

Historiography

in Mass Communication



Volume 6 (2020). Number 5

Historiography in Mass Communication

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This journal invites historians to submit essays. They may be original ones written specifically for this journal, or they may be from material that the authors already have (such as classroom lectures, AJHA presidential addresses, etc.).

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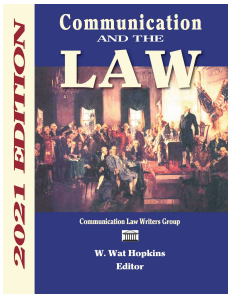
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A Big Fish Story

By Wm. David Sloan ©



Sloan

“Grandad, this is Matthew. I am working on my ancestor research for Seminar. I would like to ask you a few questions. Tell me something about when you were young that kids my age might find interesting.”

That request from my 9-year-old grandson made me remember an event that happened when I was seven and that has become a part of my family’s lore.

Although I had not until recently thought of the event as something of interest to historians, it nevertheless relates to fundamental principles of historical research.

Here’s the gist of the account that I told my grandson:

The summer after I finished the first grade, there weren’t any jobs available for carpenters in Texas. So my father and my uncle moved our families to Wisconsin for the summer, where they could find jobs. We lived in Kenosha, a town on the shore of Lake Michigan.

One morning, my cousin Tim and I were playing near a small river not

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far from our house, and we saw huge fish swimming in it. That part of the river was blocked, and the fish couldn't swim any farther toward Lake Michigan.

Tim and I went home and told our mothers. We persuaded them to go look for themselves. Sure enough, they saw the fish, too.

So one of my brothers, along with Tim and his brother, decided to go "fishing." The fish were too big to catch with fishing poles. So my brother and cousins caught them by hand and dragged them onto shore.

It was around 8:00 in the morning. The school year in Kenosha had not ended, and a lot of students on their way to school stopped to watch. About 100 students were late for school that day. The newspaper found out about our fishing and made a photograph of us. It printed the picture on its front page.

Now here's where the work of historians comes into play.

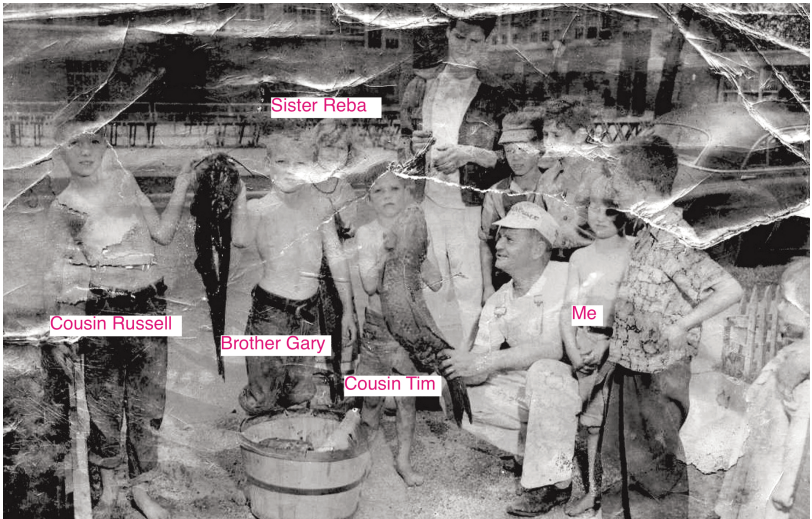
Recently my cousin Tim found a wrinkled copy of the photograph the newspaper used, and he shared it by email with his siblings and cousins. That led to a number of email exchanges about the event — and, as you might guess, the details varied greatly. In fact, some of the recollections even contradicted one another.

Historians face such issues when dealing with sources — and, as one can tell from my family's accounts of what has come to be called *The Event*, historians need to be scrupulous in dealing with sources, even if the sources were eyewitnesses. The passage of time and the use of secondary sources complicate the problem even further.

The problems of sources could lead historians to despair. Fortunately, by using standard practices and exercising a critical mind, they can safeguard against errors.

To illustrate the problems of sources, here are some of the emails my siblings and cousins exchanged. I'm not including all of them just

From the Editor: A Big Fish Story



For reference, here's a wrinkled copy of the page-one photograph the *Kenosha (Wis.) Evening News* published on June 9, 1954.

because this essay would get too long. The emails are in the sequence in which they were sent. Some of the errors will be cleared up by the end of this essay, but I'll note relevant factual errors when they are not addressed later.

From my cousin Doyle, who at the time of The Event was in Texas:

I remember the story of these fish. They were caught up in Wisconsin or one of the Great Lakes states, I think. All the adults talked about them. Animals from mudholes to roadkill were very important to us those years. [NOTE: Doyle likes to exaggerate.]

All of you were getting to live up there with the big fish, and I was having to live in West Texas, where the biggest fish you could snag was a goldfish out of a fishbowl. West Texas is just two steps from nowhere.

The Event generated great envy, so it is remembered well. It was probably about 1952 or 1953. [CORRECTION: It was 1954.]

It is amazing the camaraderie we all had back then. Thanks for remembering the good times.

From my sister Brenda, who at the time of The Event was three years old:

Reba [our older sister, who was twelve at the time] remembers *The Event*. She said that these huge carps and catfish had washed up after the hurricane caused Lake Michigan to overflow. When they found out they were getting their picture taken for the newspaper, Mother hurriedly cleaned Reba up and dressed her in a peasant dress. Though the newspaper didn't tell about Aunt Edna spanking Tim for lying about the fish [before she saw the fish herself], the radio station told that little detail, according to Reba.

I remember the hurricane because Gwen [a seven-year-old cousin] was babysitting me out in a park. I was apparently sick because I was being given Pepto Bismal. I remember her picking me up and a bunch of us running as huge trees threatened to topple all around us.

I almost didn't recognize Daddy in the picture. Sam [Brenda's husband] had to convince me it was him. [CORRECTION: Our father was not in the photo.] But this morning I took a better look and knew it was. Then I realized my son, Jason, 31, could almost pass as Daddy's double at that age. I showed Jason the picture this morning and told him he looks like Daddy did.

From my brother Wendel, who was three years old at the time of The Event:

I do have a distinct memory of the storm in the park. One of my older brothers (I guess they're all older) picked me up and carried me (and someone else probably carried Brenda), with branches falling all around, toward our house. [NOTE: This storm had deluged Kenosha a week before *The Event*. Source: *Kenosha Evening News*, June 3, 1954.]

From the Editor: A Big Fish Story

Again from sister Brenda:

I have some additional information about the famous Fish Epic, which has become entrenched in the family history, sure to be passed on to future generations.

Mother, surely a solid source, confirms the basics of the story I first reported. But there was a question that the source of the GREAT STORM may not have been a hurricane. Being two years old [CORRECTION: She was three.] at the time of this historic event, it's possible that I could have been wrong in this detail.

I do recall that when the monster fish were washed into what had been essentially a small pond before the storm hit, the manly kids of our family began slaughtering the captives.

From my brother Bonny, who was sixteen at the time but was not present during any part of The Event:

Tim and Gary, because the two of you are in the photo, and David, because you probably can remember this like it was just yesterday, how about clearing up a few details for people like me who didn't have any direct involvement and are only aware of *The Event* by stories and rumors handed down through the eons.

[NOTE: Here is where Bonny's analytical approach illustrates that historians, even when dealing with incomplete and contradictory sources, can begin to determine the facts.]

First, the details of the "capture": A.) bows & arrows, knives, and whatever were used to land the fish. B.) They were hooked with conventional fishing poles, line and hooks. C.) Something totally different?

(2) A "hurricane" really did hit Kenosha in the summer of 1954 causing Lake Michigan to overflow as Reba describes so vividly, and that Brenda also remembers — even though she was barely three years

old at the time? B.) There was a thunderstorm the night before that “trapped” the fish in a slough, or something similar. C.) Something totally different?

(3) The fish made a gourmet seafood meal for their captors and families. B.) They couldn’t be eaten because the slough, or something similar, was too polluted. C.) Something totally different?

(4) The man in the photo who is helping hold one of the fish is Dad; he and Uncle Russell came home from work early that day because of the hurricane that Reba remembers. B.) The man in the photo is a stranger. We know this because he is wearing a cap rather than the hat Dad usually wore to work. C.) Something totally different?

When one gets to my age, these important facts have long since been pushed into the far reaches of the mind to make way for more trivial occurrences.

From my cousin Tim:

Well, Bonny, I was about 7. [CORRECTION: He was nearly nine years old.] So my memory is petty vague. Here’s what I remember:

We caught the fish by hand, as the water was shallow.

A “storm” did push the water and fish into these shallow areas.

I don’t remember eating any of them. I think the health department told us not to.

I didn’t think the man in the photo was Uncle Guy. I never thought that myself until Brenda said it was.

From me:

I know all of you have probably addressed about every angle that can be taken about *The Event*, but since my mind still works at about half speed, an improvement over the past, and since I had reached the

From the Editor: A Big Fish Story

age of seven that summer, old enough to make mature observations, let me mention a few items as they relate to the various questions and eyewitness accounts and hearsay testimonies that have been offered.

I don't remember any storm the day before (which may mean that there was one), but I do remember that the day of *The Event* was sunny. As I recall, the area of water where we fished was caused not by a surge from Lake Michigan but was part of a small river running into the lake that had large pipes emptying into it, with the other end (toward the lake) blocked off by some type of gate or fence or something such. Tim and I spotted some large fish in the water and went home and told our mothers, and Aunt Edna spanked Tim for lying. We then persuaded Mother and Aunt Edna to go look for themselves.

The "fishing" must have begun around 8 a.m. because there were a number of students on their way to school who stopped on a bridge or walkway over the water to watch *The Event*.

I was too young to go in after the fish, but Gary and Russell (and perhaps Tim) swam around after the fish and stabbed them with butcher knives. My only role was helping to drag the fish onto shore and put them into sacks. (By the way, in the photo I'm the shirtless kid on the right side looking as if he has no idea what's going on.)

I don't remember Daddy being at *The Event* either, since he was at work. Although the man in the photograph resembles Daddy in some ways, I don't think Daddy knew about *The Event* until he got home from work.

Regarding a big storm, there was one in Kenosha while we were living there, and there may have been others. The one I remember, though, occurred at a different time than *The Event*. On the day of the storm, I remember walking home (with some other kids in our family, although I don't remember who) from a park once the rain started and

that by the time we got home the wind and rain were fierce. The storm dumped enough water to fill the streets, and a few people the next day were riding in small rowboats on the streets.

Despite the storm's size, though, it was not big enough to outdo *The Event*.

I hope this account clears up every question and misgiving — for it's THE TRUTH!!!

From brother Bonny again, who, by the way, may have developed his analytical mind by spending his professional career working in computer technology for Hewlett-Packard:

A couple of you responded to my email about how much more interesting the story of the capturing of the big fish has become over the years and wanted to know what I remembered. Now, gutless me, not wanting to show how little I knew about the situation, I decided to pose some questions to the actual participants for clarification. I am sorry to burst some bubbles, but here is the consensus of the responses, combined with my own recollections.

First, I was not there when the capture of these defenseless fish took place. I have an alibi. I was at a construction site where Dad and Uncle Russell worked in Waukegan, Illinois, a few miles south of Kenosha. I would go with them every day to try to get on as a carpenter's helper, without success. That should provide a big clue as to who the man in the photo ... isn't.

Other clues that the man is not Dad: 1.) It's hard to tell for certain, but it looks as if the man has a small mustache, which to my recollection, Dad never had. 2.) Dad usually wore a brimmed hat to work, not a billed cap. 3.) Finally, as Gary mentioned to me, the man in the photo is heavier looking than Dad.

From the Editor: A Big Fish Story

Brenda, now you are going to have to go back and let Jason know that he looks like a total stranger :-)

The fish had been confined to a “pond” of some sort in a river. They were captured using kitchen knives and bare hands. Traditional fishing tackle would have been, as Gary says, “Needlessly inefficient.”

Regarding the storm: there is no unanimous agreement of when it occurred. Had, though, there been a storm that day, of the intensity described by some, the workday at the construction site would have been rained out and we would have come home early. There could have been a thunderstorm the night before, but Brenda and Reba think it was that day. Gary and David say that, on one occasion, there was a storm with lightning, wind, falling branches, etc., when the Sloan/Marshall clans were in a nearby park. Maybe we have two separate storms that, in some minds, have been rolled into one.

In any event, there was no hurricane. Hurricanes are spawned in tropical latitudes, gaining force as they move across warm ocean waters. They begin to lose force once they make landfall.

There was no seafood feast that night. The health department warned that the water where the fish were captured was contaminated and they wouldn't be safe to eat.

Gary, regarding the questions you had of me: You asked, “Do you remember coming to my rescue when some bully was threatening me with a stick? I have long thought so. Will I now be disabused of the cherished notion that my big brother rescued me?”

Well, I don't remember it specifically, but I have done so many heroic things in my lifetime, I probably have just forgotten.

From my brother Gary, who was ten years old at the time of The Event:

Bonny, thanks for the coherent account of the way it (probably)

was. If errors have crept into your narrative, I presume David will straighten you out ☺. The conflicting recollections of the details surrounding *The Event* illustrate what psychologists are wont to say about memories: Once implanted, a false memory can have the authenticity of a true one. No wonder eyewitness testimony sometimes gets short shrift in a court of law.

I'm pleased you are now addressing weighty topics instead of trivial matters such as whether the global economy will rebound, whether the world can avert a nuclear holocaust, or whether anything existed before the Big Bang. Perhaps you might launch an inquiry into whether the Dallas Cowboys can win a Super Bowl any time in the 21st century. We are too old to fritter away our time with minutiae.

Sorting through the details of the fish event required a great deal of my relatives' time. Even then, uncertainty remains about some details.

Historians must spend much more time evaluating sources.

"Why," some might ask, "do JMC historians need to go to such efforts to verify sources?"

The answer is simple: Because, unlike a story of inedible fish, history is worth it.

We have in this issue of *Historiography* a lineup of excellent articles. Terry Lueck has written our lead essay, dealing with her search for the story of the final approval of the 19th Amendment. Leonard Ray Teel leads our roundtable about changes in JMC historical study in the past four decades. Yong Volz is the subject of our Q&A with a notable historian, and Mike Conway does our Q&A on his award-winning book *Contested Ground*.

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Narrative Resistance: The Deconstruction of a Journey

By Thérèse L. Lueck ©



Lueck

The train carrying the final state ratification of woman suffrage arrived in Washington, D.C., in the dead of night, initiating the stealthy enactment of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The “proclamation” of woman suffrage occurred in private. What role did the press, a train, and a letter play in the loss of the historic moment?

This essay recounts the dialogue between my research process and *the story that wanted to tell itself* in my quest to retrieve the moment that eluded history.

Through the present-mindedness embedded in my vision, I saw the crowds of suffragists greeting the train — had it arrived at a decent hour — and reasoned that, with cheering receptions as well as anti-suffrage protests along the way, the whistle-stop tour of the “Perfect 36th” ratification had no doubt taken longer than anticipated. I was soon disabused of this vision, but not of the significance of the unusual nature of the signing and its relationship to the train’s journey. And so began

Thérèse “Terry” Lueck is a professor emerita of the University of Akron and a former president of the American Journalism Historians Association. She is co-editor of the two-volume Women’s Periodicals in the United States.

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a journey of my own.

The locomotive and the printing press had long served as cultural symbols. From the metal of material culture to the written word of intellectual culture, trains and newspapers sutured America's westward expansion to its eastern establishment. Their symbols shaped cultural values, transforming regionalism into a national identity, enticing a nation of rugged individuals to embrace the emerging mass culture of the 20th century.

In 1920, newspapers documented the train's journey by covering the political action at each terminus. From Nashville, Tennessee, came the acknowledgement that, on August 24, the Tennessee governor certified the legislature's pro-suffrage vote and sent it by mail; and on August 26, the process of enactment was reported to have begun after the train's arrival in Washington, D.C. Amid the viciously partisan discourse of the suffrage debate that raged on despite ratification, there was neither a report of a grand send-off from Nashville's Union Station nor of protests at its departure. There was no coverage of crowds or whistle-stops. Neither did contemporaneous suffrage accounts record any fanfare. Therefore, like the papers of the times, historians have not recounted the sojourn of the ratification between the two historic events. Yet, this lack should not be read as insignificance. The journey transported the formal certification — a key piece of the Constitutional process — from the state that sealed the three-quarters majority to the nation's capital, and it preceded a peculiar proclamation of the amendment.

In Tennessee, desperation rose to the level of preventing the governor from certifying the vote, as a cast of formidable characters tried to thwart women's enfranchisement. One wealthy and influential individual leading the fight was the publisher of Nashville's evening newspaper. Publisher Edward Stahlman used his *Nashville Banner* as a mouthpiece,

securing front-page coverage for his fiery anti-suffrage speeches. Stahlman was also a former railroad executive with the Louisville & Nashville Railway, the region's major line for industry and commerce. In fact, it was aboard an L&N night train that anti-suffrage legislators had been spirited across the state line to create a filibuster. While the lack of a sendoff — pro or anti — for the governor's certification was still ponderous, perhaps nefarious interference intervened in the carriage of the hotly disputed keystone of the Constitutional amendment. A scenario of intrigue suggested itself.

As the 10:30 train pulled out of Nashville that morning, the courier tightened his grip on the precious cargo. Drawing both acclaim and criticism, his mission was nevertheless a noble one. At the destination, however, he would not be met by cheering and protesting crowds, nor would his cargo be led through the crowds to the halls of power. Forces were at work to delay the arrival of the train until the wee hours of the morning, when only a handful of reporters would be on hand to greet him and the cargo he carried.

The makings of a good story, but it is not history. There was no personal courier or special express. Perhaps, though, the train that chugged into this turning point of modern history could be described. The railroad kept meticulous records, from employee schedules and mechanical innovations to the timetables of an era when trains crisscrossed the Eastern United States in a busy plaid of whistles and deliveries. Historical railway timetable information is available, much of it online dating from about 1940. Since railways formed the backbone of their regions, regional railroad history, with incorporation of relevant national information, is archived with local museums. The Library of Congress also houses regional railway materials. Policy decisions are documented in the records of the Railroad Labor Board and the Association of American Railroads. Numerous archives display generations of locomo-

tive engines with their families of crew members. The Internet Archives at <https://archive.org/> houses a substantial collection of publications dealing with labor, political, and social issues affecting railroads, which in 1920 were reorganizing after governmental control during World War I.

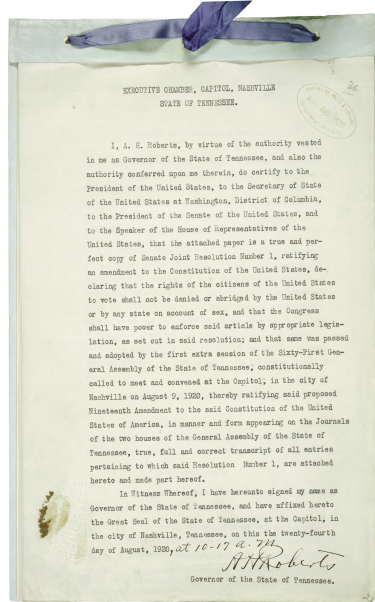
The industry publication the *American Railroad Journal* was established in 1832. The journal appeared under a number of titles and endured suspensions in publication. Throughout the decades, the magazine maintained a focus on the mechanical and engineering functions of the railways. Thick with the era's fascination with shiny metal innovation, the journal published details of essential components, from steel plates to boilers. In addition to the schematics of the cogs and gears that kept the industry in motion, the content-heavy journal covered railway personnel and published photographs. The 1910-1923 issues, scanned from the original pages at the University of Illinois, have been posted online by the HathiTrust archives. In August 1920, as *Railway Mechanical Engineer*, the articles ranged from discussions of laminated glass for train-car windows to the decisions of the Railway Labor Board, which was established as a means of returning to the railroads the control that had been nationalized during the war.

Serendipity would send me on the next segment of my journey. Attempting to contact the Nashville chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, I reached a railway museum curator. The chapter was inactive, but the curator of the Tennessee Central Railway Museum provided me with historical context by describing the mesh of regional railways that drove daily life in the 1920s. He spoke about the competing rail lines in Nashville and how the Tennessee Central Railway operated not out of Union Station in the heart of the city but from another terminal, which now houses the museum. The fact that the city had a

railway terminal besides the grand Union Station meant that the governor would have had an option other than the L&N-dominated Union Station when he committed his certification to a letter instead of sending a telegram. Using the Tennessee Central Railway terminal that was located among the warehouses on the riverfront may have circumvented untoward influence of the major railroads. Although the train's D.C. reception was again shrouded in mystery, perhaps I could now provide detail that would bring to life the train's departure and the historical journey itself.

Steam surged from the stack of the black engine, adding its clouds to the sultry summer sky as the train pulled away from the modest station on the banks of the Cumberland River. On board was the governor's certification of Tennessee's ratification of the 19th Amendment. By all other accounts, it was a routine 10:30 departure that morning.

Puffing its clouds of heat, the train pulled out of Nashville and snaked east along the river to make its deliveries and transfers, slowing for letters and newspapers along the way as it traversed the gently rolling countryside toward the mountainous region of East Tennessee. There, the Washington-bound would be entrusted to another regional railway for the journey



Tennessee's letter of certification of its ratification of the 19th Amendment. It is housed at the National Archives.

through the mountains and then, in Virginia, a turn northward to travel along the rainshadow of the Appalachians.

Despite frequent stops and transfers, the route of this regional railway was the shortest of the competing railways that traveled from Nashville to Washington. ... On the second day, the train arrived at the nation's capital in the dark, early morning hours of August 26, where a few men waited to report the event to the newspapers.

The makings of an engaging story. But it, too, skirts history. The fiction resides in the detail. Despite the many waystations and opportunities for news exchange along the Tennessee Central's route, there was no evidence of a train carrying the final ratification of suffrage toward Washington. The main character, the train, cannot even be described with certainty. In 1920, "the train" was characterized by the steam engine at its head; yet all steam engines were not alike. Distinctive in design and performance, trains assumed personalities, and coupled with the regularity of their routes, often nicknames. Photographs of steam engines and their historical documentation populate the sites of regionally curated online collections including NERAIL, the New England Railroad Photo Archive, and nationally focused sites such as <https://www.railpictures.net/>, which includes pre-1940 international examples. Collections maintained by railway enthusiasts feature an eclectic sampling of industry memorabilia.

More than one type of steam engine operated on the Nashville rails, with the Tennessee Central running locomotives built by the American Locomotive Company. However, even described in a historical retelling, "the train," singular and individualized, is a misnomer, a present-mindedness of phrasing that creates a false impression of what was a regionally disruptive journey using different railways with different engines in different parts of the country. In other words, "the train" that

left Nashville was in many ways not “the train” that reached Washington. When I realized that I could not describe the train as it deserved, I decided to write it out of the research. But I could not write it off. Determining the events, pacing the coverage, and pleading to be reckoned with in the historical record, its presence persisted.

Nashville’s competing daily newspapers and other contemporaneous accounts recorded that, in both temperament and temperature, it was a hot August in Nashville, the site of the last legislative vote needed to ratify woman suffrage. In the mornings, the Tennessean duly reported through its pro-suffrage lens the week of protest that followed the vote, and in the evenings Stahlman’s anti-suffrage Banner reported the events of the day, including the governor’s signing and his sending the certification by registered mail to the secretary of state. Both newspapers covered the last stages of woman suffrage as an increasingly male narrative, with pseudo-events capturing headlines and providing distraction as the anti-suffragists worked to nullify the ratification.

The historical chronicles of suffrage segue from the governor in Nashville to Washington, where the secretary of state was said to be waiting. Newspapers noted that the train arrived in the early hours of August 26, the chorus of reportage assuring readers that despite the hour the certification was promptly delivered via the State Department to the secretary, who waited at his home. In the privacy of his home that morning, the secretary of state signed the proclamation of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution before he went into the office.

A historical account, yes. But without the train and its journey, there is a gaping hole in the narrative. The author of *Tennessee Central Railway: History Through the Miles*, a book I relied on in charting the railway’s eastern route, confirmed that the Nashville-Knoxville segment, ironically, never ran as far east as Knoxville, but ended about 40

miles west of the city at the town of Harriman. There, cargo bound for Washington was transferred onto another railway. Yes, author Barton Jennings said, the Tennessee Central hailed the shortest route between Nashville and Washington, but it was more probable that a letter bound for Washington was taken to the railroad post office, which was attached to Union Station, and that it traveled out of Nashville on the L&N or its affiliated railway. Ah, perhaps intrigue was not dead. Stahlman was a force to be reckoned with, and Nashville newspaper battles were legendary. Someone could be shot for far less than ratifying a disputed federal amendment. The *Banner* stated that the governor's certification was sent by registered mail. In that case, Dr. Jennings noted, Stahlman would not have known on which train the letter departed. Likewise, those awaiting the arrival could not have been certain about which train brought the letter to town. In fact, no one at the train station would have been able to confirm that the letter arrived, since registered mail pouches were not opened on the platform but delivered directly to the post office. He suggested that I run this scenario past the curator of the Railway Mail Service Library.

Curator Frank Scheer agreed that the Tennessee Central Railway was not generally used for mail and provided an August 1920 schedule of mail trains that showed the routing was more likely to have been north to Cincinnati and then east. He confirmed that those in Washington would not have known on which train the letter arrived, since it would have been in a locked pouch and the public was not allowed on train platforms while mail pouches were unloaded. Dr. Scheer noted that at the outset of the process a courier would have prepared the governor's certification and taken it to the railroad post office where a registered mail clerk determined which train to send the registered letter on based on distribution and the fastest route. A devoted registered mail

clerk rode in the mail car leaving Nashville, and he carried the registered mail pouch when it was transferred to another train.

It was reported that the train arrived in Washington about 2 a.m., and that the certification was delivered to the State Department at 3:45 a.m. Dr. Scheer wondered how reporters knew what time a particular piece of mail arrived in town. Since newspapers would have known the futility of waiting at the train station, Dr. Jennings and I discussed how this was probably a night they paid men to wait at the post office or the State Department for that news point. Dr. Scheer was puzzled by the report that the letter was sent by registered mail, since registered mail was not ordinarily distributed outside business hours. That the letter was delivered to the State Department shortly before 4 a.m. suggested that it was a special delivery letter, which secured “immediate delivery” when it arrived at a post office. In Washington, special delivery was likely a 24-hour operation. For verification of his surmise, he copied our recent correspondence to the United States Postal Service Historian’s Office. The senior research analyst of postal history concurred with Dr. Scheer’s interpretation.

These waystations provided a richly sourced historiographic process, along with pedagogical implications. After a glimpse into our related fields, I was able to bring to journalism historiography the knowledge shared by those with a passion for America’s history as told through its railroads and postal service. This broadened perspective informed my focus on August 1920. With the final ratification’s arrival in Washington, women would be granted enfranchisement, which portended a rebalancing of power in a nation emerging from the great disruption of war. In sync with the typewriter, the familiar cadence of the train provided time and space for tradition to reassert control in the face of further social disruption.

Newspapers, trains, and the railway postal service were well established modes of transportation and communication in the industrialized nation, with newspapers the traditional means of news dissemination in the 20th century's nascent mass culture. Newspaper headlines do not shout the expected outcomes of routine events. In 1920, they did not announce that trains ran on time or that mail reached its destination. However, on August 24, the evening paper did record that the certification was contained in a letter that was sent by train, signaling that the final stage in the process of woman suffrage would proceed at a traditional pace. The reporting of the correspondence as a registered letter occasioned some historiographic wandering on my part, but the larger picture is that the inclusion of the detail of the letter and its mailing by train, as mail routinely traveled, signaled a context of contrast. While the governor chose to document his certification in a letter and to send it through the mail, the message was also sent in a telegram. The paper reported that the director of the state's Democratic women's steering committee telegraphed the news to the secretary of state.

About a week before the governor's certification, after Tennessee's ratification vote, opinion in Washington was that the governor could submit his certification via letter or telegram. Alice Paul, head of the National Woman's Party, encouraged the governor to telegraph the certification; she also urged the secretary of state to sign the proclamation immediately upon receipt of the telegram. The secretary demurred, saying that he would wait for the formal certification, unless there were legal threats or actions that would impede the Constitutional process. Tennessee's intervening week was filled with legal threats. With the mailing of the certification, the anti-suffrage focus shifted to the federal level in attempts to impede the enactment of a Constitutional amendment. Despite political obstruction for the duration of the train ride,

the secretary determined that he would wait for the governor's letter. In the comfort that the pace of tradition afforded, he equivocated, tempering his announcement by stating that he would sign the proclamation as soon as he received the certification. And he capped his decision to wait with a dismissal of women.

Members of the National Woman's Party waited for notification that the certification had arrived and that the secretary was ready to sign the proclamation. They arranged for a film crew to document the signing ceremony that granted 26 million women the right to vote. Tennessee's ratification arrived at the State Department at 3:45 a.m. and was verified. The women waited at their party headquarters, about two miles from the State Department, but they were not notified. The secretary was not at the State Department. He was at his home, where the ratification was then delivered. There, he signed it privately before going to the State Department, where he made it known that he had enfranchised women by signing the proclamation of the 19th Amendment of the Constitution. And so, in 1920, facilitated by a reliance on tradition with its guise of legitimacy and formality, women were denied the public moment that enfranchised them as citizens of the United States.

Ushering women into the public life of the nation in this manner denied the 70 years of women's lives spent in its pursuit. It is a moment lost to history. The impact of a symbolically empty pinnacle and the cost to the advancement of women is still unclear. The denial of their presence completed the symbolic annihilation of suffragists, who had already been written out of the press narrative. Conventional modes and comfortable routines reified tradition at a time of historic change, helping guarantee that, despite a Constitutional amendment, the status of women would not advance with the dawn of modern culture. Newspapers lapsed into familiar news routines as the pro-versus-anti coverage

of woman suffrage became the story of men's legal action and political sensationalism. Certifying the vote in a letter that would travel by train and arrive anonymously in Washington, the governor initiated the journey that would end with the nation's simultaneous enfranchisement and exclusion of women.

The secretary of state had reason for expediency. The wait for the train and the quaint delivery of a letter had given the antis time to launch an injunction to prevent his signing. Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the moderate woman suffrage group NAWSA, expressed empathy with the secretary's expediency. Stepping off the train from Nashville about the time the secretary was signing the proclamation, she joined him that evening to commemorate the enactment. The secretary's announcement of the reason for his clandestine signing reinserted women in the press narrative of woman suffrage. Instead of highlighting the pending injunction that hurried his hand before the start of business that day, he was widely quoted in the press as he laid the blame on women. It was their fault that he did not have the suffragists witness — or the press document — the proclamation of the 19th Amendment. A statesman seasoned in national two-party politics and public moments, he excluded women because he did not want to choose between the moderate and radical women's groups for representation at a ceremonial signing. And he certainly did not want to endure the catfight had he included both "rival" groups. Despite the enfranchisement, his justification along with its national dissemination in the press indicated the retention of women's lower-class status. Perhaps suffragists were not the only ones to recognize the power of symbol and imagery.

Woman suffrage was a movement that had increasingly come to rely on the spectacle of parades and protests to demonstrate the need for enfranchisement. Suffragists recognized the power of publicity and em-

braced media coverage to harness popular sentiment. Media effects are difficult to gauge, especially in a historical context. Effects are particularly hard to trace when they stem from a lack or an absence. But a century of evidence points to powerful loss. That fall, the Wilson administration did not reap the bounty of the woman vote for the Democratic party, as the Republicans won the White House with Warren G. Harding. In subsequent years, women's enfranchisement was not commemorated. Historians have documented the stalled progress of women's rights and cultural advancement in the wake of the 19th Amendment.

A century since woman suffrage, the process of uncoupling communication from transportation continues the trend of disembodied media that was ushered in by the telegraph. The railroad and the newspaper industries repositioned themselves in response to the innovations of 20th-century mass culture. In the 21st century, alongside a postal service in the throes of redefining its role, both railroads and the press survive, albeit as shadows of their former selves. A weakened press has once again been thrown into partisan discourse. Amid this discourse, the centennial of woman suffrage brought renewed focus to the gender inequity, racial injustice, and the class privilege that have persisted despite the Constitutional promise of "woman" suffrage made 100 years ago.

By the time of the enactment, the women who were deemed worthy of enfranchisement constituted but a sliver of the female population; those representatives of the gender were defined by race and class. "Woman" was further narrowed by the secretary of state. The press had bestowed members of the National Woman's Party with attributes — considered positive in the pro-suffrage press and negative in the anti-suffrage press — that identified them as the embodiment of the modern woman. President Wilson had maintained a relationship with Catt,

which aligned him with the moderate suffrage position as he appealed to Congress to pass suffrage and petitioned Tennessee's governor to call a special legislative session to secure the final ratification. However, the women who waited down the street for notification, the younger, activist suffragists, would also be enfranchised. They were those who embraced spectacle, using their bodies as symbols of women's underclass status, from a march that marked Wilson's inauguration to hunger strikes when they were jailed for picketing the White House. The secretary's denial of those women, the ones who waited down the street for his notice, was a repudiation of the modern woman and the social shift she brought with her. His blanket dismissal of women with the pointed exclusion of the modern woman may have effectively blunted the perceived need for federal consideration of race, class, and access. Evidence shouted in the headlines across America in August 2020 demonstrated that 100 years after the exclusionary enactment of the 19th Amendment the nation had yet to confront essential issues of privilege, equality, and human rights.

The clack of the train against the rails paces time, summoning tradition with a mantra that wards off change. The mesmerizing metaphor travels in sync with the clack of the typewriter keys as their words fill the space of the train's journey with the sound and fury of the modern world.

The whistle of the train beckons me. The next stop is history. All aboard!

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Historical Roundtable: Changes in JMC History Since the First AJHA Conference

By Leonard Ray Teel, Maurine Beasley, David Copeland,
Michael Murray, and David Sloan ©



Teel

During the 2019 national AJHA conference in Dallas, Texas, Dr. Ross Collins, the AJHA’s president, arranged for four distinguished JMC historians to speak on a President’s Panel. The discussion focused on “Changes in Journalism History” in the thirty-seven years since the first AJHA conference. Given the significance of the topic, *Historiography* here shares their views for a wider public.

All four Roundtable members not only are pre-eminent scholars but also have held leadership roles in the AJHA. Sloan founded the organization, and Beasley and Murray attended the first conference, which was held in October 1982 in Dallas. Copeland began attending when he was a graduate student. All four are former AJHA presidents and have received the AJHA’s Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement.

Leonard Ray Teel, professor emeritus at Georgia State University, has published five books, including two journalism histories that won national awards. He joined the AJHA in 1984, served as its president in 1990-1991, and received its Kobre Award in 2014.

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For this Roundtable, I've asked them to expand on the remarks they made at the 2019 convention.

I especially want to thank Ross Collins for organizing the panel and for allowing me to use the questions he raised.

Q: What has changed in journalism history research?



Beasley

Beasley: Topics pursued today are far broader than in the early 1980s. Scholars now are much more interested in studying alternative journalism and pursuing the journalistic voices of marginalized segments of the population in



Copeland

Maurine Beasley is a professor emerita of the Philip Merrill College of Journalism, University of Maryland College Park. She is the author, editor or co-editor of eight books dealing mainly with the experiences of Washington women journalists. She received her Ph.D. in American Studies from George Washington University.



Murray

David Copeland is the A. J. Fletcher Professor, Distinguished University Professor, and Professor of Journalism at Elon University. He is the author of twelve books, more than forty journal articles and chapters, and series editor for thirty-seven volumes on media history. He earned his Ph.D. in mass communication from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Sloan

Michael D. Murray is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Missouri's St. Louis campus. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Prior to that, he worked for CBS News and the News Election Service.

David Sloan is a professor emeritus of the University of Alabama. He has authored or edited more than fifty books. He received his Ph.D. in mass communication and American history from the University of Texas.

response to efforts to diversify higher education. Also, journalism historians have been increasingly influenced by the field of cultural studies along with changes in news delivery presented by social media and other forms of technology. These have produced new questions about the origins of journalism, its practices, and its impact on political, economic and social structures.

Copeland: One of the big changes during the past 37 years has been the expansion of media history as a discipline and as a focus of doctoral studies. For many of us, our advisors were either Ph.D.'s in history who somehow migrated into the world of media, or communications/journalism scholars who found themselves immersed in history for many reasons. Because of this, it became easier for those with an interest in the history of media to find programs that were welcoming to them, who provided a history focus, and then, sometimes specialized in aspects/time periods/issues in the history of media.

Because the field expanded and more people began to focus on media history, we, media historians, began looking at things more broadly. We began to approach our research in many different ways. Media history scholars prior to the formation of the AJHA looked at the way media affected the growth and development of the nation; but as the growth of the AJHA and media history programs progressed, we have been able to broaden our understanding of the importance of the media lens as an interpreter of almost all elements of America's development.

Murray: There is a much greater appreciation for some very important but previously under-researched and overlooked areas. That would also include some individual contributors, especially people in the field of

broadcast journalism who worked behind the scenes. And there are also sub-topics within the research specialty that have gained attention but were not previously explored by journalism history scholars. There have been a lot of important articles and excellent books including biographies which were published since we first got together for an organizational meeting in Dallas. This would include the key contributors in the field including especially the examination of the work of key decision-makers versus on-air “talent.”

Today there is much more consideration given to the history of handling controversy and conflict within the media organizations themselves, and also, of course, coverage of “live” and remote events, which you didn’t see thirty or forty years ago. In terms of my primary focus on CBS News, for example, as a national broadcast leader, there have been a lot of important articles about particular programs such as those from the *See it Now* and *CBS Reports* documentary series. And these have included some projects looking at how a traditional “over the air” network approached controversial topics back then and how those fit in the broader scheme of things. Today there is also more attention being given to independent efforts in terms of examining investigative reporting projects and informational documentaries; and trying to identify potential bias up-front.

Investigations into the role of minorities and women would have to be considered the most obvious of the old omissions and in terms of looking at the growth in the field of broadcast history research. Some broadcasters who might have been considered of secondary importance have been re-examined in light of evolution and expansion in the field. And the most basic questions about objectivity and ethical considerations have been revisited a lot over the past few decades. This has happened within the context of special concerns of bias, for example, so

that the role of many of the landmark programs and the key people associated with those have been reevaluated to a much greater extent.

As a by-product of the additional attention by media scholars, the general public has had an opportunity to get a much better perspective into the workings of some of the major figures in broadcast news, including those people working behind the scenes while still appreciating prominent people, the Murrows and Cronkites, in front of the microphone and camera. Some senior members of the AJHA might recall the effort our organization made to get special recognition for Edward R. Murrow on a U.S. Postage Stamp closer to the mid-point of our development 26 years ago (1994) to honor his legacy. This was an initiative I led, honoring his work at CBS News from decades before. More recently, I tried to get the postal service to do the same for Walter Cronkite but discovered some opposition from a political point of view. Thankfully, after the passing of Gwen Ifill of the PBS *NewsHour*, a Black Heritage U.S. Postage Stamp, the 43rd in that series, was issued to celebrate and honor Ifill's work. This is all to acknowledge that it typically takes at least 20 years to begin to appreciate someone's significance in the field of broadcast news, but viewed within the context of what came before, there seems to be a growing awareness and sensitivity to issues which helps to drive some of that better appreciation today.

Sloan: So much has changed, it's hard to know where to begin. One thing is the amount of research that is being produced, presented, and published. In part, that's a result of more outlets being available. After 1982, the journal *American Journalism* began publication. A couple of other journals also started up, and a few that predated 1982 have continued to publish. As for research papers, the AJHA annual conference and the Symposium on the 19th Century Press obviously have made

major new opportunities available. In fact, JMC historians may have more conferences for their research than researchers from any other JMC area. Along with articles and papers, the number of books has soared. Part of the reason is changes in technology that make publishing easy, but also important is the number of book manuscripts that JMC historians have produced. Likewise, more doctoral dissertations on JMC history probably have been written since 1982 than the total written in all the years previously.

Q: How have methods changed?

Beasley: They have changed, due in part to technological changes. Historians now can do much more research via computers. They no longer need to spend hours with microfilm reels. They can use “big data,” allowing for analysis of the front pages of hundreds of newspapers, for example. Many more publications are available electronically, giving wide access to both primary and secondary sources, but much manuscript material unfortunately still has not been digitalized.

Copeland: As the field expanded, I think that we have begun applying the methodologies of multiple fields to our understanding of media’s relationship to society. As a result, we have begun to create new and sometimes differing interpretations of our understanding of media and society. I also think that, as media history as a field separate from “traditional” history has expanded, scholars from other disciplines have begun to study media more. By having a scholar from, say, psychology or political science study media through a focus that would be used in that specific discipline, we also get differing ways of interpreting media’s effects during certain periods.

I think it's also important to remember that, with any methods or approaches to history, we must keep our research and the methods we use in focus with the times that we are studying. Present-mindedness, as David Sloan has said many times, is a sure way to misunderstand and misinterpret the past. Any method that we use to study history regardless of the discipline must keep its study firmly rooted in the times that are being studied.

Murray: With all of the change in terms of additional access, the primary methods have remained pretty much the same. But those methods have evolved to a large extent. The approaches have become much more sophisticated when it comes to focusing on some of the key issues that were previously ignored. If you just take a look at the most recent issue of *American Journalism*, you will see one article about Walter Lippmann by Julien Gorbach and another one about the marketization of broadcast news in the UK authored by Madeleine Liseblad. They are both looking at subjects that have been widely explored by media historians but they are taking an entirely different kind of look at the content. They are both well-designed, carefully sourced studies providing a different approach to two important subjects. In both instances, Gorbach and Liseblad employ inventive methodological approaches which go “against the grain” in terms of the more traditional approaches and a lot of earlier research on those two topics as they relate specifically to journalism objectivity and “detachment” in the case of Walter Lippmann or British broadcasting’s resistance to change in the piece evolving from Professor Liseblad’s dissertation.

Sloan: The most dramatic change has been the proliferation of information on the Internet. In 1982 we were only starting to think about the

use of computers, and hardly any professors had them. Today, there are almost 2 billion websites and around 5 billion web pages. I can recall in the late 1980s waiting three weeks to get a book through interlibrary loan and spending months traveling to archives — for information that today I can almost be certain to find online within minutes.

Less dramatic, but certainly of just as much importance — perhaps more — has been the increased knowledge of methods that today’s historians have. In 1982 most historians in our field were unfamiliar with common terms such as “primary source” and “present-mindedness.” That’s no exaggeration. Today the majority of our historians understand the methods of historical research. I credit that improvement in no small degree to Jim Startt. He attended the second AJHA national conference in 1983, and his influence (particularly through the book *Historical Methods in Mass Communication*) on our historians’ mastery of methods has been immense.

Q: *How has scholarship changed?*

Beasley: Has the discipline grown? No, if one considers formal class instruction in journalism history in academic institutions. Journalism education is cutting back on history to offer more classes related to technologies. In the early 1980s educators still were preparing students to work for mainstream print and electronic outlets; journalism history stressed development of these institutions. Now students need to be prepared for many more areas including podcasting, video production and graphic presentation of information.

Copeland: From the inception of the AJHA, there has been a growth in the discipline. We especially saw this in the late 1990s and the begin-

ning of the twenty-first century, I think. AJHA conventions had good attendance and many paper and panel submissions for each convention. The addition of the Margaret Blanchard prize for dissertations revealed that quality pieces of research were being conducted on media's history — and not solely in journalism or communications doctoral programs.

Murray: The scholarship in broadcast news has evolved and is more likely to reflect today a greater awareness and comparison to counterparts in print journalism. There was a time — and not long ago — when basic history textbooks and key publications ignored most of the contributions by broadcast journalists, almost to the point of the ridiculous. That has changed considerably. The scholarship has benefited by having public historians like Douglas Brinkley, a contributing editor to *American Heritage* and the history commentator for CNN, writing a biography of Walter Cronkite. This isn't everyone's "cup of tea" but I think it raises awareness of the impact that broadcasting and some individual broadcasters have had on modern American history. I also have in mind a book I often refer to with graduate students as "the revenge of media history." *Fault Lines* is a book by Kevin Kruse and Julian Zelizer that they use as a basic text for a course they teach at Princeton University called "The United States since 1974." What some academics might regard as an antidote to "fake news," that book takes fragmented themes about the modern press and weaves them together with special emphasis on media coverage of politics and manipulation by politicians. It's definitely worth a read.

Sloan: Obviously there's a lot more scholarship, but there are other changes as well. As I mentioned in my answer to the previous question, most JMC historians understand methods better, and so their research

has improved.

Many, perhaps most, are writing from different philosophical and ideological perspectives than in 1982. At that time, half or more of our JMC historians were writing from a Developmental perspective, interested in how professional JMC practices had originated and developed over time. Today, very few write from that perspective. More seem to be Progressive ideologically, and others attempt to apply different “theories” (such as Cultural Studies). There’s also much more attention to what we might call alternative subjects (alternative, that is, to mainstream subjects) such as women and members of minority groups.

It’s good that such subjects are getting more attention and that historians are offering different perspectives. Alongside that change, though, there’s now comparatively more attention given to recent history and, unfortunately, less to older subjects (those, let’s say, before 1940), making one wonder if some of our “historians” are more interested in contemporary issues than in history. When you forget the past, you destroy history.

Q: What challenges do we continue to face as journalism and mass media historians?

Beasley: Journalism history is under threat today just as it was in 1982 when the AJHA first met in Dallas. Then we were threatened by social scientists who sought to dominate the research end of journalism education. Now technology is threatening to wipe out history as a major field of study in the academic research itself. We can survive by interjecting material on history into classes in mass communication. Also, we can teach media literacy from an historical perspective. We must strive to play a crucial role in equipping students, along with the general pub-

lic, to make sense of the technology that surrounds them.

Copeland: I think that the push by many journalism and media programs to keep up with the rapidly changing world of communications in the twenty-first century has caused a panic with many universities. One of the first casualties has been courses in media history for undergraduates, as I'm sure everyone answering this question will note. When we remove history from the curriculum, we do a disservice to our students and to the nation. Because media history entails more than simply understanding the development of media over time, we diminish our students' understanding of just how important the media have been in all aspects of our nation's growth and development. I'm talking solely about the United States, but the same would be true globally. Our university's media history course was effectively killed off five years ago when a new curriculum was adopted that focused more on new technology. "We need something a little more modern" is the administrative quote that still hangs with me about why media history was being scuttled. But, as *New York Times*' columnist Maureen Dowd said at a breakfast I attended with her, "The best *Times* reporters are those steeped in history and literature." Getting all within the broad discipline of communications to realize that what Dowd said is true is certainly a challenge for all media historians.

Murray: Like many of our brethren in the more general field of history, it is sometimes easy to become myopic and forget about the "big picture." And like so many of those doing media-related research we will continue to be second-guessed regarding the topics with which we are most closely associated. In my case, on the 40th anniversary of the "Murrow-McCarthy" *See It Now* program, I was asked to provide an

overview of what had happened so many years ago. After concluding the presentation, a history professor from my wife's institution approached me and said: "I thought you did a pretty good job with it but it truly amazes me that someone could build an entire academic career writing about just one prominent individual." In the briefest moment, I almost went "Marshall McLuhan" on him to say: "You Know Nothing of my Work!" But better angels held me back. If memory serves, that's when I started talking to him about Alistair Cooke.

Sloan: JMC historians continue to face a variety of challenges. In fact, they may be bigger than in 1982.

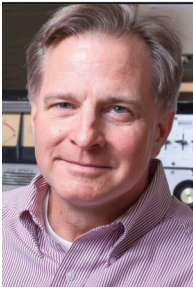
Despite the efforts of the AJHA, the entire field of JMC education has grown even more oriented toward practical occupational matters and toward theory and social-science methodology than it was in 1982. That means that many professors, administrators, and students see history as having a peripheral place in career planning as well as in the curriculum. So history professors face obstacles. Some teach at schools that don't even offer history.

At some schools, on the other hand, history thrives — which leads to the question of "Why?" Much of the explanation, I don't doubt, has to do with the historians at those schools. There are exceptions, but history probably tends to do poorly at schools where the history professors are pedestrian historians, and it does well where the professors who teach history are productive historians and good teachers. So, even though we might want to blame administrators and social-science theorists for the problems that history faces, the greatest challenge is for professors in JMC history to be very good as historians.

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Book Award Interview

By Mike Conway ©



Conway

Mike Conway won the 2020 book award from the American Journalism Historians Association for his historical account *Contested Ground: The Tunnel and the Struggle over Television News in Cold War America* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2019). An associate professor of journalism at the Indiana University Media School, Conway received his Ph.D. in mass communication at the University of Texas at Austin.

Q: *Give us a brief summary of your book.*

Conway: A 1962 documentary on a Berlin Wall tunnel escape brought condemnation from both sides of the Iron Curtain. The strong reaction was not limited just to the topic, but it was against the medium itself.

The Tunnel was produced for American network television.

The controversy and the rise of television news reveal a critical juncture in American journalism and media history as the Cold War entered one of its most dangerous periods. The surprisingly fast ascendance of television news as the country's top choice for information signaled the public's acceptance but threatened the self-defined leadership role of

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print journalism as well as the implicit cooperation among government officials and reporters on Cold War issues.

NBC's Reuven Frank is at the center of the book, as producer of *The Tunnel* and creator of the most popular journalism source of the period, NBC's nightly newscast, *The Huntley-Brinkley Report*. The production and reception of the documentary, and all of television news, bring into focus a major upheaval in American news communication and the boundary work involved as government leaders, journalism competitors, and other groups fought over the shifting media landscape.

Q: *How did you get the idea for your book?*

Conway: I knew when I met legendary NBC producer Reuven Frank in 2003 that I wanted to dig into his work during the early decades of American television news. He was one of the first with a strong vision of how television news would be different from, and more personal than, print journalism. He created and produced NBC's nightly newscast, *The Huntley-Brinkley Report*, which was the most popular journalism platform in the United States for most of the 1960s.

I spent a few years in archives and hit some dead ends because of the lack of primary sources. I finally decided to put together a conference paper on his documentary, *The Tunnel*, about the daring escape plan under the Berlin Wall in 1962. I became frustrated because the production and reception of the broadcast could not be easily explained using our traditional silos of historical research. Frank's work was not just journalism, it was also broadcasting, television, and documentary work. That forced me to dig into the histories of each area to better understand the documentary and the disparate reactions.

After what I thought was a tortured conference presentation, fellow

historian Dr. Michael Stamm of Michigan State pulled me aside. He saw my dilemma as an entire book project. It was his idea to look at *The Tunnel* through the lens of these different approaches to media. With his inspiration, I was able to put together a book proposal and get a publishing contract.

Writing the book proved much more difficult than the original idea.

Q: *Tell us about the research you did for your book: What were your sources, how did you research your book, how long did you spend, and so forth?*

Conway: It's hard for me to separate my broadcast history research projects because I work on several at a time. As mentioned earlier, when I conducted oral history interviews with Reuven Frank in 2003, I started to think about a future project. I got more serious about it after I published my first book, *The Origins of Television News in America: The Visualizers of CBS in the 1940s*.

I began to see this book as the second in a trilogy about the first decades of television news in the United States. Reuven Frank died in 2006 and left his papers to Tufts University, which is also the home of Edward R. Murrow's archive. I was one of the first scholars to work in Frank's archive and that helped me understand more about Frank's journalistic journey and ideas on effective television news.

Because of the dearth of available historic news broadcasts, I had to dig deeper into other primary sources to understand the era. Some of the more important archives I visited included the Library of American Broadcasting at the University of Maryland, the NBC archives at the Wisconsin Historical Society, The Paley Center for Media, the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin, The

National Archives, the Library of Congress, and several others.

Because *Contested Ground* concerns an escape project under the Berlin Wall, I also spent considerable time digging into Cold War history, so I could put this journalistic work into an appropriate political and cultural context. I spent time in Berlin familiarizing myself with the locations that were important in the tunnel escape.

Q: Besides the sources you used, were there any others you wish you had been able to examine?

Conway: I spent a couple of years trying to track down the early *Huntley-Brinkley Report* newscasts. I finally came to the sad realization that very little of that era was saved. Even though that newscast was the most popular way for Americans to learn about their world from the late 1950s to the late 1960s, we do not have a systematic record of those broadcasts. I was able to track down scripts, and even the stripped-out audio of the newscasts for some years, but not enough to conduct a legitimate analysis of the broadcasts.

Q: Based on your research for the book, what would you advise other historians in our field about working with sources?

Conway: I would love to see more journalism and media historians get involved in studying broadcast news history. But at the same time, I have to caution that it is very difficult because of the lack of archived radio and television news programs. You have to do a lot of digging to come up with primary sources.

Q: What were the challenges you faced in researching your book?

Conway: Even though television news has been the most popular and trusted format for journalism in the United States since the early 1960s, the amount of academic research on this platform is negligible compared to the focus on print journalism. In its place, historians and others have used memoirs and anecdotal evidence to frame the broadcast news era. I have found over the years that it is difficult to challenge accepted historical ideas, even if they aren't based on rigorous research, especially if the actual broadcasts are not available for study.

Q: *Is it possible to get too close to a research subject? How do historians maintain their neutrality of viewpoint when conducting and interpreting research?*

Conway: I don't believe there is such a thing as "neutrality of viewpoint" in historical scholarship, just as there isn't "objectivity" in journalism. Instead, be willing and eager to challenge your beliefs. The key is to see your research thesis or book proposal as the beginning. Let the evidence and your curiosity take you from there. When I find a primary source or other evidence that doesn't seem to fit what I expected, I need to explore the discrepancy and change my focus if needed. My journal articles and books never end up where I thought they would go. That is the frustration and excitement of historical research for me.

Q: *What new insights does your book provide?*

Conway: My book focuses on one documentary to look at the rise of television news in the United States and the resistance from various groups to this new platform for journalism. *The Tunnel* documentary wasn't just journalism, television, broadcasting, or a documentary; it

was all of those things and can only be understood by studying all of those areas. Plus, the politics of the Cold War hung over all of American journalism in this era.

I was also able to use declassified government documents to reveal the behind-the-scenes cooperation and conflict between the American government and journalists. In many ways, both the press and government leaders celebrated the freedom of the press for public consumption while working much closer together behind the scenes, often using Cold War threats from the Soviet Union as reasons for the cooperation.

Q: *What findings most surprised you?*

Conway: Reuven Frank wrote a 32-page memo to his NBC News staff in 1962 on the strengths of television news and how it is different from newspapers. That memo, often called “the bible,” became a touchstone to generations of television journalists and its ideas are still a cornerstone of video journalism to this day.

Until I started digging into *The Tunnel* documentary and Frank’s career, I didn’t realize the memo was written right after his long struggle to have the Berlin Wall escape documentary broadcast on NBC. According to Frank, newspapers provide information while television involves a “transmission of experience.” He felt vindicated in his approach to producing the documentary and the strong response from the public and critics. The connection was only apparent when I combined broadcast and documentary history research.

Q: *What advice would you give to people in our field who are considering doing a book in JMC history?*

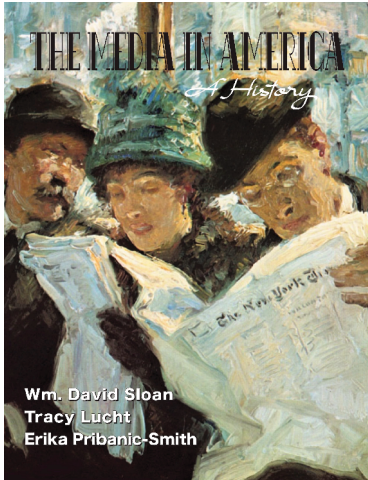
Conway: First of all, it will take much longer than you expect, especially if it's your first book. If you are not on strict tenure deadline, don't push yourself on a quick publication date. Allow the evidence to take you where it leads. The more you struggle to make sense of the primary sources, the better the final product will be.

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Historian Interview

Yong Volz ©



Volz

Yong Volz, a professor at the University of Missouri, serves as the vice president of the Chinese Communication Association and is a former head of the History Division of the AEJMC. She has won several top paper awards from the AEJMC and won the *Asian Journal of Communication* Best Paper Award for International Communication Research. She was awarded the University of Missouri's 2017 Alumnae Anniversary Faculty Award as well as the 2020 Jordan Hoyt Tribute to Women Award for pro-

fessors who are “notable for their teaching excellence and/or other contributions to the education of women.” She was a 2013-14 Reynolds Journalism Institute Faculty Fellow and currently is the Roger Gafke Faculty Fellow, a position offered through the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation. She received her Ph.D. in mass communication with a minor in history from the University of Minnesota.

***Q:** Tell us a little about your family background — where you were born and grew up, your education, and so forth.*

Volz: Both my parents were engineers. My father, hailing from a peasant family in a central Chinese village, grew up in poverty and did not

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have his first pair of shoes until the age of 13. He worked very hard to earn a free ride to a top university majoring in mechanical engineering and eventually moved up to become the head of a large government research institute. My mother is from a Chinese ethnic minority group in the landlocked province of Anhui and is the youngest of five sisters. She worked in the same research institute as my father, first as a chemical engineer and then taking on a sales job, until retirement in the 2000s.

Both my brother and I were born in Beijing during the Cultural Revolution, a turbulent time of mass violence and political dislocation. My family moved to Shanghai when I was six. At 12, I was fortunate and privileged enough to get into one of China's highest-ranking middle and high schools located in western Shanghai. The school was a boarding school, about three to four hours of travel time from home. Staying in a tiny little dorm room with seven other girls in bunk beds for six years, I nonetheless very much enjoyed the freedom, independence, and friendship as well as the rigorous academic training I had during that time. After high school, I moved even farther from home, this time back to Beijing to attend the top journalism program at Renmin University of China. I stayed to pursue a master's in the same program while self-studying law and passing the Chinese bar exam during the first semester.

My life path took me to Hong Kong in 1998, one year after Britain returned Hong Kong to the Chinese government after more than a century and a half of colonial rule. It was a lifetime opportunity for me to observe and experience first-hand the political and social transition of a society from colonial to Communist rule. I did my master's in communication at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, where most of my professors were Ph.D.s trained at the universities of Pennsylvania, Wisc-

Historian Interview

consin, Minnesota, Michigan or Indiana. Following in their footsteps, I moved to the United States in 2000, this time across the Pacific Ocean from home. I did my doctoral study in mass communication with a minor in history at the University of Minnesota and spent a year on the Stanford campus while completing my dissertation.

Q: *What did you do professionally before going into teaching?*

Volz: During my high school years, I became one of the few student reporters working for *Shanghai Youth Daily*, a newspaper that had a circulation of about one million at that time. While in college, I worked as a special correspondent or a freelancer for several magazines and newspapers and spent a semester as a news intern at the *China Economic Daily*, a central government newspaper specializing in business, finance, industrial trends, and market movements. I have to say that I became disenchanted with working as a journalist in China after my internship and decided to pursue a life in academia instead.

Q: *Where, and what courses, have you taught?*

Volz: While a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota, I taught a skills class on gathering and assessing information as well as a theory class on global communication. Since coming to the University of Missouri, I have been mainly teaching History of American Journalism, an undergraduate core course for all journalism majors, and qualitative research methods courses for our master's and doctoral programs. In addition, I have taught a media history graduate course, an introductory media theory course, and doctoral research seminars. I also taught in China as a visiting professor on topics of media literacy and media soci-

ology.

I enjoy teaching all these courses especially because they provide me with a structured opportunity to update my own readings on different subject areas, refresh my knowledge and perspectives, and generate new ideas for my research. Plus, there is no better job in the world than being a professor to help the intellectual and professional growth of young people!

Q: Tell us about your background in history: When did you first get interested in historical research? How did your education prepare you to be a historian, etc.?

Volz: Both my father and older brother were avid readers of Chinese history. So growing up I always had shelves of history books at home. I got interested in history primarily through my reading of Chinese literature while in middle school. But instead of the classical poetry, fiction, and drama, such as *Dream of the Red Chamber*, I was more fascinated with the literary work from the Republican era in the 1920s and the 1930s. The historical experiences as fictionalized in the works of Zhang Ailing, Ding Ling, Feng Zikai, Lin Yutang, and such were full of tension, conflict, dilemmas, and struggles as the society was transitioning into modernity. I was enchanted by this most interesting time of the Republican era and thus began to read some historical work on that.

While in graduate school at Renmin University, I took several journalism history classes from Professors Fang Hanqi and Zheng Chaoran, who rekindled my interest in Chinese Republican-era history. I eventually wrote my thesis tracing the Chinese history of journalism education under Western influences from the 1910s to the 1980s. My interest in journalism history continued, and I wrote a thesis at the Chinese Uni-

Historian Interview

versity of Hong Kong, examining the historical trajectory of the ideational change from Maoist doctrine of “masses” to the market-oriented “audience” in China’s media reform after the 1980s. When starting my doctoral program in communication at Minnesota, I decided to pursue a history minor and take as many history courses as possible. Those courses, offered by Professors Liping Wang, Ted Farmer, Ann Waltner, and Thomas Wolfe, to name just a few, opened my eyes to historiography and various areas such as postcolonial history, global history, and Chinese modern history. At the JMC school, of course I had the two best mentors one could hope for, who guided me through my historical inquiry: Professors Chin-Chuan Lee and Hazel Dicken-Garcia.

Q: Who or what have been the major influences on your historical outlook and work?

Volz: There have been numerous influences on my historical outlook at different points in my academic career. I am ultimately indebted to my doctoral advisor, Dr. Chin-Chuan Lee. Trained as a political scientist and known in Western academia as a world-class scholar in global communication, Dr. Lee is also renowned in Chinese societies for his transformative work on Chinese media history. He always pushed me to ask questions that are theoretically informed but are also deeply rooted in historical realities, to be conceptually and methodologically conscious, to unravel various layers of meaning and significance, and to strive to turn rich historical details into meaningful insights. He is particularly interested in the interplay between journalists and their life-worlds, asking the question: “How do the tumults of modern Chinese politics impinge on journalists to make difficult choices at key moments, all with profound and often unpredictable implications for their life and ca-

reer?” His way of historical inquiry formed a foundation for my own research.

I took several classes with the late Dr. Hazel Dicken-Garcia, whose *Journalistic Standards in Nineteen-Century America* showed me how a solid historical analysis can achieve both descriptive beauty and explanatory power. She always warned students that historical inquiry cannot be served by short-cuts and it takes heart and soul and discipline to quest for historical truth. She introduced me to the key JMC history works, edited my journalism history paper for publication, guided me through job interviews, and came to my wedding. We took numerous walks together around Como Lake in St. Paul during my last year of doctoral study at Minnesota, during which we had unforgettable conversations on history, politics, and sometimes just personal stories. She truly exemplifies the best kind of historian through both scholarship and teaching. I miss her so much!

I have drawn inspiration and insights from many other historians. I will only mention one in this interview: Michael Schudson. I read his *Discovering the News* while I was in graduate school in Hong Kong. I was intrigued by the way he asked the questions and developed compelling and convincing theoretical arguments in an easy flow of storytelling. I have been following his work ever since. I have a shelf of all his books and often bought a couple of copies of the same book so I can read them both in my office and at home. His contrarian approach to the conventional wisdom of history is powerful and impactful. As Silvio Waisbord summarizes, “probing widely circulating truisms has been a hallmark of Michael Schudson’s work on the press, citizenship, and democracy.”

Q: *What are the main areas or ideas on which you concentrate your histor-*

ical work?

Volz: My research centers on journalists themselves. Working primarily in the tradition of historical sociology, I look at the formation and reformation of journalists as a distinctive occupational group at different historical times and in different societies. I am particularly interested in the career path, professional mobility, and collective identity of journalists in the broader historical context of social movements and social stratification.

Q: *Summarize for us the body of work — books, journal articles, and so forth — that you have done related to history.*

Volz: The historical cases of journalists I have examined span three centuries and are from both the United States and China. My published work includes studies on the Western missionary journalists in late nineteenth-century China, the rise of the first generation of Chinese women journalists at the turn of the twentieth century, U.S.-trained journalism educators and their trans-cultural practices in China from the 1920s to 1940s, the social composition of American foreign correspondents in China in the first half of the twentieth century, the gender disparities among Pulitzer Prize winners from 1917 to 2010, the formation and identity work of American women journalist associations in the post-feminist era in the 1980s, and the key players in the journalism field through a historical analysis of American journalism awards from the 1960s to 2000s, among other topics. My work has appeared in book chapters and in journals such as *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*, *Journalism Studies*, *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *American Journalism*, *Media, Culture & Society*, and *International Com-*

munication Gazette.

In addition to traditional scholarship, I had a fellowship opportunity in 2013-2014 to develop an oral history project — The Herstory — to document varied experiences of senior women journalists who made inroads into the traditionally male-dominated field of journalism from the 1960s through the 2000s. The 40+ oral history interviews we conducted, averaging more than three hours each, disclosed the most authentic and intimate personal reflections on the women's journalistic careers. These oral histories not only recount their individual lives and careers but also record their memories of JAWS, a women journalists' association founded in the wake of the second feminist movement in the 1980s, through which these women manifested their deep commitment and continuing work in women's empowerment. We spent the next year creating a website, featuring these oral histories and archival materials of JAWS in an effort to make history public and to serve as a research and teaching resource for scholars and teachers. The website, <http://www.herstory.rjionline.org/>, won an Honorable Mention Award from Awwwards and has since been visited by scholars, journalists, and other interested people from dozens of countries.

Q: *We realize that it is difficult to judge one's own work — and that the most accomplished people are often the most modest — but if you had to summarize your most important contributions to the field of JMC history, what would they be?*

Volz: I am far from being accomplished. If anything, I hope to contribute to the field of JMC history in two ways. One is to explore and promote alternative methods of doing media history. Archival research has long been the hallmark and foundation of historians' work. I myself

am a firm believer in the importance of original archival research in historical scholarship. My dissertation and a few of my earlier studies were based primarily on materials I found from exploring more than 20 archives in mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong and across various states in the U.S. At the same time, however, I became increasingly aware of the absence of voices from those considered historically “insignificant” or “peripheral.” I found that in these archives, the majority of those “un-extraordinary” journalists, as well as women and minority journalists, have only a minimal presence. Such people have left few writings about themselves, their careers and work experiences, and their views and concerns about journalism at a historical time. I share the concern with many others in our field that with the missing voices, we may have also missed some basic yet essential building blocks of media history.

Oral history, therefore, as a vital access point to the understanding of plurality yet connectedness of human experiences, can be used as an alternative source of historical evidence. One of my studies on a women journalists’ association was based on oral history interviews to explore the reconstruction of collective professional identity among women journalists in the 1980s. As a way to promote oral history research, I also programmed a pre-conference panel discussion and a workshop for the 2015 AEJMC conference, featuring guest speakers and trainers including Drs. Bonnie Brennen, Paul Burnett, Loren Ghiglione, July Polunbaum, and Ford Risley, who have done significant work in oral history. In 2018, I organized a historical roundtable for this *Historiography* journal, bringing together media historians to discuss the place of oral history in media historiography and how to turn oral history into publishable scholarship and transform oral history into public knowledge through various platforms.

In addition to oral history, I have used quantitative methods and various statistical analysis in a number of articles I published. Quantitative methods are seldom applied to JMC history, but they can be helpful in asking different questions and offering alternative interpretations. In addition, a well-executed quantitative analysis can make a strong historical argument, widen the scope of the evidence base, help explain contextual effects and historical impacts, identify the trends, transitions and changes, and engage more meaningfully in scholarly debate with social science researchers.

Working with my research collaborator Francis Lee, we have examined the effects of cumulative advantage and social stratification in the field of journalism by applying multivariate analyses to a sample of 814 Pulitzer Prize winners from 1917 to 2010 whose life course and career progressions are reconstructed using various archival data. Using the same dataset, we borrowed the “compensation theory” and statistically compared the demographic characteristics of female and male Pulitzer Prize winners, finding that some form of social capital (e.g., a metropolitan upbringing, a journalism major, and a graduate degree) can be important for female journalists to overcome gender disadvantage in competing for recognition. In a very different study, we used a statistical model to analyze the box office receipts of 594 foreign-language movies shown in the U.S. between 1984 and 2006 in order to test whether critical historical events such as the 9/11 attacks in 2001 would bring about sudden shifts in American reception of and attitudes toward foreign culture. I have also employed mathematical techniques to identify the changes in journalism awards from the 1960s to 2000s. In the most recent study of the social composition of U.S. correspondents in China from 1900 to 1949, I adopted the collective biography approach, which uses quantitative means to identify common properties and systematic

variations across many personal experiences. I consider these studies as my efforts to seek and develop alternative methodological approaches to JMC history. In the last few years, as the big data method has been increasingly introduced into various areas of study, I hope it can open new terrain in JMC history and help examine an even wider range of historical questions with new data and interpretations.

The other aspect I strive to contribute is theoretical development through my historical work. My studies have been informed by various theoretical frameworks and analytical concepts, such as field theory, capital theory, collective identity, transculturation, compensation model, cultural discount, accumulative advantage, and social movement spillover, among others. To me, theories are essential in identifying a good history problem and also in helping connect the dots among otherwise messy and fragmentary historical materials. I would also argue that theoretical development needs history. As sociologist C. Wright Mills powerfully wrote, “Every social science — or better, every well considered social study — requires an historical scope of conception and a full use of historical material.”

Q: As you look back over your career, if you could do anything differently, what would it be?

Volz: I see myself as a mid-career scholar, with quite a few new areas and topics I want to explore in my future work (e.g., the history of Asian American journalists in the U.S.). Looking back, it has been a wonderful journey of exploration and discovery in the field of JMC history. I wish, however, I could focus more time on my own historical research. I was pulled into quite a bit of service work from early on, which, on the one hand, has definitely contributed to my personal and

professional growth, but on the other hand, distracted my time from historical research, which is often long-term, time-consuming, and labor-intensive. But I certainly don't regret becoming an academic, nor choosing media history as the core of my scholarship!

Q: Tell us about your “philosophy of history” (of historical study in general or of JMC history in particular) or what you think are the most important principles for studying history.

Volz: There is a compelling quote attributed to Mark Twain: “history doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes.” The quote is often used by historians to justify why history matters. It also captures what I think are the two most important principles for studying history: 1) to always recognize the unique, the specific, and the peculiar when examining each historical time and situation and its impact on the following historical path; 2) to take the historical long view and constantly draw parallels, connections, comparisons, and contrasts from history to provide critical and prospective insights into today's problems. To borrow a Chinese idiom, doing history to me is “to seek similarities from differences and to identify differences within the similarities.”

I would also add a third principle: empathy. Empathy, to me, is not only the goal and impact of good historical work on the readers, but also a fundamental tool for historical analysis. When studying historical figures, it is important for me to use empathy to analyze historical sources and inquiry into those social agents' motives and actions in a particular circumstance. The position of empathy requires a historian to recognize and respect complex human actions and achievements. It also encourages a historian to constantly contextualize people's actions and explore the consequences of their actions with sense and sensibility. It

also reminds a historian to treat history truthfully and authentically, by examining historical evidence in a most thorough and comprehensive way.

Q: *How would you evaluate the quality of work being done today in JMC history — its strengths and weaknesses?*

Volz: It is always a treat, after a busy week of teaching and administration work, to sit down and read a book or an article written by fellow historians. I continue to be impressed by the quality and productivity in the JMC history field and feel fortunate to be part of this scholarly community. The winners of the AEJMC History Division's History Book Award best represent the quality and wide range of work being done in the field. While *American Journalism* and *Journalism History* continue to publish some of the best historical studies, I am also glad to see a number of historical works appearing in top general journals such as *Communication Monographs*, *Journalism*, *Journalism Studies*, *JMCQ*, and *Media, Culture & Society*. Thanks to Dr. David Sloan, *Historiography in Mass Communication* continues to be a valuable venue for JMC historians to discuss and reflect on issues related to historical writing.

I want to also highlight the book series of *Journalism in Perspective* from the University of Missouri Press, which started in 2018. Dr. Tim Vos, the series editor, cast a bold and fresh vision for the series to “span the history of journalism, and advance thoughtful and theoretically-driven arguments” for how journalism, as an institution, can best negotiate the currents of change. The books published as part of the series are some of the best JMC history work I have read in recent years, including *The Struggle for the Soul of Journalism: The Pulpit versus the Press*,

1833-1923 (by Ronald Rodgers), *Before Journalism Schools: How Gilded Age Reporters Learned the Rules* (by Randall Sumpter), *Provoking the Press: (MORE) Magazine and the Crisis of Confidence in American Journalism* (by Kevin Lerner), and *Rewriting the Newspaper: The Storytelling Movement in American Print Journalism* (by Thomas Schmidt).

I would like to see JMC history be more theoretically informed, to address more the pressing issues of race, gender, and social movements from a historical perspective, and to be willing to adopt or develop new methodological repertoires to ask new questions and provide fresh interpretations.

Q: *What do you think we in JMC history need to be doing to improve the status of JMC history in (1) JMC education and (2) the wider field of history in general?*

Volz: My response to the previous question addressed the second part of this question. For the first part of the question, what we need to do is to continue promoting, advocating, and pushing for media history to be part of the undergraduate and graduate core curriculum in JMC programs. Dr. David Sloan led a survey of the JMC history courses being taught nationwide, which provides very helpful information for us to use for this purpose. I also greatly appreciate all the creative work by AEJMC History Division leaders, especially the Teaching Journalism History Podcast produced by Dr. Teri Finneman, and the annual Transformative Teaching of Media and Journalism History contest organized by Drs. Kristin Gustafson and Amber Roessner. These are innovative and effective ways to improve history teaching in JMC education, and I certainly hope these initiatives will continue and thrive.

Q: *What challenges do you think JMC history faces in the future?*

Volz: I am deeply concerned about the increasing trend for research universities to use citation counts of one's published work as a key measurement of research quality and impact. This trend, as I wrote in the *Clio* newsletter back in 2014, has indeed infiltrated the field of JMC and is especially detrimental to the academic standing and development of JMC history. My stand on the issue remains unequivocal five years later: citation counts are "seriously misguided as a measure of research quality" especially for historical scholarship. I pointed out that citation metrics are flawed because 1) the influence of a historical study often takes much longer to manifest itself than that of science and social science; 2) even when a historical work is widely read and recognized and used as a course reading, it does not necessarily lead to higher citations because of the contingent and particular nature that is characteristic of most historical scholarship (according to Dr. John Ferré, the AEJMC History Book Award winners are being cited an average of three times per year, which is a fraction of the citation that a study on health communication or new media would receive); 3) the metrics especially penalize those media historians who choose a less explored but more challenging subfield, or those who choose to develop long-term history projects that may yield few publications in the short term. In the long run, citation metrics will discourage novel and innovative research in JMC history and instead facilitate the usual, the routine, and predictable research that can gain immediate citations by chasing after mainstream trends.

I was ultimately pleased and moved to receive a long email note from Dr. John Pauly, who read my commentary and later published his response in *Clio* on the topic. In the essay, he forcefully argued that

“when we too easily accept citation data as dispositive of intellectual quality, we abdicate our professional responsibilities.... If historians hope to resist unreasonable institutional demands for citation evidence, they need to articulate and defend their own vision of academic life.” In answering the call, the AJHA Board of Directors put forward a powerful statement regarding the use of analytics to evaluate historical work and drafted a set of clear guidelines that identified important considerations historians could use in communicating with evaluators and administrators to provide context for assessing their work. I am extremely thankful for their work. While still being deeply concerned about the impact of using metrics in evaluation, I feel hopeful that our field will continue to thrive because of the unwavering commitment and conviction I see in my fellow historians.

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