as news to the administration. You have learned from a student who works in the admin building that the administration is scrambling to address this situation, and that the students have been advised to move off campus immediately."

Someone usually counters with: "That doesn't seem fair, since they have already paid their sentence and registered like the law requires. The students might be able to sue the school for putting them out of the halls." Or "Hey, if it was a guy who had sex with his underage girlfriend, that's officially statutory rape, but not the same as someone raping a kid."

*Since Megan's Law covers a lot of territory from kidnapping to rape, do we know what crimes these people committed?*

"You learn that one of the cases occurred about six months ago and the other was four years ago. Both have served their sentences.

• Instructor: "Mr./Ms. Editor, the two students in question have now called you to beg that you do not run a story about them."

Students: At this point the students have collected enough information to move from the "Empirical Definition" phase of the Potter Box to "Identifying Values, "Appealing to Ethical Principles" and "Choosing Loyalties." These three phases happen in rapid succession, intertwined in a lively discussion.

Student discussion includes issues of the public's right to know, damage to the two students' reputations and types of approaches reporter and editors might take writing the story. Additional information queries are raised and students use the newsroom computers to track down facts and statistics. Additional questions arise: what do we gain from exposing them? And, maybe the real story is that the college doesn't have a policy about this.

A passionate discussion ensues.

• Instructor: As class time draws to a close, I ask them what type of story (if any) will be generated by this information and how are they going to justify (using the ethical code) the information they print.

Students: Story suggestions have included:

-Run the story with the names.

-Run the story without the names. Give the reader information about how to find information about Megan's Law.

-Run no story at all.

-Sidebar stories include: Megan's Law, the college's policy on criminal background checks, a board editorial regarding their decision to run or not run the names of the students.

**Impact/Outcomes**

- Students write a brief reflection paper.
- Students have a greater sense of moral reasoning and decision making after this activity. Evidence of this can be found in their news writing assignments, newspaper critiques and the way they develop future news stories.

**Note/Source**

[1]The original version is described in Ralph B. Potter, "The Structure of Certain American Christian Responses to the Nuclear Dilemma, 1958-63" (Ph.D. Diss., Harvard University, 1965). Potter assumed this framework in Ralph B. Potter, "The Logic of Moral Argument," in Toward a Discipline of Social Ethics, ed. Paul Deats (Boston: Boston University Press, 1972).

# Around the BRIC World in 80 Seconds

## *How to use social networking Web sites to globally connect U.S. advertising students with the BRIC countries' students*

By Dr. Karie Hollerbach
Southeast Missouri State

*Karie Hollerbach, Ph.D, is an associate professor at Southeast Missouri State University where she teaches advertising social issues, advertising media, advertising creative strategy and communication theory and research. She has taught at the university level for 13 years and currently serves as the advertising option coordinator for the Department of Communication.*

**Introduction**

Students in the Advertising Social Issues and Responsibilities course complete a team-based, researched, multimedia presentation known as a "power briefing" on one of the four BRIC countries: Brazil, Russia, India or China. The assignment's objective is to foster a better understanding of each country in terms of demographic, cultural and advertising/business trends so that as advertising practitioners we could make more informed decisions about how to best communicate with consumers in that country.

A key component of this assignment is that each team must generate researched profiles of people from their assigned BRIC country through the use of online interviews conducted using one of the social networking Web sites such as My Space or Facebook. Students are encouraged (and rewarded via points on the assignment) to develop and ask many different types of questions related to the objective of the assignment.

**Rationale**

Students are able to literally "put a face" on the consumers from their assigned BRIC country through the two-way, connected communication that is possible via the social networking platform. The use of these Web sites is already an inherent part of nearly all college students' lives. This teaching idea takes a social skill that feels very natural to most students and marries it with research and global connectivity.

**Implementation**

- Students conduct secondary research on their assigned BRIC country in the mandatory areas of demographic, cultural and advertising/business trends and then expand their research base to include any other information that they deem relevant to increasing our understanding as ad practitioners about their country and its consumers.

- Students then develop a list of

questions to ask in their primary research interviews.

- Students now do research in order to preliminarily identify some common last names of people from their assigned country.

- These last names are then used to begin searching for possible people to interview at one of the social networking Web sites. Profile pages of members at the Web sites are also searched using the assigned BRIC country term and checked for accuracy.

- Potential interview candidates are then contacted using the social networking site and are screened to make sure that they are actually from that country.

- The global dialogue then begins with the U.S. ad students asking their first round of research questions. Often their BRIC country counterparts have questions that they would like answered about the U.S. as well!

- Both the primary and secondary information is used in the multimedia presentation on the assigned BRIC country.

**Impact**

The use of the online interviews with people from their assigned BRIC country really gets students' creative juices flowing regarding the entire project. The online dialogue encourages students to frame their entire BRIC country presentation with "out of the box" type thinking. Students often ask their online interview subjects for advertising examples from their country to share with the class, photos that can be used on the interview subjects' Q&A slides in the multimedia presentation and general commentary about mass media in the interview subjects' country.

This is a project that I really look forward to. It provides for the students a "hands-on" method of experiencing globalization and its current effects on advertising.

# Teaching Multimedia on the Cheap

## *How to teach convergence journalism using inexpensive digital still cameras to tell stories with audio and video for the Web*

By Brian K. Johnson
Illinois-Urbana-Champaign

*Brian K. Johnson, M.S., associate professor, teaches photojournalism and multimedia at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and worked for seven years as a staff photographer at a daily newspaper. He has won national, regional and state awards for his photojournalism, teaching, multimedia projects, videos, books and creative projects. He earned a B.S. in journalism from the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire and a master's degree in journalism from the University of Illinois.*

**Introduction**

To compete in this converged news environment, traditional publications need to tell multimedia stories. How are universities to teach all their students these new storytelling methods without breaking the budget? Use cameras students might already own to teach the basics of video and audio storytelling.

Recent advances in Internet bandwidth available to subscribers and dropping prices of video equipment have made video storytelling required of every journalist. More than just the photojournalists need to be trained in audio and video storytelling and technology.

The solution presented here is both novel and accessible—use simple, modern and inexpensive digital still cameras to teach students how to produce video and audio stories. Most modern cameras include a "movie" feature. These video modes in the new breed of camera is capable of full-sized video and acceptable audio plus superior still pictures. By combining this equipment with the basics of video storytelling we can train a whole generation of journalists in the multimedia storytelling.

**Rationale**

Schools across the nation are struggling with the need to teach multimedia in journalism education. Two major hurdles exist: 1) how to fund expensive technology and 2) student anxiety about new equipment and new storytelling methods. This novel approach uses technology the student or university probably already owns in a form factor that is familiar and non-intimidating. The ability to produce video and audio stories with this equipment helps journalism students tell multimedia stories. Special considerations are needed to squeeze the best quality from inexpensive equipment.

There is no substitute for solid journalism education. But the technology can't be separated from the reporter's toolkit. With this project the students will be proficient producing video stories. This technique is simple and cost effective and can be taught as a unit within a required journalism course. For most

efficient classroom instruction it is highly recommended that the school purchase enough cameras of the same model for each student in class. But have no fear. If this is not possible buy what you can afford and count on the students who already own cameras to fill in the gaps. Students should be required to buy the memory card with the largest storage capacity they can afford, hopefully around 4GB (although even 1GB cards will be fine).

**Implementation**

• Purchase cameras for the class and familiarize yourself with the "movie mode" of the camera. It is a plus if the camera can zoom while in movie mode.

• Experiment with the camera in low light and in noisy environments. This will give you "problem" examples to show in class.

• Talk to a broadcast colleague, purchase a basic book on shooting videos and visit multiple news Web sites that contain video. Shooting an interview and "cut away" or "B-Roll" shots are the basic types of shooting to master. A topical profile makes for a good early assignment. Make the total interview story length one minute or less.

• Teach your students the special considerations of using an inexpensive digital still camera for video:
-Be sure that the subject is no more than four feet away for the interview. Choose a quiet room.
-Shoot near one source of light either on the front-right or front-left side. Windows without direct sun and lamps without shades make good light sources.
-Use "custom white balance."
-Use a tripod or other technique to steady the camera.
-Don't pan or zoom while shooting video.
-Sit near the camera but have subject look at you, not into the lens.
-Verify that enough storage space is available on card.

• After interview video:
-Shoot the subject in action "B-Roll" using techniques above.
-Shoot many different angles of this action.
-Shoot overall, medium and close-up compositions.
-If audio only, shoot video, use only audio portion.
-Keep the camera close to audio source.
-Show how to import video into editing program.

**Impact**

Students loved this project. Using the still cameras they already were using and comfortable with removed a mental hurdle from the process of learning multimedia reporting.

"I'm having so much fun" one student commented.

This methodology gave a huge boost to my morale because I didn't have to worry about a limited number of video cameras. The technology bar is lowered because the equipment is simple and not intimidating. Students were not afraid of the technology and therefore were able to concentrate on mastering new storytelling techniques.

# The Flexible Syllabus

## *How to use an innovative approach to teaching writing intensive courses*

By Dr. Michael Kent, Oklahoma
Dr. Maureen Taylor, Oklahoma
and Dr. Marcia Stratton, Alaska-Anchorage

*Michael L. Kent, Ph.D., is associate professor of public relations at the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Oklahoma. He studies mediated public relations and is interested in issues of technology and relationship building. Kent has taught courses in new technologies, management, public relations writing, design and writing.*

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*Marcia Stratton, Ph.D., studies rhetorical theory and criticism at the University of Alaska-Anchorage. She holds a bachelor's degree in business, master's in education and communication and a doctorate in communication. Her areas of interest are rhetoric, public address, culture, gender and communication.*

**Introduction**

The Flexible Syllabus is suitable for many courses including Fundamentals of Public Relations; Public Relations Writing, Cases or Campaigns; Introduction to Journalism; International Communication; or Advertising.

In this model, a percentage of the course points (typically 20–30 percent) is left open so that students select assignments based on their own individual needs/desires. The instructor provides students with a list of "possible additional assignments" from which they can choose. Each assignment reflects a certain percentage of points. For instance, a student may decide to complete two 10 percent assignments for the flexible part of the grade. Another student may select one 20 percent assignment that allows him/her to complete a larger, more involved project.

**Rationale**

The Flexible Syllabus reflects a core

set of exams and assignments that all students in the class complete. However, the instructor can provide variety in the types of assignments given to the students for the flexible portion of their course grade. The syllabus works much like the liberal arts curriculum where students are required to take a core of school-wide and departmental classes, but then take electives in areas of interest. The Flexible Syllabus exposes students to a greater variety of writing assignments than would normally be possible. More importantly, it allows students to tailor their writing projects to their professional interests. This is especially valuable when you have students with varying levels of writing ability in the same class.

**Implementation**

Assuming a public relations writing class:

- Assign the core assignments for the class. For example, an instructor might require two or three exams and three foundational writing assignments of everyone. These assignments and due dates are placed on the class schedule.

- The instructor then provides a list of potential assignments on the syllabus with a brief description of each to inform the students about their choices. For instance, the option of writing a speech might be listed with 1) a required word count (700 words); 2) suggested amount of points (15 percent); and 3) due date for all who select this option.

- It is important that the specific dates that assignments are due are also placed on the schedule either as "five percent assignment due…10 percent assignment due…" or "first individual assignment due… second individual assignment due…" etc. These dates become a part of the individual student's contract with the professor.

- During the second week of class, students complete a course contract from a cafeteria list of writing assignments. All dates, percentages and details are listed on this contract.

**Impact**

Students love to have the freedom to select assignments that they feel fit their individual needs. Students learn the fundamental writing skills on the required assignments and then pursue their interests on the flexible assignments.

In public relations writing, some students may select a high percentage, multi-part writing assignment so that they can have one significant outcome (a Web site with four or five writing samples). Other students may select more assignments worth fewer points to reach their individual total.

In the new communication technology class, students can pick assignments ranging from writing/critiquing blogs, Web site design/critique, a research paper or content analysis.

In the international communication class, students can study news events from different international views, compare and contrast news coverage of different media outlets, compare product advertisements in different nations or analyze Web sites for international audiences.

Two of the authors allow the students to sign up for extra credit assignments as part of their contracts. Once contracted, these

assignments become "required." Students who sign up for extra credit actually wind up doing more assignments than their peers. The experiential learning research suggests enormous value in this type educational outcome.

The impact on instructor morale is also dramatic. Often in the introductory journalism and mass communication classes, the students complete the same assignments each semester. These required assignments are foundational to their development as media professionals. The Flexible Syllabus allows for a different course to be taught without additional preparation. It also allows the instructor to test out new assignments that may eventually become a part of the foundation of the course.

# Mapping the News

## *How to engage students in understanding the world view presented in U.S. newspapers*

By Dr. Karen E. Kline
Lock Haven

*Karen E. Kline, Ph.D., is a professor at Lock Haven University. She teaches broadcast journalism, advertising and public relations as well as media studies courses in the Communication Media Program. She also serves as chairperson of the Department of Communication.*

**Introduction**

While the world has grown interdependent, countries and their citizens often cling to parochial values, abetted by the practices of their major cultural institutions. This exercise challenges students to think about the world by examining the ways in which U.S. journalism depicts it. In small groups, students analyze issues of American newspapers to chart a "world news map" showing patterns of coverage across the geographic regions of the world. This assignment compels students to think about the selective representations of the world in American newspapers and the extent to which their own world views are limited.

I use this assignment in a course titled Media Literacy. However, it is applicable to any course in which students examine the news media. It is adaptable to analysis of various journalistic forms, including television newscasts and NPR broadcasts.

**Rationale**

With Web-based "news on demand" instantly accessible, many college students have become disengaged from traditional newspapers and shy away from journalism that doesn't serve their immediate needs and gratifications.

This assignment puts newspapers back into students' hands and encourages them to examine how the print media represent the world in digest form. By focusing on world news coverage, this activity takes students beyond their routine news habits and facilitates global awareness. The hands-on, collaborative nature of this exercise fosters peer interaction and teamwork, which enhance student learning.

**Implementation**

- Prior to the exercise, I locate a world map sized for mobility. Each group will receive several copies of the map, a supply of red and black markers and the written assignment.

- I visit the university library to organize the groups' tasks. U.S. newspapers can generally be divided into three categories: national (*USA Today, Wall Street Journal* or *Christian Science Monitor*), metropolitan and

local (non-metropolitan). Groups will be spread across these categories, so that at least two groups examine papers in each category. This allows comparative discussion within categories following the task. If the library subscribes to non-U.S. newspapers, these would add a useful fourth category for comparison.

• This library task requires one 50-minute class session, and I distribute the assignment and materials during the prior class period. Each group is assigned to one newspaper. The group is asked to examine two weeks' issues of the newspaper to analyze the world news (not the national or local news) that this newspaper published. Students should use the most recent issues available and two consecutive weeks of the publication.

• Students are told to locate each non-U.S. news story presented in the newspaper. For each story, mark the map once with a colored X to indicate the country or geographic region that the story is about. Use the red pen to indicate stories that are "hot," for example, problems, disasters and stories about violent acts. Use the black pen to mark the map for stories that are "cool," such as announcements about trade agreements or diplomatic visits. If they have difficulty plotting the particular stories on the map, they should use a world atlas to pinpoint the location.

• Groups must complete the "world news map" for their assigned newspaper and submit written responses to the following questions.
-What geographic patterns of world news coverage did you find in this newspaper? Which areas of the world were covered? Which areas were not?
-Compare the number of "red" and "black" stories. What patterns did you find? Provide several examples of each.
-What conclusions can you draw regarding this newspaper's depiction of the world?
-If these patterns are typical of this newspaper, how might they affect the world view of the newspaper's readers?

• During the following class session, groups report their findings and display their maps. Differences and similarities across the three categories of newspapers are noted.

• Discussion also explores the reasons for these tendencies in U.S. newspaper coverage of the world, including news organizations' operations, journalistic biases and dominant values in the larger society.

**Impact**

Students find this out-of-class activity a welcome departure from the routine. Committing a class session to the task allows all group members to be available. While students have an intuitive notion that U.S. newspapers emphasize domestic news, this assignment is an eye-opener, for it reveals the dearth of world coverage in U.S. journalism and leads to substantive discussion about ethnocentrism and world politics. Students also find significant the proportion of "red" and "black" stories. Some newspapers are likely to emphasize conflict ("red") stories, and this leads to critique of journalistic news values used to select stories for the paper.

# News Jetsetters

## *How to use an international assignment that takes students on a global coverage tour*

By Dr. Teresa Trumbly Lamsam and Jennifer Mullins
Nebraska-Omaha

*Teresa Trumbly Lamsam, Ph.D., associate professor, teaches print journalism and research methods courses in the School of Communication at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Her professional experience includes 10 years of reporting and editing at metropolitan and community newspapers.*

*Jennifer Mullins, M.A., adjunct instructor, teaches media writing and publication design courses at the School of Communication at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Her research interests are in military communication, visual rhetoric and media studies.*

**Introduction**

The International News Journal and Analysis with mix-and-match team and individual components could be viewed as a current events assignment on steroids. Designed to span a semester and end with a team presentation, the assignment can be broken down into component parts and used in various journalism classes for new majors as well as seniors. Through journaling and analytical reports, students go "behind the scenes" in U.S. newsrooms to evaluate news judgment and reporting practices. Through weekly readings of international stories across the world, students consider the "how" and "why" of decisions behind international coverage in U.S. newspapers and make comparisons to online English versions of international newspapers. Student teams are responsible for staying current on a region of the world and bringing insights back to the class. In class discussion, journals and reports, they look at the big picture of how news practices and stories affect our society. They also take a micro-level view of the newsroom and consider such questions as how a foreign desk editor's news judgment can shape how we view others around the world.

**Rationale**

In an era of globalization, understanding cultures and international issues has become increasingly important–even vital to national security. Yet, domestic and international media organizations lament the "end of times" for the foreign correspondent. U.S. newspapers sharply cut resources for international news as they go "hyperlocal" in their attempts to meet the economic challenges of a new media landscape. This assignment not only introduces students to news coverage of international topics but also encourages them to critically evaluate the current climate in American newsrooms and society. Students

come to understand the importance of international news coverage and creatively address the economic obstacles as they imagine strategies to reverse the downturn in international news coverage.

**Implementation**

The International News Journal and Analysis has many parts, each possible as a stand-alone assignment. However, here the implementation is explained for a semester or half-semester project that can be used in various print journalism classes. Plane ticket, professional suit and camera are references to visual elements on the GIFT poster presentation.

• Plane Ticket: Students are assigned readings about international news coverage to be used in class discussion. During the same class period, they can be divided into teams by world region (for example, Latin America or Africa). The team decides how each member will cover news from the region and what newspapers will be read– online and print editions.

• A Professional Suit: Teams are given a journaling assignment in which they are responsible for international news coverage over a 10-14 week period. However, they can divide the weeks up among group members. Students read at least three days a week for three to six weeks. Periodic journal checks can be used for a grade. Near the end of the journaling period, each member writes a two to three page analysis of international news coverage of their region.

• A Camera: Teams use the individual analyses as the basis for a team written report and class presentation. Students often use PowerPoint but many have gone beyond requirements and designed a newspaper to showcase their work or created other visual elements, such as posters.

• Add-ons/Variations:

-Approach your international program about merging class discussions. International students like to contribute to a discussion about how the U.S. media cover their countries and their teachers like them to practice speaking English.

-If Speaking Across the Curriculum is a campus initiative, take advantage of training opportunities to help students refine the final presentation.

-Showcase student presentations at an international fair or other campus activity.

**Impact**

The international news assignment transforms the classroom climate and encourages students to form a community of learners. By semester's end, students have learned so much about their regions of the world that they report "feeling as though we've been there." Any grumblings about the assignment are soon overwhelmed by their own insights and a desire to do something about the current state of international news coverage. Instructors can take a step back and watch as students begin to facilitate their own discussions. They understand the concept of teamwork and why the practice is here to stay in U.S. newsrooms. They go beyond current events knowledge and language mechanics. They hone critical thinking skills and learn the difficulties of newsroom management. And, finally, they can argue the importance of international news in the daily diet of the American media consumer.

# Campaign 2008: Cast Your Vote!

## *How to use public displays of student work to generate excitement for graded assignments while teaching how to create attractive and readable editorial page designs*

By Hyangsook Lee
Kent State

*Hyangsook Lee, M.Ed., teaches news design, magazine design and information graphics courses in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. Prior to academia, she worked for daily newspapers, including* The Louisville Courier-Journal, The Nashville Tennessean, *and* The New York Times.

**Introduction**

The role of editorial page design in the process of newspaper production is significant. To help my newspaper design students understand what works and what doesn't in communicating with readers through page design, I used a voting system that closely resembles general elections in democratic political systems.

**Rationale**

Students often produce better work when they know someone will see it other than the class instructor or peers. Used throughout the semester, this exercise provides students with a chance to experience the effectiveness and impact of their editorial design. The voting system helps students re-examine their design approach and to rethink how to improve the quality of their presentation.

**Implementation**

- Upon completion of an assignment, each student presents their work in class and receives feedback from fellow design students.

- All student work is then displayed in a high traffic public area inside the School of Journalism and Mass Communication building, along with ballots and a secured voting box. Voting is open to the public, other students, faculty and staff for a two-week period.

- Potential voters are encouraged to cast their ballots for their favorite design along with their comments.

- Amid fanfare similar to an election victory celebration, voting results will be announced and students discuss feedback they received.

- Voter comment will be implemented in the next design assignment.

**Impact**

- Students like this exercise because they get their classroom assignments displayed in public and receive valuable feedback from readers comprised of students, faculty members, staff, visitors, etc.

- This exercise helps students pay more attention to details such as misspelling of words and consistency in styles, since they know their work will be displayed in public.

- This exercise can be modified and used by any skills-based course in which graded assignments are given.

# The Great Blog Race

## *How to teach students about the twin imperatives of promotion and content on the Internet*

By Miles Maguire
Wisconsin-Oshkosh

*Miles Maguire, M.B.A, is an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. He teaches writing, reporting, editing, magazine production and online publishing. He has worked as a newspaper reporter, newsletter editor and magazine publisher.*

**Introduction**

In this assignment students are challenged to develop compelling content and match it with an appropriate promotional strategy for a Web log. They compete in teams to see who can draw the most visitors who spend the most time on a blog over a defined time frame. This experience exposes students to the dynamics of Web journalism without requiring them to learn specialized software or coding. Students make strategic decisions about their blog's topic, appearance, content, frequency, tone, interactivity and promotion (both virtual and physical); see the results in real time; and undertake midcourse corrections. This project can work in a variety of classes, from introductory writing to advertising strategy to online publishing.

**Rationale**

Many undergraduates know the Internet largely through social networking programs or simple content management systems that allow them to communicate with friends but don't teach them the central paradox of publishing on the Internet: Because it is so easy, it is really, really hard. Anyone can put up a Web site, but it takes a special talent to match content to audience and to find ways to get that audience to spend precious time on your site. Just because you think something is interesting doesn't mean that anyone else will. And just because you have a good idea doesn't mean that anyone will notice. While students spend a lot of time on the Internet, many of them are not interested in learning the specifics of Web design or feel intimidated by technology. This is a low-stress way to experience the Web and learn about the behavior of online audiences without having to know any programming.

**Implementation**

- Form students into teams and sign them up with accounts from a free blogging site.

- Challenge students to brainstorm key questions: Who will be their audience?

What content can they produce? How can they promote their site? What will bring the audience back for more?

- Students pick a name for their blog and customize its appearance.

- Students add some form of visitor tracking program, such as Site Meter, to show them how many visitors they are getting, how much time they are spending, where they are coming from and when they are coming.

- Students develop a content strategy, considering such things as tone and frequency, and a promotion strategy, considering how to use viral techniques to build a community of users.

- Students begin posting, including text, images, sound files and video.

- Students begin promoting their blog both online and in the physical world.

- Visitor counts and other metrics are posted online so that student teams can gauge their progress against what other teams are doing.

- Based on the tracking statistics they are getting, students are encouraged to make adjustments to attract more visitors and keep them on site, perhaps by adding online polls or other devices to increase interactivity or by adopting new promotional techniques, such as e-mail campaigns, social networking and contests.

- On the day set as the finish line of The Great Blog Race, final counts are taken on visitors and time spent. The winning team receives extra credit, or merely the envy of their peers.

**Impact**

Without getting their feelings hurt or experiencing defeat, students see the brutal nature of competition on the Internet and start to recognize the ingredients for online success and how they might interact.

Participants get to experience a range of reactions to their postings, including indifference, and they learn how the Web provides measures of audience size and interest that cannot be ignored.

Students begin to think in holistic terms about the field. News-ed students start to see the value of marketing while the ad/PR students see the relative effectiveness of different promotional techniques and how they can all be trumped by great content.

Students learn to value good team behavior and how to make the most of the diverse talents within a group.

Because this is a light-hearted competition, students become engaged with this project. They want to outwork and outsmart their classmates, and as they struggle to do so they start thinking in a deeper way about the nature of the Internet and how it changes the ways of mass communication.

# What's Your Typestyle?

## *How to use typography to convey personality and emotion*

By Dr. Renee Martin-Kratzer
Florida

*Renee Martin-Kratzer, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the University of Florida. She teaches writing, magazine and design courses in the journalism department.*

**Introduction**

Beginning designers enjoy experimenting with different typefaces. Unfortunately, this experimentation is often done with little thought to how the letterforms communicate meaning and convey emotions. This assignment challenges students to take a professor's name and create a design that represents the professor's personality using only type. This assignment emphasizes the need for students to adapt their typography depending on the mood they are trying to evoke. For example, a design for a serious professor should vary considerably from a design for a zany professor.

**Rationale**

This idea requires students to be creative. Not only do they have to apply what they've learned about the basics of typography, but also they have to think about the emotion that the different typestyles convey. This assignment highlights the fact that letterforms are a design element that should not be overlooked.

**Implementation**

- Before this assignment, students should have a basic knowledge of typography. Showing examples of logo designs before introducing the assignment will help spark students' creativity.

- Explain to the students that they will be designing the names of five professors. You may want to take nominations for the professors that they would like to participate. (This helps when it's time to recruit your colleagues–you can tell them that the students have specifically requested them.)

- Have the students brainstorm a set of questions they would like to ask the professors so that they can gain insight into their personalities (for example, "What are three words that your best friend would use to describe you?"). Choose the top five and distribute them to the participating professors.

- After the professors turn in their answers, provide these to the students along with links to the professors' biographies on the college Web sites. This allows students who haven't taken courses with these professors to learn a little more about them so that they can do better on the assignment.

• The students should use what they know about typography and each professor's personality to design his/her name. If there are five professors, then students will each complete five designs. They should experiment with different typefaces and methods for altering type, but they should NOT use images or graphics. Keep the focus on how to communicate personality using typography ONLY. Students should design the names–move them around, vary the letter sizes, etc.

• On the due date, have the students spread the designs out on a table or show them on a projector. The students should vote on the top five best designs for each professor. Lead a discussion on what worked/what didn't and how each could be improved.

• Arrange one-on-one meetings with each professor so that you (the instructor) can present the five best designs to them while you capture their responses on video (I used my own digital camera to take this video, and it worked fine). Ask them to talk about what they like and don't like about each. Most likely, they will have some humorous comments about whether these capture their true personality. Ask them to narrow it down to their top two choices. As the tension builds, have them select the best one and explain why it's the winner. (Depending on schedules, you might be able to have the professors come to class instead of relying on video.)

• Show the videos to the class. They will watch in anticipation to see who wins. They will also learn what kept the other designs from being selected as the best. After you congratulate the winners, conclude with a discussion about what made the winning designs successful. Drive home the point that words on a page not only communicate through the actual meaning of the words, but also through the visual arrangement and appearance of the letters. This is the message that you want students to take away from this competition.

**Impact**

This assignment was a creative way to have students consider the power of typography as a visual element. The students enjoyed the competition aspect of the assignment and were eager to get the professors' feedback. Having the professors critique the designs gave students the opportunity to gain additional perspectives on their work, and it also made them more motivated. Making the videos took only about 10 minutes each and was well worth it because of the students' increased level of engagement. They enjoyed this assignment, and I plan to repeat it next semester.

*GIFT 2008 Winner*


# Forging Critical Links Between Academics and Professionals

## *How to acquire input from working professionals on student advertising portfolios*

By Dr. Jody Mattern
Minnesota State-Moorhead

*Jody Mattern, Ph.D. is an assistant professor at Minnesota State University-Moorhead. She teaches ad copywriting, ad campaigns and ad portfolio development. Prior to entering academia, she worked in an advertising agency for 19 years, first as a creative copywriter and then as an account manager.*

**Introduction**

I have developed a Web site where students upload their work and I am able to send it out in e-mail form to a network of advertising professionals. I have recruited 38 evaluators on local, regional and national levels so students can see how their work ranks at the different levels. Evaluators receive a link by e-mail where they can go to evaluate the piece. The evaluation form and the student's uploaded image appear together and the submitted evaluation returns in e-mail form to me, which I forward to the student.

**Rationale**

Forging connections between students and working professionals is beneficial from both inside out and outside in perspectives. With this program, students receive concrete advice on how to improve their work, plus they are able to get a better idea of what the expectations will be when job seeking. Students who continually receive poor reviews from evaluators are also learning a valuable lesson. They may find that they need more work in a particular area or they might also realize that they should consider other career options. These valuable lessons are best learned while still in school, rather than after graduation.

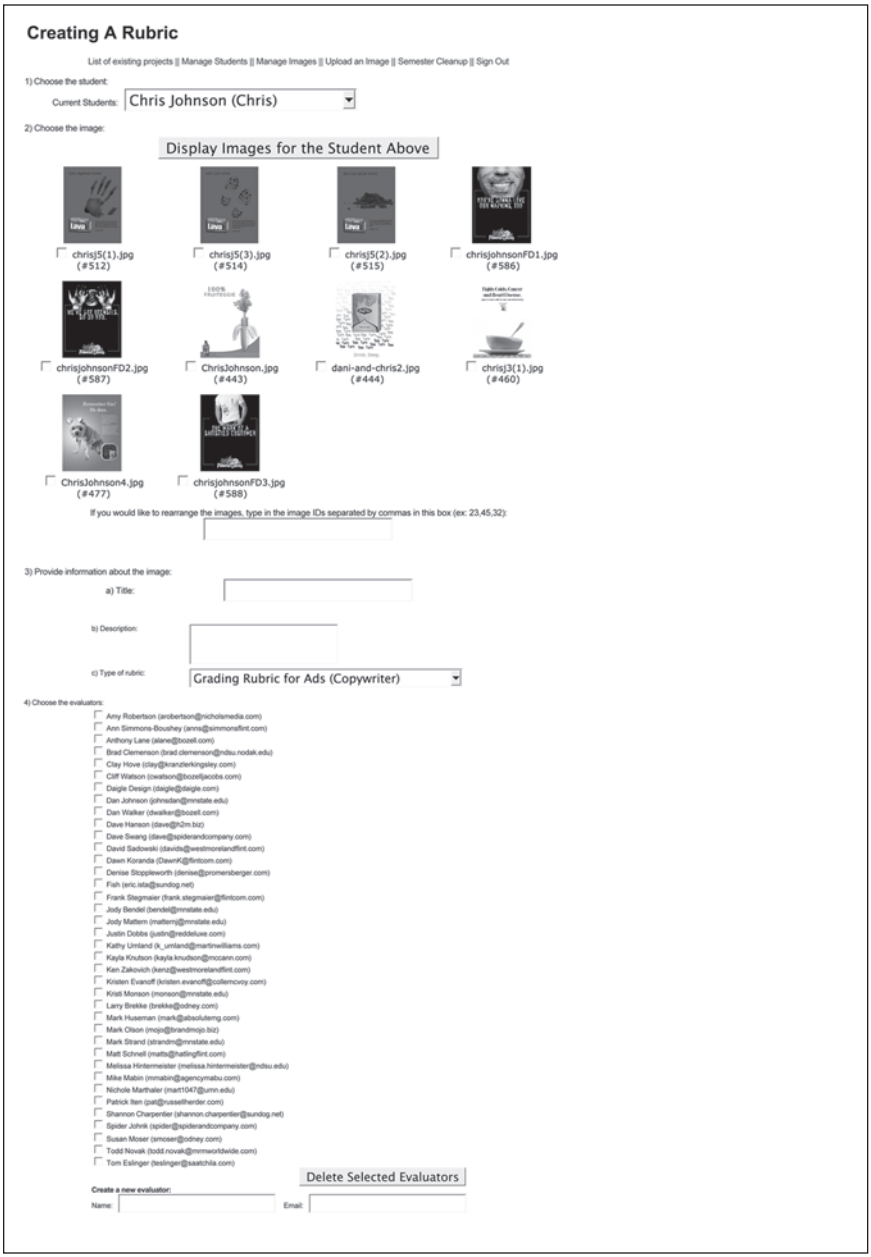
The program is also an excellent public relations tool for our department. I have received many positive comments from reviewers about the fact that our department is reaching out to the professional community for feedback. I have heard many times from reviewers that the portfolios they see are generally weak and they are happy we are trying to do something about it.

**Implementation**

• Recruitment: Recruiting professional evaluators has been surprisingly easy. In two years, only one person who was asked declined participation, and all reviewers from last year agreed to participate again this year. This year, I added 12 evaluators to the network through referrals from other evaluators.

• Portfolio Class: The portfolio class is a once-a-week night class where we spend time working on pieces for portfolios. Part of the evaluation form asks outside reviewers if they think the piece is portfolio ready. I require students to have 12 pieces in their portfolio that have been approved by at least one outside source in order to receive an "A" in the class.

• After I approve a student's piece, they can upload it to the site. I then go in, select that piece from the student's folder, choose one of the evaluators and send him or her an e-mail message with a link to the evaluation form. On the next page is a screen shot of a page I work from when developing rubrics.


Creating A Rubric
List of existing projects || Manage Students || Manage Images || Upload an Image || Semester Cleanup || Sign Out
1) Choose the student:
Current Students:
Chris Johnson (Chris)
2) Choose the image:
Display Images for the Student Above
chrisj5(1).jpg (#512)
chrisj5(3).jpg (#514)
chrisj5(2).jpg (#515)
chrisjohnsonFD1.jpg (#586)
chrisjohnsonFD2.jpg (#587)
ChrisJohnson.jpg (#443)
dani-and-chris2.jpg (#444)
chrisj3(1).jpg (#460)
ChrisJohnson4.jpg (#477)
chrisjohnsonFD3.jpg (#588)
If you would like to rearrange the images, type in the image IDs separated by commas in this box (ex: 23,45,32):
3) Provide information about the image:
a) Title:
b) Description:
c) Type of rubric:
Grading Rubric for Ads (Copywriter)
4) Choose the evaluators:
Amy Robertson (arobertson@nicholsmedia.com)
Ann Simmons-Boushey (anns@simmonsflint.com)
Anthony Lane (alane@bozell.com)
Brad Clemenson (brad.clemenson@ndsu.nodak.edu)
Clay Hove (clay@kranzlerkingsley.com)
Cliff Watson (cwatson@bozelljacobs.com)
Daigle Design (daigle@daigle.com)
Dan Johnson (johnsdan@mnstate.edu)
Dan Walker (dwalker@bozell.com)
Dave Hanson (dave@h2m.biz)
Dave Swang (dave@spiderandcompany.com)
David Sadowski (davids@westmorelandflint.com)
Dawn Koranda (DawnK@flintcom.com)
Denise Stoppleworth (denise@promersberger.com)
Fish (eric.ista@sundog.net)
Frank Stegmaier (frank.stegmaier@flintcom.com)
Jody Bendel (bendel@mnstate.edu)
Jody Mattern (mattern@mnstate.edu)
Justin Dobbs (justin@reddeluxe.com)
Kathy Umland (k_umland@martinwilliams.com)
Kayla Knutson (kayla.knudson@mccann.com)
Ken Zakovich (kenz@westmorelandflint.com)
Kristen Evanoff (kristen.evanoff@collemcvoy.com)
Kristi Monson (monson@mnstate.edu)
Larry Brekke (brekke@odney.com)
Mark Huseman (mark@absoluterng.com)
Mark Olson (mojo@brandmojo.biz)
Mark Strand (strandm@mnstate.edu)
Matt Schnell (matts@hatlingflint.com)
Melissa Hintermeister (melissa.hintermeister@ndsu.edu)
Mike Mabin (mmabin@agencymabu.com)
Nichole Marthaler (mart1047@umn.edu)
Patrick Iten (pat@russellherder.com)
Shannon Charpentier (shannon.charpentier@sundog.net)
Spider Johnk (spider@spiderandcompany.com)
Susan Moser (smoser@odney.com)
Todd Novak (todd.novak@mrmworldwide.com)
Tom Eslinger (teslinger@saatchila.com)
Delete Selected Evaluators
Create a new evaluator:
Name:
Email:

## Student Work Evaluation

**Chris Dog** by Chris Johnson
Target market: women 25-54

**Grading Rubric for Ads (Art Director)**

The following portfolio has been developed by a student who will be looking for a job as an art director.

Please rate this piece in comparison to other portfolios you have seen from junior (entry level) art directors.

Demonstrates Conceptual Thinking (creativity): Average

Layout (composition, typography, color): Average

Headline/Body Copy: Average

Overall Impact: Average

In your opinion, is this piece of sufficient quality to be included in a portfolio?

Yes

Comments/Suggestions for Improvement:

Please enter information about yourself.

Name:

Email:

Submit


View Larger Image

• The evaluator receives an e-mail titled "Student work for you to evaluate." When the evaluator clicks on the link in the e-mail message, he or she sees the advertising piece and an online evaluation form. On this page is a screen shot of this form.

• After the evaluator fills out the evaluation form, he or she hits "submit" and the review comes back to me. On the next page is an example of a review.

**Impact**

This is the second year we have used this system. I have received only positive feedback from both students and evaluators. Students create better portfolio pieces as a result of the feedback. They are more confident of their work at interviews. I have learned from evaluator comments and I now require a higher quality of work from my students before I allow them to upload for sending out. I have forged valuable contacts with professionals that have resulted in early

## Evaluation

**Kaciemakeup** by Kacie Victorian
Target: women 18-45

### Grading Rubric for Ads (Art Director)

**Demonstrates Conceptual Thinking (creativity)**:
Slightly Below Average

**Layout**:
Slightly Below Average

**Headline/Body Copy**:
Slightly Below Average

**Overall Impact**:
Slightly Below Average

**In your opinion, is this piece of sufficient quality to be included in a portfolio?** No

**Comments/Suggestions for Improvement**:
This concept really needs to be pushed. The eye makeup could be much more dramatic, emphasize the eyelashes, zoom in closer so we focus on the eyes, etc... If you use a more dramatic photo, then the headline makes more sense. Right now it doesn't intrigue. The photoshop work also looks sloppy. Hair is tough, but this needs to be cleaned up. The black background feels harsh and heavy, not the image a product like Neurtogena should promote. Typographically the style doesn't fit. If we're using a photo of a woman with dramatic makeup, I would argue that it wasn't all that easy to put on (first sentence of body copy). Overall, when a consumer see's this ad, they would not think of Neutrogena (a brand that is pretty recognizable), More than likely, they would think of a salon.


View Larger Image

Evaluator information:

| | |
|---|---|
| Name: | Frank Stegmaier |
| Email: | frank.stegmaier@flintcom.com |

Date Submitted: 3/5/2008

View the list of projects || Make a new rubric || Manage Images || Sign Out

notification of job openings and internship opportunities for my students.

The evaluators also benefit from our association. My "recruits" seem eager to have an opportunity to critique student work. Many have commented that it feels good to give something back to their profession. They are also getting a first look at potential future employees.

This program also serves as a departmental assessment tool and average evaluation scores are tracked from year to year.

# Designing the Ad of My Life

## *How to use Hemingway's "Six-Word Memoir" as an advertising copywriting exercise*

By Dr. Ginger R. Carter Miller
Georgia College & State

*Ginger R. Carter Miller, Ph.D., professor of mass communication at Georgia College & State University in Milledgeville, Ga., teaches public relations, advertising, mass media law and ethics and the capstone senior seminar course.*

**Introduction**

Legend has it Ernest Hemingway won a bar bet by writing his life story in these six words: "For sale: Baby shoes. Never worn." In 2006, the editors of *SMITH* Magazine held a contest, asking people around the country to write their own six-word memoir. Last October 2007, *SMITH* published the book "Not Quite What I Was Planning: Six-Word Memoirs by Writers Famous and Obscure."

After seeing a television segment on six-word memoirs, I decided to create an advertising copywriting exercise where I asked my students to write their own six-word memoir (of their young 20-something lives) and, using good design principles, create a single-page ad suitable for a magazine.

**Rationale**

The epitome of great ad copywriting is a short, pithy headline, and crisp, clean copy is the hallmark of the best print ads today. This assignment made the students *focus* on both their client (themselves, in this case) and their audience (me) to produce a storytelling ad that got right to the point.

**Implementation**

- Overview

Students were asked to design a one-page, 8.5 by 11", B&W or color advertisement (landscape or portrait) for a mid-term assignment following work on print ads for newspapers and magazines. Ads must be printed on card stock or photo paper for presentation.

Students were introduced to the concept of the six-word memoir and its link to Ernest Hemingway; they were given a handout about the book, "Not Quite What I Was Planning: Six-Word Memoirs by Writers Famous and Obscure."

It is understood in my class that advertisements would be graded on a 100-point scale based on 1) adherence to specifications (size, graphics, use of font, graphics); 2) overall design of the ad (adherence to the optical z, etc.); and 3) overall impact of the finished advertisement.

- The rest of the assignment was described to them in six-word phrases. It

made them laugh when they caught on I was speaking in six-word phrases.)
-Assignment: Designing the ad of my life.
-Audience: The professor is the magazine publisher.
-Client: The students themselves are the clients.
-Copy specifications: Six words. No more. No less.
-Type specification: Type should be serif, any font.
-Required graphics: Client driven ad. You're the client.
-Deadline: Due next Thursday. That's nine days.
-Grading: Did you follow all the rules?

- Other Adaptions

Beside ad copywriting, this could be used as a headline writing experience in editing class or public relations writing. (There was a two-day discussion on the ACES listserv about this process in the spring.)

**Impact**

When I first explained the assignment, the students groaned. GROANED! "Oh no, you can't make me sum up my life in six words. How can I do that?" But then they thought about the process, they did the required research and they proceeded to design. We discussed the assignment briefly in the next two classes before they were due, but we continued to work on another project.

Posts back and forth among the class on their Facebook walls showed me that they were taking this project seriously. Many created original photos for their ads, collaborating with one another for impromptu photo shoots. One student called her grandfather to request a photo he'd taken of her in 1988 (when she was two) to use with her ad. The photo was mailed, scanned and became one of the most beautiful ads in the series. One student designed three ads, all dedicated to her mother who had been diagnosed with cancer in 1996.

When the ads were presented during class, the students were first shy, then proud of their work. Some ads brought tears to my eyes, they were so beautiful.. Many of the students plan to use the ads in their professional portfolio, since their client—themselves—was the toughest they ever had to please.

Most of all, the students said the project helped drive home an important point about headlines and copy. Keep it short. Keep it sweet.

# Transition Tune-Up

## *How to get smoother transitions from feature writing students—by connecting the un-connected*

By Dr. Quint B. Randle
Brigham Young

*Quint Randle, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of Communications at Brigham Young University. Prior to entering the teaching profession he worked as a freelance writer, editor and publisher. He founded several media titles including* Gig Magazine *and* HockeyPlayer.com.

**Introduction**

Due to increasing complexity of content and structure, smooth transitions are key to building flow for any novice feature writer. This "Mad-Libs-in-reverse" activity is a fun and effective way to get students thinking beyond common transitional words and phrases–and writing deeper transitions that really flow.

**Rationale**

As students progress from pyramid to more complex feature article forms, they often struggle with transitioning smoothly between topics or sections within an article. At the basic level are common transitional words and phrases. The next step up would be the repetition of key words or ideas. Both of these techniques are important, but can easily be overused. Oftentimes, attempts at more sophisticated transitions result in what I call "Research Paper Transitions" that literally scream, "I'm ending one section and beginning the next." Yikes!

Truly fluid transitions are those where the reader moves from one section to the next–almost without even knowing it. This is accomplished by finding subtle connections between ideas and then using that commonality to bridge the old thought to the new thought. It's done without stating the obvious.

Much like stretching an unused muscle, this activity "forces" students to reach outside their normal thought patterns, developing new levels of connectivity.

**Implementation**

- Preparation: First make the handout. Select one-paragraph segments from six to eight different articles from totally different magazines or newspapers, relatively random paragraphs that have no connection to one another. These should be longer paragraphs from the middle of articles–stuff from the body. Do not include extensive quotes; try to stick with narrative or expository writing. Type or cut and paste these into a one-page document, single-spaced, with triple-spacing between the paragraphs.

- Presentation: You begin with a standard discussion of transitional techniques–words and phrases, repetition of key ideas, etc. You might also read an article that features

various types of transitions. You finish the lecture by posing the question: "How do we do this? Or how do we get better at doing this?" You answer with, "Let's play a little game."

• Activity: Each student receives the handout with the unrelated paragraphs on it. The instructions are to write a transitional sentence (or two) that connect paragraph one to paragraph two, paragraph two to paragraph three, and so on. They usually have a look of astonishment on their faces when you first explain this, but it adds to the fun. If you have time, each student can complete the entire page. If not, then a third of the room can do the first several, another third do the middle of the page, and so on. Upon completion–and this is where the fun begins–you read the original first paragraph and point to a random student who reads their transition sentence. You then pick up with the reading of the next existing paragraph and point to another student who reads the second transition and so on. The results are hilarious at times.

• Reflection: This activity is kind of backwards Mad Libs. But instead of us laughing at the absurdity of the random, out-of-place word that has been placed in a sentence, we laugh and are amazed at the connections that have been created between seemingly unrelated subjects. Through the creation of these "extreme transitions"–between subjects that are relatively unrelated–students are able to think about deeper and subtler connections between different parts of their own articles.

**Impact**

I have been using this activity each semester for about eight years now. Transitions in students' longer, complex articles are smoother, subtler and much improved over techniques they used at the beginning of the semester. And almost as important, this activity creates one of those "fun moments" that is remembered for years to come–a light-bulb moment if you will.

# News Design, Contemporary History and a Rock 'n' Roll Classic

## *How to inspire editing students with Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire"*

By Daniel Reimold
Ohio

*Daniel Reimold, M.J., is a mass communication doctoral candidate and Scripps Howard Teaching Fellow in the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University, where he teaches news editing, information gathering and introduction to mass communication. He also earned a certificate in contemporary history from the university's Contemporary History Institute and serves as an adviser for* Speakeasy Magazine*, a daily-updated Webzine run by Scripps students. He previously worked as a special projects reporter at* The Philadelphia Inquirer *and as a police reporter for a daily newspaper in suburban Philadelphia.*

**Introduction**

This design project asks students to bring to life one portion of Billy Joel's lyrical masterpiece about modern history, "We Didn't Start the Fire," through a two-page layout. Past students have created pages solely concentrated on one or more celebrities, movies, TV shows, books, political figures, military events or countries mentioned in the song. The project is a melding of journalism, history and new media acumen. Students test their news judgment, knowledge of the past and aptitude on the latest design programs to create an accurate, objective and eye-catching visual glimpse of the people, places or events named in the song and an understanding of their historical significance (for example, why they were included in a song about contemporary world history when so much else was left out).

**Rationale**

Contemporary history is beyond most undergraduates' realm of understanding. In our increasingly complex world, with national boundaries blurring and evermore new media stirring, journalism students must have at least the faintest awareness of the foundation on which our present day sits. The Billy Joel song is a hip segue into the not-so-distant past, providing a soundtrack to history that is created in the students' language: quick, catchy and filled with rhymes. Students' creation of a news-oriented layout related to an individual or issue named in the song enables them to be their own teachers, diving into a part of the past that intrigues them and simultaneously familiarizing themselves with proper news design techniques. Overall, the project is a test of their research, design and journalism skills, built around a project that they consider worthy of their time and one that

they can brag to friends even has a dash of rock 'n' roll thrown in.

**Implementation**

- Prior to handing out the project instructions sheet, a PowerPoint collage is shown that displays photographs and other visuals related to the individuals and events named in "We Didn't Start the Fire," while the song plays in the background.

- The project instructions sheet is handed out and sample pages designed by past students are shown.

- Students are instructed that the project requires the creation of a double-truck, or two-page layout. The layout must include at least six photographs with actual, readable cutlines properly attributed to reputable outside sources. In addition, students are required to create at least two original information graphics of any type, based on related class lessons. Due to the project's focus on visual elements, students are instructed that no more than two full stories (properly attributed) should appear on the pages.

- Students are instructed that they are free to create a layout set in the time period in which a person lived or event occurred (such as a student who designed a double-truck set on the day after the JFK assassination) or in the present (such as a student who created a layout that historically traced the path of the HIV/AIDS epidemic).

- During the class period prior to the project's due date, students carry out a brief presentation in which they confirm the issue or individual they have selected and ideas they have brainstormed related to designing a layout that matches the song's intensity, earnestness and scope. Students subsequently receive critiques and suggestions from the instructor and classmates.

- At the start of class on the project's due date, projects are affixed to the front board and a semi-circle is formed. Each student then discusses his or her layout and receives feedback from classmates and the instructor. A written evaluation and grade are ready for each student by the following class session.

**Impact**

The assignment positively impacts students and the classroom atmosphere overall in a number of ways: the course's "cool factor," as one student put it to me, is upped immensely by students' immersion in a project linked to a song so beloved and ingrained in popular culture; students' news design abilities are honed and their knowledge of contemporary history heightened, both by the research they carry out with their own projects and the presentations made related to their fellow students' layouts; and, ultimately, I've found students' confidence levels related to their design sensibilities and world awareness skyrocket when realizing they are able to meld both together into a coherent, newsworthy, stylish layout that students often tell me is one of the more memorable projects they undertake during their time as undergraduates.

# Who's Like Me?

## *How to talk about diversity with journalism students*

By Jessica E. Smith
North Carolina-Chapel Hill

*Jessica Smith, M.A., is a Roy H. Park Fellow and Ph.D. student at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Her research interests include online communication and media effects, and her teaching areas include online news and news writing and editing. She worked for several major metropolitan newspapers before returning to school, and she plans to graduate in May 2009.*

**Introduction**

Some students believe diversity lessons are just a consequence of a political correctness movement. I try to help students see that although their biases may be unintentional, they exist—so lessons about stereotypes, bias and diversity are meaningful to them. This activity shows students how their pictures of the world diverge from reality by having them estimate the percentages of Americans in various Census categories. The exercise enforces the idea that diversity is more than race; diversity can include education, income, country of origin and disability, among other things.

**Rationale**

Many textbooks tell students to avoid bias in their writing by knowing their biases, but students often struggle with identifying their blind spots. They also may be subject to a third-person effect that allows them to say, "Other people may struggle with biases, but I am unusually aware and sensitive. I can be completely objective." This exercise provides a tool that will allow them to see their misperceptions, whether they overestimate the percentage of black Americans or people in their state with a college education. This knowledge makes students more receptive to learning strategies for increasing diversity and reducing bias in their work.

**Implementation**

- Visit the Census Bureau Web site (*http://www.census.gov/*) before class and find national and state (or county) statistics about race (white, black, Asian, Hispanic/Latino), foreign-born status, education level, poverty status, age (under 25, over 65) and disability status.

- List these categories on the board or a slide, and ask students to scribble their estimates of the percentages of the U.S. population with these characteristics.

- Ask a few students to share their guesses for each category with the class. The estimates will vary widely.

- Show the state and national numbers and point out differences (for example, higher percentage of Hispanic/Latino people in California, Florida or Texas than

national average; higher percentage of college graduates in county with a major university compared to rest of state).

• Guide students in discussion about how they developed their perceptions, particularly in areas where they don't match reality. Then discuss how students' perceptions can bias their reporting by blinding them to people who are not like them.

**Impact**

This lesson opens students' eyes to their own misperceptions. It shows students that their college degrees will make them more highly educated than three-quarters of their audience. They see that 15 percent of Americans live below the poverty line, and they see true representations of racial balance (and imbalance) from place to place. It teaches students to be aware of their audiences in order to represent them well and avoid stereotypes. It spurs discussion of issues of diversity and bias among classmates. It offers the extra benefit of reminding students of the bountiful information available on the Web.

Using statistics in a meaningful way engages students in a way that no list of do's and don't's about addressing ageism, sexism, and racism could do. Each group of students that has done this exercise has been more active than usual in discussion throughout class. It works well in small news writing classes where students have a chance to talk and have gotten to know each other a bit so they don't worry about offending each other with questions. The exercise is a good lead-in for lessons about stereotypes, bias, diversity and AP style for entries about these issues. Students often find that they overestimate the number of people who are like them and that they have little concept of their community's demographics.

I welcome any tool that helps me show students the relevance of my lessons to their careers and lives. The discussions after this activity and students' work and questions for the rest of the semester suggest that "Who's Like Me?" is such a tool. It encourages me to hear students recognizing their biases, considering the role of media coverage in this, and actively discussing these issues in class. After weeks of focusing on leads and the inverted pyramid, it refreshes me to hear students reawaken in class and grapple with the implications of living in a diverse world.

# Finding Matches Made in Journalistic Heaven

## *How to envision "enterprise joins" for enterprise reporting*

By Jeff South
Virginia Commonwealth

*Jeff South is an associate professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, where he teaches reporting, media ethics and other courses. He specializes in the use of technology, such as computer-assisted reporting. Before becoming a teacher, he was a newspaper reporter and editor for 20 years.*

**Introduction**

My journalism school wants every student to understand computer-assisted reporting (CAR), including the use of relational database managers, such as Microsoft Access. People use database managers to "join" (or match) tables of data. In government and business, employees usually work with tables that were meant to be joined–for example, matching a list of cities and their 2007 population with a list of cities and their 2000 population. Savvy journalists go further by joining tables that were not intended to be related. CAR experts call such matching "enterprise joins"–because they can lead to enterprise reporting (stories done on a journalist's own initiative). For instance, a reporter might join a table of school bus drivers with a table of convicted drunken drivers: The matches–the people on both lists–would be bus drivers who have been caught driving under the influence. Or a reporter might match the governor's political donors with gubernatorial appointments to find campaign contributors who have been rewarded with patronage jobs.

I want my students to think creatively about enterprise joins–to see the story possibilities in crossing disparate data sets. I do this by giving the students descriptions of two random tables, such as the city pet registry (the name and address of every licensed dog and cat, along with the owner's name) and the voter registration database (the name, address, voting history and party registration of each registered voter). Students then brainstorm story ideas that might arise from matching the tables. In the above example, students have suggested looking at whether cat owners tend to vote Republican and dog owners Democrat (or vice versa) or whether pet owners are more likely than pet-less residents to turn out for elections.

To encourage such brainstorming, I divide my reporting class into three groups (about six students per group). I then bring out two "Wheel of Fortune"-type dials that I have salvaged from games such as Twister. Each dial is like a clock with a pointer that spins freely. On each dial, I have printed the names of 10 different data sets–so I

have 20 data sets in all. They include lists of government employees, liquor stores, day care operators, sex offenders, gun permit holders, "deadbeat dads" and schools, and as well as census and property tax data. I invite a student to spin the two dials. When they stop, each dial points to a particular data set– and the first group of students must think of story ideas that would involve matching those two tables. We spin the dials again and randomly select a pair of data sets for the second group to ponder. Then we repeat the process for the third group of students. Group members have about three minutes to discuss the stories they might pursue by matching the tables. (Students' ideas have included: day care operations where guns may be present; sex offenders who live near schools; government employees who owe child support; and the demographics of neighborhoods with high concentrations of liquor stores.)

Each group presents its ideas to the full class, and students from other groups add their thoughts. After each group has presented, we do two more rounds; so each group explores three pairs of tables.

**Rationale**

This is an innovative teaching idea because it requires students to apply imagination and critical-thinking skills to CAR. Students learn to envision the "best case" stories they could get by matching seemingly unrelated data sets and asking inventive questions about the results.

**Implementation**

- Create two dials, each displaying the names of 10 data sets.
- Divide the class into groups.
- Spin the dials to randomly select two data sets.
- Have the first group of students ponder what stories they might pursue by joining the two tables.
- Select a pair of data sets for each of the other groups to discuss.
- Have the groups report to the full class for more discussion.
- Recognize/reward the best suggestions.

I also give my students a computer-lab lesson in joining tables with Microsoft Access. But I emphasize that CAR is more about creative and critical thinking than about technology.

**Impact**

Students gain confidence in their ability to conceive (and execute) stories with CAR. They have written articles about such subjects as: people who have donated to both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama; the demographics of communities with high and low recycling rates; and university contractors who have been fined for pollution or workplace-safety violations. One story won a regional SPJ award.

# See It. Live It. Tell It.

## *How to create a mass communications study abroad course in a multimedia world*

By Dr. Andrea Tanner, Dr. Kent Sidel and Lisa Sisk
South Carolina

*Andrea Tanner, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the University of South Carolina. A former TV news reporter and anchor, she teaches courses in the electronic news sequence, focusing on television news reporting and producing. Her research interests include health communications, media convergence, local television news and journalism education.*

*Kent Sidel, Ph.D., a professor emeritus at the University of South Carolina, currently serves as the associate dean of the College of Communication and Media Sciences at Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates. While at USC, his research and teaching interests included international communication and electronic journalism.*

*Lisa Sisk, M.A., has practiced public relations for 30 years, working in the nonprofit, corporate, government, public education and agency sectors. She is an instructor at the University of South Carolina, teaching undergraduate and graduate public relations courses. Her research interests include nonprofit public relations and crisis communications.*

**Introduction**

In this global communication era, journalism and mass communications students need to think beyond the traditional boundaries of the United States. Although colleges and universities are increasingly stressing the importance of studying abroad, many students are still hesitant to add an international dimension to their education. This GIFT explains one way to add an international component to your curriculum–a unique "short course" for journalism and mass communications students who are interested in a study-abroad experience, but either are unwilling or lack the money to spend a semester overseas.

Faculty at the University of South Carolina created a study-abroad experience to introduce students to another culture and give them a hands-on multimedia experience. The course was open to all journalism and mass communications majors and designed as a short course during the university's three-week "Maymester."

Armed with video cameras and laptop computers, the students spent two weeks in Munich, Germany. During their stay, they had two overall objectives: 1) to produce multimedia stories on topics that would interest people back home and 2) create a public relations campaign for the college to promote the international mass

communications experience to prospective students.

Ultimately, the students–majoring in advertising, public relations, electronic journalism and visual communications –produced a wide array of mass communications materials, including two traditional television news mini-documentaries (focusing on Germany's environmental efforts, and Jews in Germany since the Holocaust) and a daily blog with video and written reports. Public relations students created a comprehensive campaign, including a brochure, promotional video, poster and story for the college's Web site.

**Rationale**

This study-abroad experience allows mass communications students to experience another country and culture while taking part in hands-on, skills-oriented exercises. By focusing on a multimedia project, students from different disciplines must work together, bringing their unique skills and talents to the project and learning new communication techniques throughout the process.

Although several of the students already had international experience, the course is designed for students who do not want, or can't afford, to spend a full semester overseas. During our stay, we saw students taking part in other study-abroad programs in which they simply toured different sites and traveled on chartered buses. Because our students had to gather information for stories, conduct interviews and shoot video and still pictures, they not only immersed themselves in the culture, but learned how to work in a foreign environment.

From a college perspective, this is a good "first steps" approach when beginning an international course or program. The multimedia materials produced depend on the skill sets of the students and course objectives can be adjusted accordingly. The course is designed so that it is not necessary to form a partnership with a foreign university. Furthermore, the college can promote future study abroad endeavors with the student-produced materials.

**Implementation**

- Two faculty members accompanied the students to Germany. Faculty arranged hotel accommodations, but students were responsible for airfare and meals.

- Students spent two weeks of the three-week Maymester course abroad. Upon arrival, students were introduced to Munich, then began working on their multimedia news reports and public relations campaign.

- Once the students began gathering the content for their projects, faculty members met with them as a group at least once a day. At other times, the students (sometimes accompanied by a faculty member) were free to work on their projects.

- Laptop computers, with necessary software, were brought from the home university to aid students in their projects. Internet access was available and video cameras were also provided.

- Each student was required to post print and visual content onto the class blog on a daily basis.

- Upon returning home, the students completed their projects and made a final

presentation to course instructors and to the Dean of the college.

**Impact**

This course made a significant impact on the students from academic, professional and personal perspectives. The challenges of developing and producing media content, all while trying to maneuver through another country and an unfamiliar language, not only helped the students think critically and gain knowledge about other cultures, but also led to increased independence, adaptability and ability to cope with new and different situations. The multimedia projects allowed students to acquire practical media skills and produce materials that may help land their first jobs.

# A Synergy Story

## *How to supercharge your–and their–thinking with Soundslides*

By Dr. Leslie-Jean Thornton
Arizona State

*Leslie-Jean Thornton, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the Cronkite School, Arizona State University. She teaches online media and advanced editing, and her research focuses on professional journalism practices and the incorporation and use of new media forms. Prior to academia, she was a journalist in New York, Connecticut and Virginia.*

**Introduction**

When I was learning to play the piano, I tackled a Bach Three-Part Invention–a musical piece pitting three distinct melodies against each other. I remember the moment, mid-invention, when I realized I was thinking three things at the same time. I was stunned and delighted by the power of the mind. Recently, I was reminded of that moment when it clicked that juggling multiple "melody lines" was exactly the kind of mental dexterity required of the modern journalist. In Soundslides, an inexpensive and easy-to-learn software program used in many newsrooms to create sound-enhanced slide shows for online use, I found the perfect tool–and a great way to explain such new concepts as narrative cutlines, both audio and written, where the goal is to keep the viewer hooked on the story through multiple changes of image.

**Rationale**

We learn in different ways; this experience offers visual, aural and written-word learners a chance to play to their strength while reinforcing their weaker talents. It is a perfect example of the whole being greater than its parts. It teaches a transportable skill, both in terms of creating a multimedia story and developing mental agility. Many who have done this exercise say it's changed the way they think about reporting, helping them "think in an online way."

**Implementation**

- The software is available for download as a free trial (fully functioning, but it labels the opening slide as a "demonstration") from *www.soundslides.com.* As a result, students can work on projects outide as well as in the classroom. For beginners, the basic program is fine.

- The lesson, however, begins before you even show the students how to use the software. They will need about 10-12 photographs to make into a story–but that might mean having 40 photos from which to choose. Provide them with (or have them bring in) digital cameras. Give them 30 minutes to rove the campus snapping abstract shots to tell a story that may or may not be non-fiction. (Give them a

short talk on composition to boost their confidence and skills.) If they are puzzled by these directions, tell them they may shoot colors, shadows, shapes or words–or any combination thereof.

• When they return, have them upload the images to a computer and choose their 12 or so best. Tell them to think about a story that might be told with them.

• Show them how to load their chosen pictures into a Soundslides project. Provide them with a 30-second MP3 recording of silence (or if you use music, turn off the sound on the computer). Explain that they will make a 30-second recording of their own to replace it. The dummy track is just for initial picture placement for brainstorming purposes.

• Assign them the task of writing a script that times out at about 30 seconds. Tell them that they must also use captions to augment the information in the narration, and that both the spoken and written words must illuminate the photograph (and vice versa) and help advance the story.

• If you can provide them with digital audio recorders, great. If not, use the recorders on most computers. In any case, the next step is for them to record their narrative. Assure them perfection is not always achieved in one take; they may need to re-record.

• Make sure the recording is or is converted to an MP3 file (Google for free conversion programs). If any editing needs to be done, Audacity is a free cross-platform program used by many journalists–but for a first lesson, you won't need it.

• Have them load the audio file into the Soundslide.

• Now they work on timing and writing cutlines, credits and headlines.

• Show everyone's work! Instant reward. Particularly good ones can be uploaded to a class Web site, blogs, online resumes, etc.

**Impact**

I've used this assignment four times for copy editors and online media graduate students. The results have never failed to surprise me with their quality and ingenuity. I've seen walking tours, narrations that imagine abstract shapes as alien beings visiting Earth, and the campus from the perspective of a 5-year-old. One student illustrated a poem she wrote herself. The most reserved students have come alive during this exercise. Several have taken their projects to newspapers where they intern and come away with weekly assignments to do more, although not of the abstract variety. It bolsters their confidence and gives them the exhilaration of thinking in other than superficial ways.

# Turning Student Errors Into Lasting Lessons

## *How to use examples from student newspapers and Web sites to promote solid grammar and better writing*

By Dr. Douglas B. Ward
Kansas

*Doug Ward, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the University of Kansas. He teaches editing and other courses at the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications. Before joining KU, he was an editor at* The New York Times.

**Introduction**

Many students enter journalism programs with little or no understanding of grammar and sentence structure. The word *grammar*, in fact, draws blank stares and barely hidden disdain, even though all journalists must have solid word skills to succeed. To raise awareness of the importance of language, I collect errors from our school's student newspaper, magazine and Web site and use them to create a lighthearted publication on the importance of grammar, punctuation, style, usage and clarity in writing. I distribute the publication to students two to three times a semester.

**Rationale**

Markups of student newspapers have been used for years. This publication moves beyond that, pulling out individual errors and juxtaposing them with explanations and examples of how the work could be improved. It's like a continuous textbook applied to students' own work. Tone is crucial, though. Humor and satire go a long way in keeping students engaged, allowing an instructor to provide lessons in grammar, usage and writing that students might otherwise shun.

For instance, I used this example from a commentary page to emphasize proper punctuation: *What is epic about "The Apprentice?"*

Under the headline *Question Marks?*, I wrote:

*Ah, yes. "The Apprentice?" Here's a snippet:*

Contestant: *Mr. Trump? You wanted to see me?*

Trump: *You apparently don't know a question mark from my toupee? You're fired?*

Of course, we could save everyone the agony and remember that when a question mark applies to a complete clause, it goes *outside* the quotation marks.

Under the heading *Comic Capers*, I included a student-drawn cartoon that had the sentence "Super villians beware the amazing guitar hero." My comment:

Super *villains*, beware: Dictionaries are lethal to bad spelling if used in the right way.

No, just make that *used*.

I also include errors I find in the local newspaper, in *The New York Times*, on Web sites and other places. That allows students to see that they aren't the only ones making mistakes, and encourages them to pay attention as they read. I provide examples of good writing, as well, especially headlines, and examples of how students might have approached a lead or a particular paragraph. I keep my commentary short, sometimes using poetry or Photoshop images. Not all the commentary is humorous. Not all is short either. For example, I have written longer commentaries on indirection, insertions in quotes and the proper use of sequence of tenses, topics that didn't lend themselves to just a sentence or two. The trick is to intersperse the humor among the more serious elements.

**Implementation**

- Collect errors from student publications (clip them, or copy them from the Web), trying to group similar types of errors together. (I use color-coded folders to keep track of everything.)

- Write commentary and a headline to accompany each set of errors. (I use 16 pt. boldface headlines and 14 pt. body type to set off my comments from the examples.) Some recent headlines: "True Facts and Other Redundancies," "Because of vs. Due to," and "Explain, Please."

- Paste the examples vertically on 8½-by-11-inch paper, usually three or four to a page. I create sections for grammar, punctuation, style and headlines, along with a "This and That" section and an "Editor's Choice" section for things I want to emphasize.

- Attach a cover page explaining what the publication is intended to do and where students can find more information.

- Copy and staple the pages into a booklet. I distribute the booklet to students in class and in the newsroom. PDFs of the pages can be posted to Web sites.

**Impact**

The publication reminds students that someone is paying attention to their work, and they pay attention because the examples apply directly to them. It reinforces the points I make in class and emphasizes things I sometimes can't get to. It circulates widely in the newsroom, reaching students I've never had in class and inspiring some to ask for help and others to submit errors they have found. It has also attracted students to my classes by giving them a taste of who I am and what my classes are about. I've even had graduates write and ask for PDF copies of the latest edition. The commentary keeps my own knowledge of grammar and usage fresh, allowing me to elucidate points more clearly in class.

# A Look at News Web Sites Created By and For 20-Somethings

## *How to get more young adults interested in reading news online*

By Amy Zerba
Texas-Austin

*Amy Zerba, M.A., is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Texas at Austin who studies the news reading habits and non-habits of young adults. She received her bachelor's and master's in journalism at the University of Florida and has taught courses in Web publishing, reporting, copy editing, print design and graphics of journalism. She has eight years of experience as a page designer/copy editor at large daily newspapers, having worked at the* South Florida Sun-Sentinel*,* Houston Chronicle *and currently the* Austin American-Statesman.

**Introduction**

How can educators, and online journalists, get more 20-somethings reading news? Ask young adults this question, and then have them show you. For an online journalism class project, juniors and seniors created a news Web site geared at 20-somethings who don't read news regularly. Leading up to this project, students described what they liked on news Web sites, and what they didn't like, as a group. Students experimented with different ways for presenting news that would inform, engage, teach and entertain 20-somethings, but most importantly get more of this audience wanting to read news online.

**Rationale**

With this project, journalism students examined their own news reading habits, or non-habits, and created a news Web site prototype that addressed their needs and wants and also those of nonreaders in their 20s. This project gives insight into what these young adults would like to see on news Web sites, as well as how daily news wire stories could be presented to engage them more.

**Implementation**

- Preparation: For the first half of the semester, these journalism students built Web sites using CSS. They discussed news story packaging, critiqued news Web sites and navigation and defined the parts of a news site page.

- Brainstorming: Students outlined 10 ideas that they would implement on their sites to get more of this audience reading news, especially politics and world news. They described each feature and its purpose and drew sketches of their Web pages.

- One-on-One Consulting: The instructor and each student discussed these 10 ideas and any how-to CSS questions.

- The Project: Students developed an original news site aimed at informing

20-somethings of what's happening around them. Each news site consisted of five working pages (homepage, politics, world and two article pages) using CSS only, along with links to other sections of their choosing. The students worked as if they were online producers–building pages, selecting wire stories and art, writing headlines, blurbs and captions. Most importantly, they brainstormed for news Web site features/ devices to engage those 20-somethings who do not regularly read news.

• Critique of Drafts: Students presented site drafts to classmates. A classmate would navigate through a student's site to give user feedback in written and verbal form.

• Evaluation: Students evaluated what they learned from the project, what challenged them and how the project could improve.

**Impact**

Before starting her project, one student commented, "But I don't read the news." I responded, "Then what would it take to get you to read news online?" She created a site, called "WTF," that had pop-up windows over each story describing what that story was about, in laymen's terms. This WTF feature is one of a handful of ideas implemented on their news Web sites.

Other ideas included:

-5 W's story boxes (relevancy)
-Stories in 30 words or less, a site called -30- (time)
-Maps with all world news stories (learning)
-An everyday young reader columnist commenting on stories (young voices)
-A "talker of the day" story that dominates a page space-wise (conversation pieces)
-How-this-story-affects-you boxes (relevancy)
-Quotes from leaders around the world about a single news story (perspectives)
-A playable-stoppable daily iTunes song playing while users read news online (entertainment)
-Login access to one's email, Facebook and Myspace account on every section page (multi-tasking)

This project challenged these young journalists to think of ways to attract those 20-somethings who don't regularly read news online. A note: Some of these students read online news regularly and some did not. One student wrote, "I liked the critical thinking it took to come up with a site geared toward 20-somethings. It's a hard concept to think about, and it really got me thinking on how our generation utilizes the news." Another wrote, "Usually we all complain that news Web sites are plain and boring, but I've learned it's a lot harder to make news creative." This project prepared students to think like readers, a skill that will help these young journalists in the selection, planning and writing of online news stories and the building of news story pages in the future.

While some of their proposed 20-something Web site features may, in part, be implemented on news sites somewhere, these features do show what these young adults are drawn to. Online journalists could learn from these classroom ideas in trying to reach and engage more of this young adult audience.

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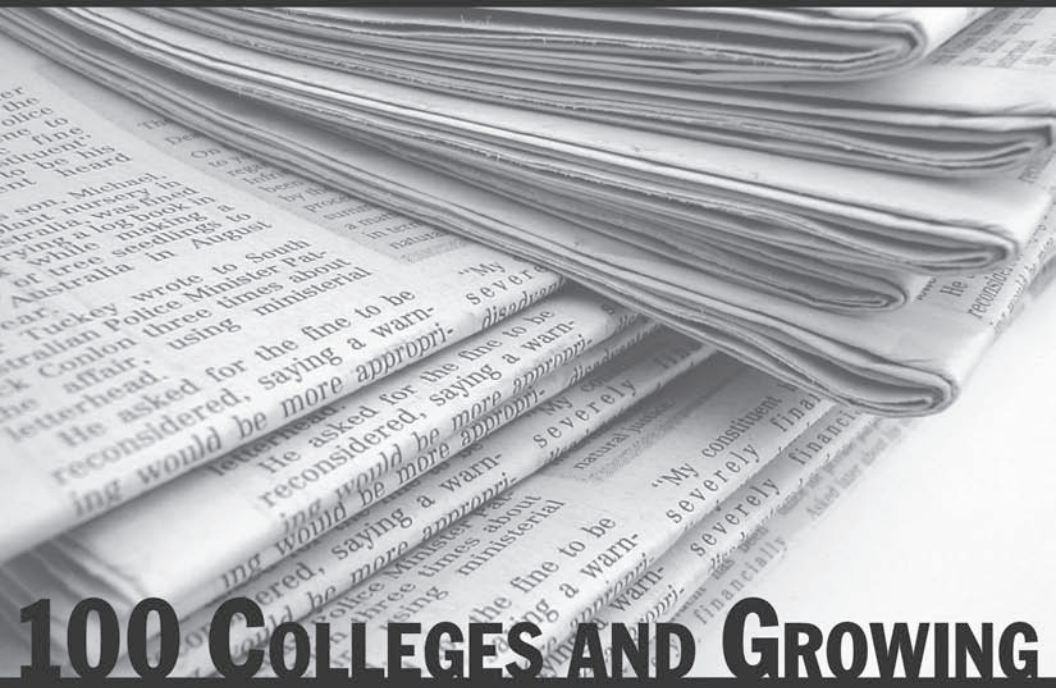

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