Facebook

facebook ®

Benefits and potential pitfalls of using the popular social networking site

REFEREED ARTICLE

SELF-CENSORSHIP IN COLLEGE MEDIA

This award-winning study explores the connection between an adviser's comfort level, job security and willingness to self-censor

FROM THE PRESIDENT

FROM PLATE SPINNING TO MULTITASKING

Multitasking is alluring but should be limited

KANSAS CITY SHOOTOUT
See the winning photos inside!

Changes & Challenges

Advisers may need to re-evaluate how they advise the Internet generation

↻ Editor's corner

The biggest newspaper in Georgia, if not the South, when I first started reading the news used to brag daily to its readers that it "Covers Dixie Like the Dew." Today, it barely reaches past its city limits, and events in the hinterlands that once would have garnered statewide reporting are left now to the discretion of local news media that often lack either the resources or the inclination to tackle the complex issues.

And those massive cuts in newspaper coverage across the national board that leave more and more readers less and less informed carry a heavy human toll on the expert, skilled journalists who find themselves floundering in uncharted waters when it comes to restarting their careers.

It's also pretty clear that emerging readers—whoever and wherever they are—no longer have the sentimental attachment to newspapers that those of earlier generations did, and those most concerned about the demise of newspapers and the ramifications for journalists seem to be relatively few. When my hometown daily a few years ago scrapped its Old English-style banner of more than 100 years for a modern, stylized nameplate, I chided the regional manager was throwing history out the door. Maybe so, he said, but the paper had gotten about three complaints, hardly a groundswell of support for ye olde tradition. And when the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* overhauled its design and adopted a front page of summaries that jumped all over the various sections, readers were told the changes corresponded to their wants and needs. And the diehard readers who grumbled about the changes? A chief designer there told me that their fidelity would be taken for granted—and after all, what choice did they have but to keep on reading the paper, warts and all?

So what I overhear about the news industry on the work floor or outside it is all too often disturbing. Rightly or wrongly, too many Americans see the news machine as distorted by its political agenda, to the point that "liberal media" could be considered a compound noun or the "liberal" as a redundancy. And how often do you hear those sentiments challenged?

It seems the best career advice we can give our students, when most are clueless as to where the practice of journalism is headed, not to mention its business, is the same given the Boy Scouts, with a 21st century twist: be prepared for anything in as many ways as possible. That may not be much, but it's the best we've got right now.

Two story packages in this month's *CMR* take looks at how to stay connected (and relevant) to our student journalists but also how to stay connected with the traditions of journalism education. Our Facebook package takes a look at how advisers can use it to their advantages, but with a few caveats. And longtime adviser Trum Simmons offers some commentary on the need, amidst all the changes and demands, to stay true to the traditional roots of journalism and of college advising.

In the peer review section, *CMR* also showcases 2008 winner of the Ken Nordin Award for College Media Research; Vince Filak and Scott Reinhardy explore what news issues may—or may not—compromise advisers from doing their jobs.

And, we introduce a new feature to *CMR,* a column from the CMA president.

Read on, and let us hear from you.

— *Robert Bohler, Editor*

college media REVIEW

Just Facebook Me

by Lori Brooks

I once had a boss who didn't believe in small talk in the office. If she caught employees sharing confidences over how the kids were doing, who they favored on *American Idol* or what their weekend plans were, she'd stop them with a glare or stand by until it was so awkward that everyone walked away.

She thought we were wasting time. It was more than that. Studies (by Gallup Research, among others) show employees are more satisfied if they have friends at work. A DaimlerChrysler case study found that the bonds of friendship "improve both the work experience and the quality of their work."

It's hard to argue against the idea that happy employees, those with friends in the office, make better workers. As a collegiate media adviser, Facebook gives me something in common with my students, it keeps me aware of the goings-on in their day-to-day lives and it gives us a deeper relationship. In Facebook parlance, we're friends.

Many advisers draw a line in the sand for their Facebook use. Some don't "friend" (i.e. ask for or accept an offer to be online friends) current students. Some will friend students who work for their various media, but not students who are in their classes. Some won't "play" with their students' online, either one of the hundreds of various games (though many seem to be mourning the copyright death of Scrabulous), via "pokes" or sharing flowers or flair. Some refuse to "talk class" on the site. Some won't reveal personal thoughts.

I probably fall on the far side of that line in the sand.

> "That's what's wrong with the newspaper industry. [Newspapers] haven't adapted to changing ways of communicating."
>
> — *Paul Isom*
> *Director of Student Media*
> *East Carolina University*

I may spend a little too much time coming up with quirky status updates, I religiously post my newest beloved book through the GoodReads app and I play a variety of word games with students, alumni and other friends.

I start most mornings with a check of my news feed: I need to know that Kelsey is broken-hearted by the U.S. women's silver in gymnastics, that Lauren's first day at her new internship went off without a hitch and that Mike passed his micro test. I steal photos (only those without the telltale red Solo cups and the obligatory ping-pong table) to use in our year-end banquet movie. I post stories about the evolution of fonts, the gender of punctuation marks and the tirades of copy editors as well as astounding examples of writing, multimedia storytelling and photography. (You know what? They read them.)

And all day long, students and I talk about all of the above. We compare favorite authors, crow over bingos and laugh about bumper stickers. I often Facebook (yes, it's a verb, now) instead of emailing or calling. I get faster responses that way. We post departmental activities — both the in-house editors' dinner and our latest round of portraits — as Facebook events. We scout new recruits. We search for story ideas and sources. And we talk about etiquette: if you're going to attend the "It's Friday. Let's Get Drunk" party, at least have the common sense not to RSVP on Facebook.

But I do have my own lines in the sand. Neither my religious nor my political views are posted online. I refuse to be turned into a zombie, vampire or superhero. I don't take Likeness quizzes, rank my Top Friends or send any cocktails, ice cream or pie. But I'm only one adviser.

The stats tell part of the story: More than 11 million of Facebook's 90 million active users are older than

Email

Password

25, and that demographic is the fastest-growing on the site. Nearly 10,000 people belong to the "Journalists and Facebook" group. The College Media Advisers group has 84 fans. The "Faculty Ethics on Facebook" group has more than 450 members.

But there's no easy way to parse how many collegiate faculty or staff use the site, much less media advisers. The ethics group discusses proposed guidelines for higher-ed faculty who have made the jump to relating to their students online. Among its (paraphrased) suggestions:

- Keep course activities off Facebook (and in some other official online media).
- Don't let Facebook affect a grade (or force usage by students).
- Don't initiate friend requests AND be equal in accepting friends (either all or none).
- Don't Facebook-stalk.

Jim Killam, adviser of the *Northern Star* at Northern Illinois University, says it's the last one that worries him.

"I feel kind of creepy whenever I'm on there, like I'm lurking," Killiam says.

"Students will post personal things about themselves, what they did last weekend, whom they're dating, how much they drank, whatever random thought occurs to them at that moment. There's a big difference between relating to them in a teacher-student setting vs. relating to them in the wide-open world of Facebook. I just think it's healthier when that line is not crossed."

Paul Isom, East Carolina University's director of Student Media, says he has a peer who felt the same way. "Using Facebook was a fairly easy call until I was accused of stalking–not by a Facebook user, to be clear–by someone who didn't use it and was predisposed against it," Isom says. "That made me feel a little self-conscious."

Isom isn't the only one to be thought less of for his Facebook profile. "My interim Communications Department head and some department colleagues actually questioned a candidate's fitness this spring to be department head in part because she has a Facebook page," says Pamela Foster, director of Student Publications at Tennessee State University. "Their wrongheaded thinking was that Facebook is child's play, a place to post revealing photos, nothing a serious professional would utilize."

Isom says Facebook is for the forward thinking. "As a person in communications, I considered it important to understand new means people are using to communicate," he says. "Isn't that what's wrong with the newspaper industry? They haven't adapted to changing ways of communicating? I was trying to adapt! Not be a dinosaur."

Shannon Philpott, adviser of *The Montage* at St. Louis Community College-Meramec, has easily adapted by using the site to relate to students on a daily basis. "I love status updates primarily because they help me to gauge moods," she says. "For instance, if a staffer posts that she is 'overwhelmed with responsibility,' then I take the cue and inquire about task delegations or if she needs assistance with any of her tasks. I never formally mention the status updates or invade a student's privacy, but it does help me to adapt my advising techniques."

Philpott says the site is a practical way to reach staff who may not respond to more conventional electronic

> "I don't think Facebook users always understand that what they're posting can be seen by a whole lot of people, and they need to use discretion. Students are still learning that skill."
>
> — *Jim Killam*
> *Adviser*
> *Northen Illinois University*

Lori Brooks just wrote 2,567 words about Facebook.

28 days ago

Lori Brooks is Associate Director of Student Media at the University of Oklahoma, where as a student, she was editor of *The Oklahoma Daily*. She now advises the *Sooner* yearbook and a variety of magazine-style projects. She also serves as yearbook committee chair for College Media Advisers and is a 2008 recipient of CMA's Honor Roll Adviser Award.

communication. "I have found that it is a great tool for staff communication," she says. "And, it is much easier and faster to reach staffers. For some reason, they are less likely to respond to my e-mails and more likely to chat or message me in Facebook."

Many advisers have found social networking also eases communication with student media alumni.

"Through social networking sites (both MySpace and Facebook), I've re-established links with students long gone from Pierce College," says Michael Parks, journalism coordinator for the Lakewood, Wash., school. "For instance, a young lady who was an editor during my first year as a full-time teacher is now in my Facebook friends list. We 'wall-to-wall' regularly, and I've even defeated her (once) in a duel along the Oregon Trail.

"It's wonderful to see her now, through the photographs on her site, not as an unpolished teenage girl but as a charming and accomplished woman, wife and mother, and to view the footprints of her career. Professionally, re-establishing links with former students allows me to put together a little 'brag list' of what these former editors have done over the years with the skills and experience they gained working on the student newspaper."

Isom uses the site the same way. "I regularly talk to students who graduated years ago, thanks to Facebook," he says. "If I don't talk to them, I still know what they're doing. It was a great tool recently, when a department chair asked faculty to report on the whereabouts of students we knew. It was a gold mine of information."

Kenna Griffin, director of Student Publications at Oklahoma City University, uses alumni as her line in the sand. "Most of my students know that they can't 'be my friend' until they graduate," Griffin says. "If a student doesn't know and they send me a request, I just tell them the next time I see them that I plan to decline their friend request until they are no longer a student. I always tell them about my unofficial policy before I decline them because I would never want them to think it's personal."

Griffin's one exception is students she teaches

through an OCU program on-site in Singapore. "Facebook has allowed me to maintain contact with these students after they complete my class," she says.

On her annual visits, she has friends to meet for coffee and dinner. "These are relationships I don't know if I would have maintained if Facebook didn't make it easy to do so," she says

Others will accept friend requests, but not initiate them. "I never reach out cold to students," says Susan Coleman Goldstein, adviser of *The Mount Observer* at Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner, Mass. "I talk about it in class and in the newsroom and then usually before the end of the day, I've been contacted by a student."

Sacha DeVroomen Bellman, adviser for *The Miami Student* at Miami (Ohio) University, has a similar policy. "I have asked no current students to be my friend," she says, "because I don't want to push myself on them."

Isom, who has 179 friends, says only about 10 percent of them are current students. "I don't friend current students," he said. "I usually let them initiate if they want to."

All advisers have their own internal guidelines, and they vary wildly.

"I don't blog, share feelings or wait to exhale. It's not an Oprah site," Parks says. "I'd rather err on the side of less disclosure."

Goldstein keeps a tight rein, as well, not listing her political or religious affiliation, not "involving" her family much or posting photo albums.

"The personal info I post about my private life is limited and usually cryptic," she says, "things only my friends would understand."

She eschews interaction, too. "I won't get involved in any kinds of games with (students) or anything else that's interactive," she says. "I don't want to cross that line and become their friend."

Others' rules are more general.

"I just share who I am, the essential, the interesting, the who could care less, etc.," Foster says. "(My) Facebook line is no different from (the) line via any other mode of communication. My

good judgment tells me what to do and not to do or say to a student."

A common "rule" is one Griffin espouses: "I basically talk about anything on Facebook that I would talk about in the classroom or with students in the department."

But she doesn't answer class questions on Facebook. "If students have a concern about something in a course, they can either send me a private email, call me or come to see me in my office," she says.

Whatever their guidelines, advisers learn about their students through almost any level of use with the site.

"I have to admit I'm mostly a lurker … and will see something about who's dating who to keep up with the politics at the paper," Bellman says.

Goldstein found a shared love of music.

"Once I discovered that a student was at the same Eric Clapton concert that I was at, so I posted a comment on his wall, he posted on mine, and now when we see each other in the hallway, we joke about Clapton," she says.

Killam, though, found something he wished he hadn't.

"A few students who used to work at the Northern Star started a group that became a gripe session about personal relationships among individuals here," he said. "I stumbled onto it and, once I saw what it was, I closed it and never looked again," he said. "I don't think Facebook users always understand that what they're posting can be seen by a whole lot of people, and they need to use discretion. Students are still learning that skill."

Using Facebook as a public forum, though, sometimes works. Foster started a discussion that led to a national media outlet.

"When Bill and Hillary Clinton wore black for Hillary's announcement of support for Barack Obama , I posted a Facebook note about it that generated a discussion among my educator colleagues and prompted an L.A. Times columnist to write about it," she says.

Goldstein uses her profile as a public face for *The Mount Observer.* "It's always about the newspaper, so as students get to know me and send me pokes or flowers for my garden on Facebook, they talk with me more and, as a result, I talk up the newspaper more," she says. "So indirectly, I am always trying to subtly recruit and at least raise awareness and respect for the newspaper. "

At its heart, Facebook is a college network, so it's not surprising that practical jokes abound. At Student Media at the University of Oklahoma, students who leave a workstation with Facebook logged in are likely to find a whole new profile when they return: They'll have new political affiliations and sexual orientations and have joined many, many obscure groups.

In offices across the country, advisers aren't spared the fun. Griffin was the butt of one joke: "My students organized a mass poke and a bunch of them poked me all in the same night," she says. (She refuses to use the poke feature.) "I actually just think it sounds wrong. One of the first things we learn as children is not to 'poke our friends.' It's just not nice!"

When she was a Facebook newbie, Philpott's students played another.

"I learned a very valuable lesson my first week on Facebook," she says. "I had posted some pics from a recent trip to New York at the end of March. When I entered the newsroom the following day (April Fool's Day), a photo of me sporting an 'I love New York' shirt was loaded on the desktop of every computer in the room. I rarely post pictures of myself now."

Some students are more overt in showing affection and respect for their advisers.

One of Foster's first wall posts was from a TSU alum. "He said, 'I'm glad that the student journalists at *The Meter* still have you to help guide them. They're in the best possible hands. I've followed the various successes of the newspaper staff over the years and am very proud of how far the paper has come and optimistic as to where it's going,'" Foster quotes.

"Now what student newspaper adviser wouldn't want to be in a position to get a message like that?"

Still, Killiam maintains it's just a fad.

"Facebook is just the latest 'big thing.' As more and more 'old' people join, I expect teens and college students to migrate to something else," he says.

"Pretty soon you'll start to hear, 'Nobody does Facebook anymore.' The whole point is to be connecting in a way the older generation doesn't quite understand."

I'm still game to tag along, though. My current Facebook status? "Lori Brooks just wrote 2,567 words about Facebook."

Okay.

Now you're ready to make the Facebook plunge.

Here are some tips.

By Macon C. McGinley

GETTING STARTED

1. Create a profile

You can share as much or as little information as you like, but remember to safeguard your privacy. The sharing can be fun and a chance to sneak in some teaching with journalism quotes, films, books and famous people.

2. Make new [?] friends

This biggest benefit are the networking features. You can reconnect with old acquaintances or establish new ones.

You can search by name, network or even insert your email address and password and facebook will search that address book for matches. Also, you can look up advisers and past colleagues; you may be surprised who you'll find.

Many advisers won't ask a student to "friend" them for fear it may seem like pressure, but they'll accept a student's initiative. So, spread the word that you're online.

3. Join groups

Groups can be created about nearly any topic and are just one more way to find others with similar interests. You can search groups by name, browse groups your friends are in, or just see which are the newest or most popular.

Here are a few media advisers may want to join.

• College Media Advisers
• Faculty Ethics on facebook
• National Press Photographers Association
• American Copy Editors Society

4. Start posting

Upload pictures, write notes, send messages, and mark up walls. Facebook is all about networking and communicating; just start typing.

You can even post links to your wall directly from many Web sites; use the "Share" button on the Web site, if it's available.

5. Update your status

Your status lets others know what you're up to, thinking about, or dreaming up. This can also be a good way to casually keep in touch with what your student journalists are experiencing in their work.

BEWARE

Facebook does present some unique challenges

1. Privacy issues

Facebook allows users to control who gets to see various parts of their profiles with three levels of privacy: most private, friends only; less private, network; least private, public.

Use the settings option to adjust to your comfort level.

We suggest you carefully consider who can view the following:

• contact information
• wall
• photos
• groups
• information like age, religion, political affiliations

2. Communicating with students via Facebook

Facebook blurs the lines between professional and personal, so it's important to think about your boundaries and how you'll approach student interaction. Prepare yourself to find out more than you may want to know, and recognize that anything you post or respond to can very easily be passed along to third parties without your knowledge.

3. TMI (too much information)

Students are notorious for posting pictures, wall messages or notes that contain details that are really best kept between the closest of friends. Some student organizations have policies about facebook practices; for example, some prohibit pictures (at least not tagged) of inebriated editors or forbid joining groups that promote racist ideologies.

4. Third party programs

Many third-party programs exist to suck your time and tickle your mind. It's true: a afternoon can quickly disappear doodling, playing word games, or taking quizzes. Finding a balance is tricky, but well worth the effort.

How student media uses facebook

• Contact sources
• Generate story ideas
• Event promotion
• Polling
• Networking with alumni
• Communicate with staff through a group set up specifically for the media group
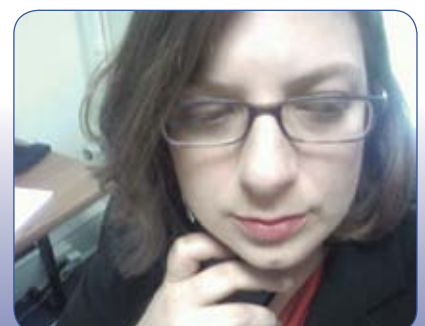
Macon C. McGinley is an assistant professor of mass communication at Georgia College & State University. When she's not updating her Facebook status, she's teaching print journalism and advising students in GCSU's student newspaper, *The Colonnade.*

facebook®
Dic•tion•ar•y

Facebook can sometimes seem like a members-only club to novice users.

Here are some terms to get you started.

— Macon C. McGinley

Applications (n.) – Mini programs within the Facebook site that allow users to do just about anything imaginable, from sending virtual gifts to friends to challenging your friends to become a pirate or ninja and beat your current ranking.

Bookin (v.) – The act of using Facebook. One is "bookin" if he or she is logged in and is actively using the site, i.e. sending messages, wall posting, or browsing bumper stickers. This is normally used to call out someone that is procrastinating a more important endeavor. Example- "There should be no bookin while at work!"

Chat (v.) – The newest feature in the Facebook world. Very similar to an instant messaging system where one chats live with a friend causing a more immediate approach than sending a message or wall posting.

Events (n.) – Similar to groups, an event is used to organize a particular occurrence. A user can set the date and time of the event, adding it to your calendar, along with everyone else's that confirms attendance to the event. This is also very useful when planning open houses, staff meetings, and mixers with various student organizations on campus.

Facebook official (n.) – The unanimous deciding factor in determining if two people are in a relationship. Example- "So they must not be really going out, because I checked and it's so not Facebook official."

Facebook stalking (v.) – The act of keeping up with friends' lives to the extent that it is deemed "creepy". This could be knowing the exact moments when their relationship statuses change, knowing all the information from someone's last 30 status updates (see below), and constantly browsing through a friend's photo albums. Example: "Did you hear Rachel is pregnant?" "How do you know that?" "I saw it while Facebook stalking."

Friend (n.) – A Facebook friend is different than the common Webster's definition. A Facebook friend could be just about anyone from your significant other to someone that you have only met once through a mutual (real) friend and they just so happened to request your online "friendship" a few days later. Unlike the other definition, you may never encounter a Facebook friend in the "real world" and it is not expected that you should help them when they have an emergency like a flat tire.

Groups (n.) – A way to get a group of Facebook users together for a unified cause. Members can send messages back and forth to the rest of the members or simply post on the group's wall. Groups can be used to support a common belief, a sports team, or to manage an organization. It is especially useful when managing writers, editors, etc. at a college newspaper.

Inbox (n.) – The mailing system that Facebook uses. It works very similar to an e-mail, without having to know long mailing addresses. All that is needed to send a message is the name of the desired recipient. Mass messaging is also a feature and is useful when trying to send a collective message to members of your staff.

Mini-feed (n.) – The way to get all the need to know knowledge about what is going on with your friends. It displays the forming of new relationships, status updates of friends, and new pictures that have recently been added by your Facebook companions.

Notes (n.) – A way to express yourself and tag friends who you wish to read what you have to say.

Poke (v.) – A way to tell someone that you are thinking of them. It is normally used as a term of endearment and is often thought of as a flirting mechanism.

Status (n.) – The way one communicates with the entire Facebook world by letting them know how one feels, what one is doing at the moment, and what one is thinking about.

Tagged (v.) – When someone attaches your name to a photo. This doesn't have to even be a picture of you, as one can tag a photograph of a floor lamp and label it with your name thus displaying it in your profile. Fortunately you can un-tag these ridiculous brandings, along with unflattering pictures of yourself.

Threads (n.) – An incredibly long message, where the involved parties continue to post messages until your finger begins to get cramped up from all the scrolling that is needed to view the entire message or "thread."

The Wall (n.) – A Facebook users personal bulletin board. The wall is usually used to display more public messages, as any friends of the user can see what others post on their wall.

Wall-to-Wall (v.) – Posting messages back and forth directly with a friend via their wall. Some use this as a "Facebook stalking" tool, as one can see entire conversations between two people as long as said person is friends with both of the conversing people.

Facebook 101:
A features guide

Detailed user information

Facebook Mail Inbox

More user photos

Profile Picture

Basic Information

Friends you both share

All friends of this user

Notes published by this user

facebook   Home Profile Friends Inbox   Adam Drew Settings Logout Search

The George-Anne

Wall   Info   Photos

Write   Share Link   Post Photo   Record Video   Give Gift

Write something...   Post

View Photos of The George-A...

Suggest Friends for The George-Anne

Send The George-Anne a Message

Poke The George-Anne

All Posts Posts by The George-Anne Posts by Others Wall-to-Wall

Sep 11

Jeff Martin wrote at 7:46am
Why couldn't open house be Friday? :(

Sep 10

The George-Anne is now friends with Amanda Reid. 9:36am – Comment

Sep 9

The George-Anne joined the groups Eagle Entertainment Tradition and Spirit and 2008 Hatch Attack!!!!!!!!!! Go Eagles!! 4:17pm – Comment

The George-Anne plans to attend Luncheon sponsored by the Friends of the Henderson Library. 4:16pm – Comment

The George-Anne plans to attend Walk for Wishes. 4:16pm – Comment

The George-Anne is now friends with Susan Warren Nowlan, Michael Cash, Suzi Hancock, Zane Thomas, Ashley Brown and 8 others. 4:16pm – Comment

The George-Anne invites you to Open House Thursday night.
4:06pm – Comment

The George-Anne is in ur bookbag, eetin ur poptarts.
3:55pm – 1 Comment

> Elliot S. Volkman at 5:45pm September 9
> LoL speak is for idiots.
>
> Write a comment...

Information

Networks:
GA Southern Alum

Relationship Status:
It's Complicated

Birthday:
April 12, 1927

Current City:
Statesboro, GA

Mutual Friends

18 friends in common   See All

Tiffany Brennaman   Bill Neville   Jake Hallman

Friends

595 friends   See All

Jackson Locklear   Pladd Dot   Brian J. Olli

CJ Blount   Tommy Flaishans   Brittney Harkleroad

Notes

2 notes   See All

Exciting changes at the George-Anne
6:04pm May 23

VT Shooting
2:12pm Apr 17

Remove from Friends

Share

"The Wall"– all activity is displayed here

Aug 10

The George-Anne is now friends with Debbie Struble. 11:34am – Comment

Aug 7

The George-Anne is now friends with Grant Richmann and Charlie McCoy. 1:03pm – Comment

Jul 28

The George-Anne is now friends with Andrew Clark, Meg Parrish, Sanjeev Pathak and Jonathan Brooks. 11:16am – Comment

The George-Anne became a fan of Georgia Southern University. 11:16am
Education
895 fans
Add Comment

Jul 16

The George-Anne is now friends with David Brennaman, Holly Logan Birchfield, Heidi R. Forehand, Miguel Fuller, Chris Kinnaman and 10 others. 6:31am – Comment

Jun 5

The George-Anne is now friends with Carter Walton, Tara Helrich and Stacey Wysong. 5:42pm

May 25

The George-Anne joined the group Crunch Berry Frappacchino Mafia. 1:42pm

The George-Anne is now friends with Mallorie McMackin, Eli Scott, Lori Hussein Amy, Tommy Flaishans, Andy Lash and 7 others. 1:41pm

Apr 21

The George-Anne is now friends with Tommy Callaway. 8:22pm

Apr 20

The George-Anne has only a few issues left this semester. Be sure to pick up a copy of them all! 2:45pm

The George-Anne became a fan of The George-Anne Daily. 8:25am
Communications
23 fans – Become a Fan

From *The George-Anne's* Facebook page at Georgia Southern University

Since my indoctrination to Facebook six months ago, I have had a chance to sort out a few of the Pros and Cons of the social network. With any activity, there are drawbacks. And, Facebook is no exception. While there is much here to value, there is much to avoid. Think of the *Cowboy's Guide to Life:* "good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment."

This is how it goes with Facebook. In no particular order, here are some observations.

—*Bill Neville*

PROS

- Appealing cost: It's a free site, supported by advertising, though the ads, at least to this observer, don't appear to be overly intrusive.

- Widespread installation: The site has achieved an impressive critical mass of over 100 million users.

- Promotional power: The site provides multiple layers of connectivity – members can create cause, interest, business and fan pages, thus linking folks who share something in common: political or social causes, hobbies or activities, commercial enterprises, or arts and entertainment.

- Blogging for non-bloggers: Updating your daily status permits you to share what you are doing with your connections in the form of a mini-blog, much like the abbreviated snapshots of activity that the Twitter network provides.

- Built-in calendar: This nudges you with reminders about upcoming birthdays in your circle or lets you describe your activities and invite others to attend.

- The visual component: Putting faces with people, taking a look at published photo albums, and even the ability to "tag" or provide captions or comments for any of the photos that interest you, are strong suits of this networking experience.

- Ease of contacts: I had been told that students today tend to use email only when they have to, like taking pity on oldtimers like me. Social networks seem to be a preferred method of keeping in touch.

- Transparency. Many Facebook users lean on the utility so much that they are unguarded in their communications. Take the case of a professor who had become "friends" with a student. When the prof noticed the student was absent but chatting online, he sent the message, "Aren't you supposed to be in class?" The student, apparently without thinking, replied "Dude, that class is so boring – who is this?" The fact that the exchange was projected via LCD on the screen in front of the entire class made it all the more memorable. A student-teacher conference soon followed.

- The fun factor: It is fun.

CONS

With any activity, there are drawbacks. And, Facebook is no exception. While there is much here to value, there is much to avoid.

- The online lexicon: OMG my BFF is causing me to LOL. (Translation: Oh My God, my Best Friend Forever is causing me to Laugh Out Loud.) I'm not a real fan of online language, much like I'm not crazy about the term "friend" that is central to Facebook, but it seems to go with the territory.

- Mini-app overloads: As a Facebook member, you would be subjected to an onslaught of things to try – typically in the form of "mini-apps," or small applications that seek to meet a specific need. Some of these might be useful or fun (in my case an interactive calendar of nearby concerts or Flair, virtual lapel pins, including those you create yourself), some are not. Social activities – like listing "who are my 'hot' friends" – just leave me a little cold. You learn to deal with these on a trial basis and can delete those that don't suit you.

- Gaming traps: It is easy to get drawn into gaming activities (and, frankly, some of the games are pretty silly) if you are so inclined. I'm not a big gamer. However, as a matter of full disclosure, I admit to playing Scrabble™ online and routinely having my butt kicked by some of CMA's expert wordsmiths… though I am getting better.

- Persistent memory of the Internet. As I am fond of pointing out to students frequently, listing yourself as captain of the university's Bong Team, even if it is a joke, may come back to haunt you in the years ahead. What is online will live on and on. And, if today's students don't think potential employers in the future will scour the Internet, they are misleading themselves.

- Time traps: Unless one is careful, I could see where a member could be drawn into spend an excessive amount of time tending a Facebook garden.

"Going Over to the Dark Side" — One adviser's welcome to Facebook

By Bill Neville

It all happened, literally, in a flash.

In quick succession a flood of electrons zipped into my computer…

Within a few hours, thanks to a couple of trusted colleagues, I had acquired "friends" by the score.

1 The first to connect was a former student editor I had advised. The first CMA colleague was Joe Gisondi of Eastern Illinois, who must spend even more time on his computer than I do.

2 Without my effort, or even my ability to object, seven or eight pictures of your narrator, spanning over three decades of varied facial hair configurations, appeared on my profile placed there by Adam Drew, a former graduate assistant who had amassed a collection of "Mr. Bill" images.

3 Pieces of Flair – the little buttons that are a virtual homage to the movie Office Space – started piling up in my in-box…

4 And one of the first scribblings on my "wall" summarized it well: "Holy shister! Great to see you finally came to the dark side of the web to visit us, Mr. Bill."

What Rachel Weeks, a talented young editor I had advised, was talking about with her "dark side" reference is, of course, Facebook, the social network platform that is an integral part of the Web… Web 2.0, that is, the evolution of the linear Web of old to a nonlinear, interconnected, community-based platform that is the today's Web.

Okay, I will admit that I am a latecomer to this platform. Frankly, I had resisted involvement in the whole "social network" concept for years, dismissing it as juvenile, clique-ish, and with perhaps only limited merit.

Another former student editor, Will Adams — perhaps mocking my mantra of several years running that New Media was not only a new game in town but soon would be the main game in town — was a bit more blunt: "for someone so into 'new media,' Facebook sure is a long time coming."

To extend the Office Space metaphor, "I must have missed the memo." Okay, Will and the rest of you guys, I get it now. I have the memo in hand. To put it another way, my aversion to at least trying out this method of connectivity was just plain boneheaded.

Perhaps it was the terminology Facebook uses. Chief among its special jargon is the term where members become "friends" with each other. It always sounded rather cheesy to me to send a message to another saying, "gee, will you be my friend." It was a Mister Rogers moment, "won't you be my neighbor." Sheesh. How corny.

And, though I had visited a number of MySpace pages, I found the experience awkward and at times rather jarring and inconsistent with user-designed web pages that ranged from the sophisticated to the ridiculous.

Perhaps I am more comfortable with the terms used by LinkedIn – a business social network much like Facebook – where associates and colleagues are "Connected" to each other. In fact, I was a member of LinkedIn before I even considered joiming Facebook. One might consider LinkedIn a Facebook for grown-ups. But while LinkedIn might be a more restrained, more sophisticated, and more grown-up conglomeration of participants, as a network it is pretty much plain vanilla and is just not as much fun, nor does it provide as much insight into its members. If you want something to appeal to that inner-child, or inner college student, then Facebook is a destination to consider.

Connections are at the heart of Facebook. The site is an enormous database. When you fill out a profile, or provide some personal information, the programming embedded in the site scans all the records and coughs up a list of people with whom you share commonalities and suggests them to you as "friends." The schools you have attended, the years you were in school are all data points that can be used to connect others in the database with you. Making one friend leads to another opportunity, and another, and another — I guess one might term this a viral experience with software stoking the virus duplication.

It didn't take long for the cumulative value of Facebook to start making an impression. It was reassuring to hear that former students had actually internalized some of the lessons I had tried to impart. I had to smile when my first friend Amanda Garlow wrote: "Mr. Bill! Good to see ya, man. I've broken into the world of minor league academia by becoming a high school English teacher. Pray for my soul." Then just to make sure she outranked a classmate, "Oh — and you added me to your friend thingy BEFORE you added Brady, right?" Then the payoff — the lesson remembered: "Remember: there's no such thing as a late-breaking feature!"

The value of Facebook as a news source — subject, of course, to verification — has been well-documented and discussed. During campus tragedies, social networks have been used as an integral part of the reporting cycle, providing valuable leads to those covering the incident and trying to make sense of the senseless. And, user-provided content on these networks has come into play with political reporting.

Students around the country have taken to Facebook to promote, and in some cases supplement media on their campuses, flowing RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds onto their pages, and using the promotional power of Facebook for special projects, upcoming events and hosting legacy groups like alumni. You can learn a lot from students. So, I launched a few experiments.

Amanda Garlow **wrote on your** Wall. 9:08am
Bill Neville **was tagged** in three photos. 11:35am
Adam Drew **sent you a** piece of Flair. 12:18pm
Bill Neville **posted a** story. 4:28pm

In an effort to boost CMA's profile, I created a "fan" page where CMA members might gather around the virtual water cooler. I had barely finished hitting the "enter" key to create the site (in fact, it was still being created) when the first fan showed up. I guess I should not have been surprised when "super fan" Joe Gisondi signed on. At last count, the CMA site was approaching 100 members. One of the nice things about that site is that it is open to all and several students have signed on as well. And, since most Facebook accounts feature pictures of their owners, we can begin putting faces with names.

I also created a Facebook page for my editing and design class here at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. The page — UAB visual journalism — has slowly evolved. I am using it as a placeholder for content and web sites that interest me, as well as sites that I think might be beneficial to class members. In all candor, the site hasn't done as well as I would have liked… about half my class has signed on. But a plus has been that a few non-class members have signed on as well. And, some of the group members have begun engaging each other and I am hopeful that the pace of that interaction will accelerate.

In both of these experiments, it must be noted that once sites are created it is ultimately up to the members of these groups to find value in and make these sites useful destinations.

At last count, I had 239 friends. Some "friends" I know well like family, students and colleagues past and present. Some connections were real surprises – like finding real friends after interludes of many years, including a former roommate who had dropped off my radar for three decades. Some I know only marginally — but thanks to the site I am learning more about them. Some new ones have been connected as friends of friends. Some "friends" I don't know at all – like some journalists in my new home of Birmingham whose work I follow but who I've yet to meet. Some connections have come my way unexpectedly. The complex software – at its heart a just a binary series of ones and zeros — behaves at times as if it were inhabited by a pervasive spirit.

Some suggested connections, though, can be bittersweet. Facebook suggested that I might want to become friends with J. Wright, who had been a news editor for the paper at Georgia Southern. I would have been delighted to renew that friendship. Sadly, though, "Jay" had died three years ago. "Jay" was gone but his Facebook page lived on.

Again, I was reminded of my former student Kelley Callaway's admonition – "you never know what Facebook will reveal."

When former student Doug Gross, an AP reporter turned editor at Cable News Network, popped up on Facebook as a new user, being the old-timer of six months tenure I sent him a cautionary note: "You have to watch out for Facebook… creepy old people are lurking there. It's like making friends with the Giant-Headed Burger King."

"I'm not scared of creepy old people – I covered politics for over a decade," Doug fired back. With all of these folks, I am learning more about them, their likes and dislikes, what amuses them, what interests them, what they are up to. And, for better or worse, if they visit my site they learn more about me, my interests, my amusements, and my attitude. For a number of former students, now starting families of their own, I can now review albums of pictures of their children. And get news of more to come, as Rachel wrote: "I haven't told you the news yet, but we're expecting a little bundle of trouble in November! Maybe he will be wonderful and red-headed like my favorite boss Mr. Bill!"

All in all, I have been pleasantly surprised with my Facebook experience. What I dismissed as being clubby and juvenile has proven to be useful, entertaining, and – dare I say –educational. If you haven't taken the plunge, I would encourage you to do so. Cast a wide net. And if you are going to be a friend, act like it. Make comments. Interact. Explore common interests. Share yourself. And, if you want to get your butt kicked by Scrabble-savvy colleagues coast to coast, I can provide some names.

> **"If you want something to appeal to that inner child, or inner college student, then Facebook is a destination to consider."**

Bill Neville, the production manager for Student Media at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, has been committing journalism in one form or another for 40 years. He worked as a cartoonist, graphic artist, magazine editor, and daily newspaper editor before becoming a teacher, and he was student media adviser at Georgia Southern University for more than two decades. A former treasurer of College Media Advisers, he now serves as CMA's director of marketing and promotions as well as its webmaster.

View Photos of Bill (7)

Suggest Friends for Bill

Send Bill a Message

Poke Bill

Information

Networks:
North Carolina—Wilmington

Bill DiNome is coordinator of the student media program at the University of North Carolina Wilmington and adjunct lecturer in UNCW's Department of English. Bill hails from New York City where he worked as a copywriter for the publishing and advertising industries and a part-time musician. He relocated to Wilmington, N.C., in 1990, freelancing as an author, magazine writer and editor, as well as a radio host for the local public-radio station. He holds an M.F.A. in creative writing.

Big Brother Watching?

An adviser's look at some of the pitfalls of Facebook use

By Bill DiNome

My first hesitation with getting into social networks like Facebook is what I think of as the Orwell effect. And I should say up front that this is undeniably a generational issue. I was born in the '50s, and the occasionally insidious, opaque and aggressive methods that advertisers use to gain access to our psyches is generally a greater concern for my generation than they are for college-aged people today. That said, as most of us know by now, Facebook is among history's subtlest money-making tools ever devised, and its methods are not transparent to the average user. Cases in point include the news feeds and mini-feeds reported for potentially every move one makes on Facebook (depending on one's privacy settings, of course), whether that consists of becoming a fan of a Facebook Page (essentially an elaborate ad), viewing a social ad, or visiting one of their many affiliated Web sites (see http://www.facebook.com/help.php?topic=social_ads). As a behavioral marketing tool, it seems unsurpassed. Again, while many people welcome that, it often makes my skin crawl.

And beyond that, the voyeuristic quality of news feeds for other social activities gives me the willies. Friends allowed to view our profiles evidently receive notices every time we edit our profiles. The value of such feeds eludes me except to stimulate curiosity and online activity for Facebook and its advertisers. I suspect that this contributes to the cult of celebrity that is ubiquitous these days. Granted, the privacy settings allow users to prevent a large array of information from being seen. I just wonder how many users find out too late that their privacy settings aren't what they thought they were when they set up their profiles. The more I find out about how Facebook uses people's desire for connection to stimulate business and access to our minds and wallets, the less I want to be part of it.

Perhaps the greater hesitation I've had is the (mis)perception that people like myself (faculty and staff of universities) are surveilling or eavesdropping on students, or that they are at least, as one writer put it, infringing on the sanctity of students' peer groups. Interestingly, The Chronicle of Higher Education recently posted a blog about this effect, what some professors call the "creepy tree house." (http://chronicle.com/wiredcampus/article/3251/when-professors-create-social-networks-for-classes-some-students-see-a-creepy-treehouse?utm_source=at_medium=en). The artificiality of such social networks creep me out too. (BTW, the "creepy tree house" effect is suspected by at least one professor referenced in that article to be especially true in cases where professors require students to interact with them on networks such as Facebook or Twitter.)

For many people these days, the social connectivity that social networks potentially provide is irresistible despite the underlying commercial agenda. And because we, as campus programmers or service providers, must "go where our students are," it only makes sense for me to get on board. I'm still not comfortable with doing so, but I realize that I will not always be the student-media coordinator at UNCW, so I must do what I can to help the program succeed. My successors will likely capitalize on social networks with far greater comfort than I have done.

What my profile will include. Right now I'm not sure, but the profile will be as professional and presentable as a resume should be. I expect it will include my name, title, university contact information, the program's Web site address, photos related to student media, event information, links to our student publications and Web sites, and so on. I do not plan to post a photograph of myself, and I'm reluctant to post photos of students unless shot in public settings.

How I will decide whom to friend? Well I still don't know all there is to know about how Facebook works. But my expectation is that I will focus on creating a Group, then inviting one or a few students from our publications staff to administer it. I hope that they will decide whom to friend and generally how to make the group visible online. I'll likely work with them in deciding what's needed and what's effective. Advising mostly.

Drawing lines in the sand is still a bit mysterious to me. I think that will come with experience. Offhand I'd guess that I would want the Group and my profile to be used solely for marketing my program and its offerings-events, internships, publishing training and experience, career opportunities, new class offerings, news about our program, staff recruitment, and so on. But all this is a complete guess at this time. I've signed up with Facebook but have yet to design a profile. Wish me luck. ◖◗

College Newspaper Advisers, Controversial Topics and Willingness to Self-Censor

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A nation-wide study of college newspaper advisers (n=244) found advisers reported high levels of comfort with a wide array of topics often deemed controversial. Of those topics with which they displayed less comfort, oral sex, sex, administrative criticism and drug use were among the lowest-rated. Furthermore, a series of multi-step regressions revealed that the Willingness to Self-Censor scale (WTSC; Hayes, Glynn & Shanahan, 2005 a, b) was a strong predictor of the advisers' comfort level regarding those topics, even when controlling for additional significant variables. Implications for advisers and scholars are discussed.

COLLEGE NEWSPAPER ADVISERS, CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS AND THE WILLINGNESS TO SELF-CENSOR

The issue of controversy and how best to cover it on college campuses has led to some disconcerting outcomes for student newspapers and their advisers. For decades, student journalists have found themselves at odds with administrators when they shine light on topics of interest to readers that do not fit the consumer-friendly image their colleges and universities attempt to portray.

What makes for a controversial story is often in the eye of the beholder. While topics such as sex and criticism of the school tend to be generally frowned upon by administrators, other incidents have led to confrontations, censorship and threats. In many cases, the key buffer between the student journalists and outside influence is the newspaper's adviser. These men and women are charged with helping the students better understand what makes for a quality product while they inform their communities on important topics. Advisers often subscribe to an ethical code that allows them to coach, to discuss and to guide, but never to censor. As Wicklein (2005) notes:

> Advisers see their function as mentors, never censors. CMA's Code of Ethical Behavior states "Student media must be free from all forms of external interference designed to regulate its content," and advisers have an obligation to protect their independence. (33)

That being said, advisers are human. Fear of reprisal, job loss, and other negative outcomes can all lead advisers to feel gun-shy when it comes to controversial topics. Furthermore, researchers have noted that inherent within all human beings is a desire to avoid expressing opinions that run counter to prevailing attitudes or counter to the opinions of people who matter to them. This desire often manifests itself in what is described as a "willingness to self-censor," which varies from person to person (Hayes, Glynn & Shanahan, 2005a, b).

The purpose of this research is two-fold. First, we hoped to assess which topics advisers find most controversial when it comes to coverage in their student newspapers. While this has been examined to some degree in regard to high school media (BLIND CITE, 2007, 2008), no in-depth research on this topic has been conducted to this point at the college level. Over the past several years, the Student Press Law Center has noted a wide array of topics that have landed student newspapers in trouble. A large part of this study is an attempt to create some parsimony among those topics and help advisers better note which topics are among the most and least controversial in a broader sense.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, we want to examine the degree to which advisers are self-censors and to what degree that predicts their comfort levels in seeing certain topics covered in their school's newspaper. While a number of variables, including job satisfaction, fear of reprisals, and a "quasi-statistical sense" of a prevailing opinion on a topic (Noelle Neumann, 1993) have shown to influence an individual's comfort level with controversial topics, little research has examined this intrinsic censoring trait. The degree to which advisers find themselves to be self-censors could predict higher levels of discomfort with certain topics and, in turn, subtly cue their advisees to back off a story or to avoid a topic entirely.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To better examine these issues, we will first assess the current climate of student media as it pertains to controversial topics and censorship. Then we will explain the human desire to conform and how it creates internal conflict for individuals faced with difficult situations and controversial topics. Finally, we will introduce the concept of self-censorship as it relates to the need to limit one's own opinions in the face of a hostile climate.

STUDENT MEDIA, CENSORSHIP AND CONTROVERSY

The Student Press Law Center, a legal-assistance agency that supports student press rights at the high school and college levels, has received an average of 2,500 calls from across the United States each year, seeking legal advice (splc.org). SPLC has noted censorship is one of, if not the, top reason student journalists contact the organization. Recent data has censorship as being responsible for almost two out of every five calls the group receives (Wicklein, 2005).

Direct censorship on college campuses can be categorized in a few basic areas: censorship through theft, funding restrictions by administrators or student government officials and censorship through direct supervisory control over content (Bohman, 2005). SPLC has noted numerous examples of theft censorship, including cases involving unfavorable stories of student athletes (Yam, 2008a), homecoming queens (Quill, 2004) and fraternities (Yam, 2008a). Stories on rape (Hudson, 2007) and crime (Quill, 2004) have also led to large-scale thefts in an attempt to suppress the news.

Even administrators aren't above seizing massive quantities of student papers. At Hampton University, acting President JoAnn Haysbert ordered that all copies of the Hampton Script be confiscated after students refused to publish a letter she had written on the front page of the paper. The students had placed the letter on the third page of the paper, where letters in their publication customarily went (Potter, 2003). After a two-week delay and various policy changes, the paper resumed publishing (SPLC, 2004).

Cases of financial censorship have also been well documented, especially when student government officials are given control over student media budgets. For example, at Florida Atlantic University, members of the student government threatened to freeze the paper's access to funding after articles in the University Press questioned the student body leaders' decision to give themselves retroactive 25 percent pay increases (Martyka, 2005). Instead, the student government suspended the paper's editor in chief search, threatened the adviser and attempted to lock the newspaper staff out of its office. Even as administrators attempted to negotiate an uneasy peace between the newspaper and the student government, the adviser of the paper described the situation as "tense" (Martyka, 2005).

A similar incident unfolded at Montclair State, where Student Body President Ron Chicken froze The Montclarion's budget after the paper hired an attorney. Chicken fired the attorney only after student journalists claimed his attempt to move SGA into a closed session violated the state's open meetings law (Beder, 2007). These two cases were resolved to some degree after time (Yam, 2008b), while other incidents continue to this day.

Perhaps the most blatant form of overt censorship is the direct interference of administrators who seek to suppress free speech in the face of controversy. For example, administrators at Grambling State University forced the student paper, The Gramblinite, to remove photos from its website, including an image of an elementary school child who had a noose placed around her neck. The images were part of the paper's coverage of an anti-racism event for school children that was rooted in the events surrounding the Jena Six case in Louisiana.

While the university demanded that the students take down all the photos and the story, the paper's editors decided to only remove the image involving the child and the noose. Over the following weekend, the paper's adviser removed the remaining images and the story at the request of an official from the university president's office (Wooten, 2007). This came less than a year after the university suspended the paper's publication in January for issues of "quality" and editors said they feared the advisers would be fired if the paper continued to publish (Taylor, 2007). The paper resumed printing later that month only after the university implemented a policy of prior review, in which an adviser was required to read and approve all copy. Other similar suppressions have occurred, with some citing the Hosty v. Carter case as a driving force of this censorship. In Hosty, students filed suit after a dean prohibited the printer of the student newspaper at Governors State University from publishing any future issues of The Innovator until a system of prior review could be established (Wilson, 2005). When the Supreme Court declined to revisit the district court's ruling, some free press advocates feared this would provide administrators with carte blanche in regards to censorship (Wilson, 2005).

While these overt cases of censorship often garner a great deal of attention, the less obtrusive and obvious instances are becoming more prevalent and more effective. Numerous advisers have been fired or threatened for not enacting prior review. The process, while clearly an abridgment of free speech, has often been couched in the language of "standards." Administrators, in the wake of controversy, have often emphasized to advisers the need to clear the paper of grammatical er-

rors or misspellings. Fact errors have often been used as an administrator's tool to seek ways to suppress student thought. While students often go unpunished, the adviser bears the brunt of these conflicts, as they are reprimanded or fired for failing to fall in line with the administrators' wishes (Wicklein, 2005).

Firing has become the weapon of choice in this battle between student media and administrators. Paul McMasters, the First Amendment Ombudsman of the Freedom Forum, noted that this tactic works more often than not because officials don't have to engage in direct censorship. Furthermore, the firing of one adviser can have a ripple effect in silencing others at other institutions who fear similar reprisals. (Wicklein, 2005).

TENDENCY TO CONFORM

Wilbur Storey of the Chicago Times once noted, "It's a newspaper's duty to print the news, and raise hell," but psychologists and social scientists have reported for decades that most people seek to conform to the norms and standards of a collective (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004).

Asch's seminal work in the 1950s (1956) with his line-selection experiments demonstrated that individuals tend to subjugate their own feeling when faced with opposition from other group members. In his studies, Asch found that when faced with several confederates who erroneously selected a line as being the longest of three, study participants would go along with this incorrect choice rather than go against the group. In many cases, the participants later said they felt uncomfortable about having done so, but for the most part, they did not want to be seen as non-conformist.

Additional work in this area has shown that people tend to conform to a greater degree when faced with making a public decision, when pitted against a larger group and when the individual is uncertain about a choice or outcome (see Griskevicius et al, 2006 for a full review). In applying this logic to journalists, Breed (1955) found that newsrooms groomed new reporters through a process of social norming. Individuals were not given rules or orders, but were instead guided by specific behavior of more senior reporters and editors. Even the editing process, Breed noted, was meant to send back "unacceptable" copy covered in editing marks until the reporter fell in line. Interestingly, none of the individuals in Breed's study noted a sense of overt control or censorship during this process. Instead, they viewed it as learning their craft.

An even greater motivator toward conformity and compliance is that of a threat. In a three-experiment study, Renkema, Stapel and Van Yperen (2008) found that individuals were most likely to conform under the pressure of a threatening situation. While the researchers in this work used mortality salience (fear of death) to prime their participants, the authors stated their research suggested that conformity is used to buffer against fear.

WILLINGNESS TO SELF-CENSOR

Perhaps the most well-known scholarly bridge between conformity and self-censorship is Noelle Neumann's Spiral of Silence theory (1974, 1989, 1993). The theory is a multi-conditional, multi-stage chain of hypotheses that seeks to explain how a dominant point of view tends to emerge, even within a diverse population of thought. Noelle Neumann stated that individuals, mainly through the use of media and through social interaction, develop a "quasi-statistical sense" of how a group (or the public at large) views a controversial or "morally loaded" topic. Individuals who find themselves to have attitudes that are congruent with that view are more likely to speak out on the topic, while those whose attitudes are contrary to the popular view are more likely to remain silent.

Research in this area has shown qualified support for various aspects of the theory as it pertains to opinions regarding gays in the military (Gonzenbach, King & Jablonski, 1999), affirmative action (Moy, Domke & Stamm, 2001) and abortion (Salmon & Neuwirth, 1990). Research has also noted support based on a small-groups paradigm, as opposed to the usual general-public paradigm (Price & Allen, 1990) and within a loosely connected work-oriented group, such as freelance photographers (Filak & Price, 2005).

In evaluating much of the spiral of silence research, Glynn, Hayes and Shanahan (1997) found weak support for the concept that all people were influenced equally when faced with a decision as to whether to speak up or to remain silent in the face of disagreement. The authors posited that an inherent individual difference could account for the degree to which people were more or less willing to express themselves, even in the face of a direct risk.

The authors created the Willingness to Self-Censor (WTSC) scale, which measures the degree to which individuals will tend to limit their own level of expression (Hayes, Glynn & Shanahan, 2005a). The scale is based on the presupposition that some individuals who have opinions on a topic are more likely than others to refrain from expressing the opinion due to a fear of discomfort that comes along with going against a prevailing opinion.

The authors note the fear of professional sanction from one's boss as a specific impetus to engage in self-censoring. They also note that self-censorship differs from conformity in some key and specific ways. While conformists fall in line with a larger group by expressing an opinion congruent with that of the collective, self-censorship is about self-limiting. Self-censors withhold an opinion, steer clear of a topic or avoid making a point due to the perception that the opinion might be negatively received and thus lead to painful consequences (Hayes, 2007).

In validating the scale, Hayes, Glynn and Shanahan (2005b) had participants fill out the WTSC scale four weeks prior to engaging in the experimental portion of a study. The researchers then had each participant engage in a conversation that was either congruent or incongruent with their opinion on a controversial topic. Those participants who scored higher on the WTSC scale were more likely to limit their expression in the incongruent condition. This reinforced the previ-

ous study's findings that willingness to self-censor manifests itself in specific conditions, but is primarily an inherent and consistent individual trait.

While this stream of research is still in its infancy, it has shown to be supported in regard to participation in publicly observable political behavior (Hayes, Scheufele & Huge, 2006) and in real-life conversational settings (Hayes, Uldall & Glynn, 2007). Some earlier work had discussed the concept of self-censorship as it applied to high-school media (Dickson, 1994), but in that case, self-censorship was situational, poorly measured and ill-defined.

However, recent attempts to attach the concept of self-censorship to student media have been successful. Researchers have found a clear link between high school newspaper advisers' comfort level regarding the coverage of controversial topics and the advisers' ratings on the WTSC scale (BLIND CITE, 2007). In that instance, the study demonstrated the scale was predictive, even when accounting for the adviser's sense of how their principal felt about each topic. A follow up study (BLIND CITE, 2008) found that the WTSC ratings still predicted a high school newspaper adviser's comfort level in seeing controversial subjects covered in the student paper, even when controlling for a number of key factors, including the "quasi-statistical sense" of how the principal would feel if the paper covered the topic, job enjoyment and fear of reprisal. Prior work in this field has also controlled various other measurable intrinsic traits, such as dispositional shyness (Hayes, Glynn & Shanahan, 2005b), but the WTSC scale has remained a valid predictor.

In sum, research has demonstrated that individuals often go out of their way to seek safer social ground when dealing with controversial issues, especially when it appears as though they are being confronted by a hostile group or a direct supervisor. While a great deal of the work has demonstrated that this can take the form of conformity, the research has also indicated an inherent reticence exists within individuals to express opinions when confronted with controversy. This willingness to self-censor can lead to a singular point of view, but also to an internal tension for individuals who find themselves swallowing more of their own opinion. Even more, the concern as it pertains to student media, is that self-censorship has gone mostly unmeasured, but can have a deleterious impact on the output of the student media.

Given these issues, this study seeks to examine the following research questions:

RQ1: Which controversial topics will college media advisers show the lowest levels of comfort in seeing published in their media outlet?

RQ2: Do any demographic variables contribute to an adviser's willingness to self-censor?

RQ3: Will adviser ratings on Willingness to Self-Censor scale (WTSC) independently predict the adviser's own comfort level in the coverage of controversial topics in the adviser's media outlet, even when controlling for their direct supervisor's perceived comfort level, the degree to which they fear reprisals and the degree to which they report enjoying their job?

METHOD

Sample

We conducted a nation-wide survey of college media through several mass email requests for participation in our online survey. We obtained a list of College Media Adviser members and emailed the membership roll with a letter explaining the survey and a link to an online survey and requesting participation. A follow up email was sent approximately one month after the initial email, thanking those who participated and encouraging those who had not to take part.

The original list contained 704 names, which included editorial advisers, advertising advisers, former advisers, journalism educators and other friends of student press. Upon clearing the list of non-media advisers, we retained a total of 683 names. Of that remaining group, we had 64 emails bounce back as undeliverable. In addition, we had an additional 18 individuals respond to the message, noting they did not feel they were within the target population of the survey, most of whom stated they had either resigned or retired from advising. This left us with a sample of 601 possible participants. Of that remainder, we received a total of 252 participants, or a 42 percent response rate. This is in line with previous studies of this nature (BLIND CITE, 2008) and is almost triple that of some of the other published studies of media advisers (Bowen, 1985; Kovacs, 1991).

In addition, we obtained a list of non-CMA members and a list of schools from other journalism organizations in an attempt to reach beyond the ranks of a single group. That list contained approximately 500 names, but few email addresses. Efforts were made to contact colleges and universities through phone calls, visits to their websites, and email messages to seek advisers at these institutions. In most cases, the media outlet in question had shut down, did not have an adviser, or had a financial overseer who had little or nothing to do with the paper or its content. This left us with a list of 257 possible participants. Again, accounting for bounce back emails and messages from individuals who stated their position was not congruent with what we were seeking for this study, we saw 53 potential participants eliminated from sample, leaving us with 207. We received responses from 41 of them, a response rate of 20 percent. Since the sample balance would be considerably skewed, we retained the "CMA/non-CMA" distinction as a variable and potential covariate, but comparing across samples would yield questionable outcomes at best. Even with a low response with the second group, we had a collective response rate of 36 percent, which is acceptable for a survey of this type.

We eliminated 39 of the 293 cases, as they stated they did not advise newspapers (an early attempt in this study to gather all media advisers failed to pull in a significant number of non-newspaper advisers and thus we eliminated a cross-media examination we planned to conduct). We also removed an additional 10 participants because the participants failed to complete at least half of the survey, leaving us with a final sample of 244 newspaper advisers. For the remaining cases, we used mean substitution to replace missing data points. No more than five percent of any single variable or case was replaced using this method.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The survey asked for participants to rate a number of controversial topics based on how comfortable they would feel about the media outlet they advise covering these topics. Before they rated the items, they were told to assume that stories that would run on those topics would be newsworthy and would be free of errors. Thus, they were asked to simply react to the topic. Participants were provided seven-point Likert scales, in which 1 = not at all comfortable, 4 = neutral and 7 = very comfortable.

We created several general topic areas for our survey, drawing the specific topics from the literature regarding controversial stories, material posted on the Student Press Law Center's website and various news articles that were written about specific controversies within the past five years. The topic areas were: sex, substance abuse/use, student misdeeds, religion, curriculum and administrative criticism. These had been previously tested in an earlier study involving high school media advisers as well (BLIND CITE, 2007, 2008).

Sex topics included oral sex, sexual activity, homosexuality, pregnancy, and birth control. Substance abuse/use topics included illegal drug use, alcohol use, and smoking. Student misdeeds included misdeeds committed in school (such as hazing and on-campus vandalism) and misdeeds committed out of school (crimes beyond the reach of campus authorities, including misdemeanors and felonies). We also used single-item variables to examine the comfort level the advisers felt regarding stories on religion, curriculum and criticism of the school's administration.

In addition, we included a three-item scale meant to measure job satisfaction (e.g. "Overall, I'm satisfied with my job.") and a three-item scale to measure the fear of reprisals the advisers felt regarding the coverage of controversial topics (e.g. "Certain stories can't be covered by the media outlet I advise or else I could be in trouble."). To ensure these items could be combined into variables, we conducted two Cronbach's alpha tests on the item sets. Both scales met acceptable alpha levels (.83 and .84, respectively) and thus the item scores were summed and divided by the number of items used to comprise the scale.

Upon completing the self-evaluation, we had participants do a second rating of the controversial topics, this time assessing to what degree they believed their direct supervisor would be comfortable with stories on these topics. As the individual's direct supervisor varies from school to school (i.e. department chair, dean of students, head of student affairs etc.), we simply asked that the participant respond to the items based on the person to whom they felt directly responsible in the school's hierarchy.

We also asked the individuals to complete the Willingness to Self-Censor scale (Hayes, Glynn and Shanahan, 2005a, 2005b). In order to maintain congruency among our measures, we used a 7-point scaled, as opposed to the 5-point version that Hayes and his colleagues developed (Previous studies showed no ill-effects in a shift of this nature.). The structure of the measure, however, remained the same with higher scores indicating a greater willingness to self-censor.

This index of eight items reveals the participant's willingness to withhold his or her opinion from others when the individual perceives a potential for disagreement (e.g. "It is difficult to express my opinion if I think others won't agree with what I say."). Two of the eight items were written to be reverse scored (e.g. "It is easy for me to express my opinion around others who I think will disagree with me."). Upon reversing those items, we conducted a Cronbach's alpha test, and the score for this scale was acceptable (alpha = .85). We then created a variable from the items by summing them and dividing that score by the number of items in the scale.

We gathered demographic information from the participants including the state in which they live, age, gender, years spent in the current school, years spent as an adviser, years spent in the current position and years spent teaching. We also asked if they taught at a public or private institution and if they had any professional journalism training.

RESULTS

Demographics

Of the 244 cases we analyzed, we received responses from 43 states and the District of Columbia. We saw an equal split in men and women (122 men, 122 women), but a more than 2-to-1 imbalance in participants from public institutions versus private institutions (171 public, 73 private). More than 85 percent of this group also noted having had professional journalism experience and 86 percent claimed membership in CMA.

The average adviser in our sample was 47 years of age, with reported ages ranging from 23 to 73. The average adviser had taught for 11.6 years, advised for 10.9 years and had been at his or her current place of employment for an average of 10.2 years. On average, the advisers oversaw two student media outlets, with some advisers overseeing as many as six. Most of the advisers who oversaw a second media outlet advised an online publication (43 percent) while 22.5 percent oversaw a magazine. Approximately 17 percent advised a yearbook, 16 percent advised a radio station and 12 percent advised a student television station.

Controversial Topics

Research question 1 asked which topics would media advisers show the lowest levels of comfort in seeing covered by their media outlets.

For the most part, this group did not express high levels of discomfort with any of the topics. The lowest mean for any single item was 4.99 for oral sex, which was followed by sex (M= 5.64), administrative criticism (M= 5.93) and drug use (M=6.17). The topics in which individuals showed the greatest amount of comfort were in-school misdeeds (M= 6.55), curriculum coverage (M= 6.53) and alcohol use (M= 6.44).

Across the board, participants rated their direct supervisor's views to be more conservative, as every estimate of their boss's level of comfort was significantly lower than their own ratings on the same topic (all 12 matched-pairs t-tests revealed t scores greater than 8.2 were significant at p < .0001). Oral sex was again the lowest rated topic (M= 3.62) and was the only topic that had a rating range into the discomfort half of the scale. Administrative criticism and sex flipped positions (Ms = 4.16 and 4.28, respectively) with drug use remaining fourth (M=4.93). Topics the participants thought their boss would have the highest levels of comfort included religion (M=5.75), curriculum coverage (M=5.50) and birth control (M= 5.29). See Table 1 for a full list of the topics and their descriptive statistics.

WILLINGNESS TO SELF-CENSOR

Prior to conducting further data analyses, we collapsed several of the items into broader variables. This allowed us to avoid repetition while making larger general statements about the outcomes. We conducted three examinations of separate Cronbach's alpha tests on the topics pertaining to the advisers' comfort levels with the sex, substance use/abuse and misdeed variables. All three registered acceptable alpha levels (.88, .81 and .90, respectively), so we summed the scores of the items involved in each scale and then divided that by the number of items used to comprise the scale. The items measuring the direct supervisors' estimated reactions to these items also met acceptable alpha levels (sex topics = .91, substance use/abuse topics= .93 and misdeeds topics = .94) and were collapsed into variables in the same fashion. The remaining three topics, religion, curriculum issues and administrative criticism, remained single-item variables across both data groups.

In addition, we conducted a bivariate correlation matrix, containing all of the demographic items we collected and the outcome variables for our study. This allowed us to assess whether any of these items potentially covaried and thus would need to be accounted for in our analyses. Accounting for CMA membership, public versus private institution, gender, age and all of the years of service variables, only the public versus private institution variable significantly correlated with the outcome variables. We thus retained it for future analyses.

In simply examining the descriptive statistics for this measure, it was clear that advisers varied greatly on their willingness to self-censor. The mean score for this scale was 2.95, indicating that advisers landed near the "somewhat disagree" portion of the WTSC scale. Further, an examination of a histogram, as well as the minimum (1.0) and maximum (6.63) scores for this variable, revealed a normally distributed data spread, indicating a wide range of ratings on the topic.

A correlation matrix was again used to examine the second research question, which asked what, if any, demographic variables contributed to the adviser's willingness to self-censor. We looked at age, gender, years of advising, years of teaching, years at an institution, whether the school had declared the paper an open public forum and whether or not they belonged to a state or national media organization. None of the variables was significantly correlated with the Willingness to Self-Censor variable (all ps > .2).

After that basic assessment, we conducted a series of multi-step linear regressions to answer the final research question: Will adviser ratings on Willingness to Self-Censor scale (WTSC) independently predict the adviser's own comfort level in the coverage of controversial topics in the adviser's media outlet, even when controlling for their direct supervisor's perceived comfort level, the degree to which they fear reprisals and the degree to which they report enjoying their job? In the first step of the regression, we placed the public versus private institution variable. In the second step, we included the job satisfaction variable, the fear of reprisal variable and the perception of direct supervisor's comfort level with the topic. In the final step, we placed the Willingness to Self-Censor variable.

In examining the sex variable regression, the final regression was strong and predictive (adj. R-square = .32) with several significant predictors. The public versus private institution variable was significant (beta = -.17, p < .01), indicating that those at private institutions had lower levels of comfort with seeing sex stories run in their paper than their public institution counterparts. In addition, job satisfaction was also a significant negative predictor (beta= -.21, p < .001), indicating that higher levels of job satisfaction indicated lower levels of comfort in seeing material on these topics published in the paper. The largest predictor was the estimated reaction of one's supervisor to the topics (beta = .46, p < .001). This showed a strong congruity between one's own views and the perception of how the supervisor would view the topics. The fear of reprisals variable was not a significant predictor at any stage in this regression (beta= .03, p >.2)

Even after controlling for those variables, the Willingness to Self-Censor variable was a significant predictor (beta= -.21, p < .001). The negative beta weight indicates that higher scores on the Willingness to Self-Censor would significantly predict lower levels of comfort with stories on the sex topics contained in this variable.

Similar patterns emerged in examining the administration variable (adj. R-square= .25), with public versus private institution (beta= -.11, p < .05), job satisfaction (beta= -.15, p < .05), the estimate of the supervisor's comfort level (beta= .51, p < .001) and Willingness to Self-Censor (beta= -.15, p < .05) all remaining significant predictors. The pattern varied slightly for the administrative criticism regression (adj. R-square= .27) with job satisfaction becoming a non-factor (beta= .03, p > .2) and the fear or reprisals variable becoming a significant predictor (beta= -.20, p < .01), indicating that higher levels of fear lead to lower levels of comfort. The other three variables, public versus private institution (beta= -.13, p < .05), the estimate of the boss' comfort level (beta= .26, p < .01) and the Willingness to Self-Censor (beta= -.20, p < .01) all remained significant.

In the religion regression (adj. R-square= .29), only the estimate of the boss' comfort level (beta= .51, p < .01) and the Willingness to Self-Censor (beta= -.13, p < .05) were significant predictors. The misdeeds regression (adj. R-square= .19) and the curriculum regression (adj. R-square= .17) were both considerably weaker than the other

four, even though they retained a number of significant predictors. In the misdeeds regression, job satisfaction (beta= -.20, p < .01) and the estimate of the supervisor's reaction (beta= .39, p < .001) were significant while in the curriculum regression, fear of reprisals (beta= -.15, p < .05), job satisfaction (beta= -.16, p < .05) and the estimate of the supervisor's reaction (beta= .37, p < .001) were all significant as well. In these last two regressions, the Willingness to Self-Censor variable was not a significant predictor (both betas < .1, both ps > .2).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study revealed several data patterns that have benefits to both scholars and practitioners alike. First, advisers demonstrated a pattern of comfort with these topics that should be of interest to free-speech advocates and student media outlets. At their lowest point, advisers still showed moderate levels of comfort in seeing stories on certain controversial topics published. For approximately three-fourths of the topics, advisers were within one point of the high end of the comfort ratings. These ratings indicated that the topics, often viewed as controversial, were unlikely to be a problem for advisers. This should bode well for student editors who seek support from the advisers upon the publication of such stories.

The three lowest-rated topics (oral sex, sex and administrative criticism) mirrored outcomes of studies conducted with high school newspaper advisers. In all of those studies, including one involving the surveying of high school principals, the data indicated that oral sex was the least comfortable topic for advisers and administrators (BLIND CITES). The repetition of this finding at this level indicates a need for further research regarding the taboos associated with this specific form of sexual encounter and why it is consistently and significantly lower in the comfort ratings than all the other topics.

Second, data gathered regarding the willingness to self-censor revealed that advisers were, on average, somewhat unwilling to suppress their feelings in the face of conflict. The ratings on the WTSC scale indicated that advisers were likely to express their opinion when they disagree with others, speak out when they think something wrong is occurring and speak publicly when their opinion is incongruent with that of the prevailing opinions.

This has inherent value to those interested in student press because in four of the six regressions we conducted, the WTSC variable significantly predicted comfort level ratings on controversial topics. To that end, those advisers who are more willing to self-censor are also more reticent to see controversial material in the media outlet they advise. While this might not lead to overt censorship, it could lead advisers who have stronger desires to self-censor to be less than supportive when stories on some of these topics come up. Even as far back as the Captive Voices report, Nelson (1974) noted the potential "chilling effect" that can occur as a result of this kind of discomfort.

While the WTSC variable did not significantly predict comfort levels in all six regressions, it remains an important and valid predictor of how advisers will react to controversial topics. In examining the descriptive statistics of all six variable outcome variables used in the regressions above, misdeeds and curriculum were the two variables in which advisers rated the highest levels of comfort in both their personal ratings and their estimates of their supervisors' view. Since advisers showed little discomfort in seeing these topics published and rated their supervisors' views favorably as well, it is likely that the WTSC variable was not a significant predictor in these regressions because the topics themselves were not viewed as controversial. Since WTSC predicts an inherent reticence to express an unpopular opinion on a difficult topic, the outcomes here are do not appear to run counter to the underlying basis of the theory.

This study has several limitations that are worth noting. First, the attempt to reach non-CMA newspaper advisers failed to yield enough data to do a full comparative analysis between the groups. Previous research in journalism has indicated that collective identity among individuals with similar goals and problems can lead to a sense of unity and purpose, even when facing a generally negative public (Filak & Price, 2005). Thus, it could be hypothesized that non-CMA advisers would be less likely to step out on controversial issues, since they might be isolated from other advisers who could offer support and advice. That said, our examination here showed no significant differences between these two groups regarding any of our outcome variables. However, this sample was too small to make any definitive statements and future work should seek a balanced sample between these two groups of advisers.

In addition, our hope initially was to do a full examination of media advisers from various backgrounds and with varied responsibilities. What we found was a high percentage of newspaper advisers and very little participation from others. While an initial snafu indicated this study to be for newspaper advisers only, our subsequent efforts to reach non-newspaper advisers failed. A broader study involving more types of media advisers should be conducted in the future to assess whether trends identified here continue with other media.

Finally, several individuals noted in email correspondence that they worked for an independent media company and thus did not have a "boss" in the traditional sense. We only received about a dozen of these responses based on email contact and open data points in our data set. However, it would be valuable to assess these individuals and their views in a different way in another study. As one email noted, advising varies from institution to institution and future efforts should seek to capture and analyze those differences.

In spite of these limitations, we believe this study provided valuable results to those interested in student media. Our hope is that future studies will examine this trend, adding and augmenting the slate of controversial topics to assess new problem areas as they arise. We would also like to see whether future research can discern whether an adviser's willingness to self-censor can be transmuted to the newspaper's student editors, either directly or indirectly. Seeing if self-censorship leads to actual censorship, or at the very least a narrowing of topics being covered, is our next goal and should be an important priority for researchers in this field.

Refereed Article

TABLE 1: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLES IN DESCENDING MEAN ORDER

	Mean	Standard Dev.		Mean	Standard Dev.
Oral Sex			**Pregnancy**		
Adviser	4.99	2.00	Adviser	6.33	1.11
Supervisor Estimate	3.62	1.89	Supervisor Estimate	5.22	1.61
Sexual Activity			**Out-of-school Misdeeds**		
Adviser	5.64	1.58	Adviser	6.39	1.08
Supervisor Estimate	4.28	1.84	Supervisor Estimate	5.17	1.72
Administration Issues			**Religion**		
Adviser	5.93	1.38	Adviser	6.40	1.01
Supervisor Estimate	4.16	1.93	Supervisor Estimate	5.75	1.42
Drug use			**Alcohol**		
Adviser	6.17	1.25	Adviser	6.44	0.99
Supervisor Estimate	4.93	1.78	Supervisor Estimate	5.23	1.69
Homosexuality			**Curriculum**		
Adviser	6.20	1.15	Adviser	6.53	0.89
Supervisor Estimates	5.25	1.66	Supervisor Estimate	5.50	1.59
Birth Control			**In-school Misdeeds**		
Adviser	6.27	1.26	Adviser	6.55	0.90
Supervisor Estimate	5.29	1.67	Supervisor Estimate	5.24	1.65

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CHANGES & CHALLENGES

A rather **colorful** letter to the editor, written by a former student when she was a sophomore, resides in your student paper's online archives, readily accessible to anyone. That former student, since graduated, is now a professional who would just as soon have that letter disappear from the face of the earth. She is no longer a wise fool, and she asks that it be removed from the archives. Your editor asks you, the adviser, what to do.

Image courtesy of Manchester City Library

This situation is typical of the huge changes which have occurred since some of us began advising student publications back in the day. Thirty-plus years ago the request wouldn't have been made, and if something was in print, there it was for all time. The Internet and on-line newspapers have raised so many new issues to deal with that hardly a week goes by now that a new challenge doesn't present itself.

And the new questions and challenges appear almost daily. You open the morning's e-mails on the CMA listserve with a subject line of "Help!" expecting anything and everything.

The ever-growing technological changes in our field alone pose questions for college student journalism. Oftentimes it's hard to keep up with everything, and we don't always have the time for adequate thought and reflection.

What are the benefits of student newspapers going online? And when you go online, what do you put there? Everything? Selected stories and features? Should the paper be part of the college web site, or a separate entity?

Should advisers become students' "friends" on a Facebook page when invited? Perhaps. And if so, is this any different from teachers and students being friends in the Pre-Facebook Era?

And what kind of world are our graduates entering after college? (It's a VUCA world for sure—read on)! Will there be any jobs on newspapers four or five years from now when your freshman staff writers finally graduate? What degree will they need to be a successful journalist? Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism says it is moving toward more of a marketing and public relations approach in order to be on the cutting edge of change. Is it going in the right direction?

I often think that Charles Dickens's famous first line of <u>A Tale of Two Cities</u> is an observation that is always true, all the time, everywhere. Today is certainly the best and worst of times for college media advisers who work in an era of unprecedented change on campuses across the country, and there sure is a lot to talk about when we get together, especially for those of us who have been advising for decades.

Advisers have always faced questions but today there seem to be more than ever. In this maelstrom of change and talk about change, how do we keep our integrity? Can we clearly articulate our advising world view and especially our ethical values? How do we stay centered and focused on what is truly important? How do we know anymore what is truly important?

If you haven't put this quote over your desk, now might be the time. It's from Ted Koppel in his 2000 Red Smith Lecture at Notre Dame. "We are these days drowning in information, very

> ## "I believe college journalism practiced in most public and some private institutions in America today marks the last bastion of the truly free press in the USA."
>
> *—Kathy Lawrence*
> *Director of Student Media*
> *University of Texas-Austin*

little of which is translated into knowledge, almost none of which evolves into wisdom." Can you empathize?

Rich Conway, adviser to The Vignette at Nassau County (N.Y.) Community College for 23 years, says that retaining our idealism is the key to success. He tells student journalists they need to be governed by idealism as well as the need to inform. "I've managed to sustain myself by believing in the value of journalism," he says. "I tell students at the start of the year that journalism is a trust. If readers think we are not honest and trustworthy, we're sunk and we may as well go home."

Conway stresses the ethical dimensions of advising and says the advent of the Internet has complicated his work with students. "Some reporters think that if something is on the internet it is automatically true and there for the taking," he says. "I want reporters to get off the net and get out into the campus, which is usually where the action is."

Another longtime adviser and currently director of student media at the University of Texas-Austin, Kathy Lawrence acknowledges the pressures of adapting to new technologies, observing that they "stretch us not just in new directions but probably directions which haven't been invented yet." Paying the bills as we try new approaches is a downside, says Lawrence, who thinks we have "several years of worry ahead before things settle out a bit."

Lawrence also maintains a high degree of idealism. "I believe college journalism practiced in most public and some private institutions in America today marks the last bastion of the truly free press in the USA," she says. She takes heart from her journalist father who believes advisers have the best of both worlds because we "work in journalism and also with college students, whose idealism hasn't been diminished by work in the corporate world."

Today's rapidly changing environment highlights the ongoing questions regarding the nature and direction of journalism in general. Is it a craft? A profession? A calling?

Most longtime advisers will tell you it is all of the above.

Laura Widmer, director of student publications at Northwest Missouri State University and a 25-year advising veteran, sees journalism as a craft and a calling. "I believe that some students can 'get it' or 'catch it' once they start working in journalism, she says. She adds, "Not only do we need to teach them the tools and skills for their craft, but we must teach them compassion, drive, success, failure and fairness."

Conway includes professionalism in this sense: "Professional considerations include legal, ethical and humanistic aspects.

While all three are important, it seems to me that it's hard to practice good journalism without having some awareness of the implications of your work—in particular the impact of what you write on the overall social fabric," he says.

CMA President Ken Rosenauer, a veteran adviser, characterizes journalism as a composite and says "it's a tough call."

"It's probably a combination of all three…and it is much more than a job to those who do it best," said Rosenauer,. He said advisers simply start students on "their growth journey, and then their own talents and creativity carry them the rest of the way."

In the 2005 Carnegie report on "Improving the Education of Tomorrow's Journalists,"some 40 news executives and journalists, in interviews conducted by McKinsey and Co., expressed much disagreement about basic questions such as the value of J-schools and what they should teach. But they agreed on one key point, that "requirements for journalists are very different from when [they] began their own careers."

"Some of the news leaders bewailed what they consider 'a crisis of confidence' within journalism," the report said, as interviewees discussed the effect business pressures have on what many of them consider "a vocation and a public service." Many believe that "journalism schools cannot overemphasize the importance of upholding the ethics of journalism." And they said that the "ethical ramifications of journalism must be infused throughout the curriculum, not just in ethics classes."

Without question, college media advisers are right in the middle of all this and have been all along, as a 1987 CMA study by Lillian Hodge Kopenhaver and Ron Spielberger showed when it called for increased training and better pay for media advisers, "Advisers to the nation's student media are critical to the future of the profession and to the future of quality student media. Stu-dent media advising is a professional career path and must be recognized as such by all concerned, especially employers." concluded authors Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver and Ron Spielberger.

In addition, a 1993 paper presented by John Bodle at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Convention entitled "Why Newspaper Advisers Quit" found that over half of those surveyed said they had lower status than classroom teachers, and concluded that advisers still "seek parity with classroom teachers on issues of status, compensation, and tenure."

In 2008 our situation has improved, thanks to education of administrators and faculty over the years .We need to take the long view of the status of our work, don't we? When you consider that CMA was founded in 1954 and is therefore still a pretty young organization, we have indeed come a long way.

But talk with advisers at any regional or national convention and you will soon realize there is still room for improvement today. Taking time to think all these issues through, taking time to have in-depth conversations with colleagues and students, is paramount. Too often we think we don't have that time, but it's up to us to make sure we do.

After all, we are dealing with real challenges in the real world, not in some artificial setting. And isn't ours the real world? Widmer puts it nicely: 'The college media outlets are a business and as real as it gets." And that real world is increasingly, to use an emerging new acronym, a VUCA world—"volatile, uncertain, chaotic and ambiguous."

Come to think of it, you might put "VUCA World" over your desk along with that Koppel quote. It well might help us keep things in perspective. ⌬
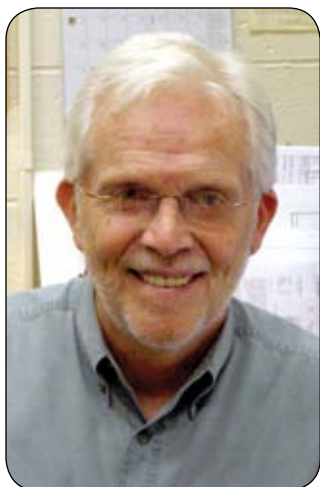
CMA Hall of Fame adviser **Trum Simmons** has taught at Harrisburg (Pa.) Area Community College since 1971. He is a senior professor of English and teaches two print journalism courses, and he has advised The Fourth Estate student newspaper since 1972. Simmons, the chair of the CMA Ethics Committee, is also a member of the Community College Journalism Association (CCJA) Hall of Fame, is a Columbia Scholastic Press Association Gold Key recipient, and was the CMA Distinguished Two-Year Adviser in 1995. Trum says he plans to retire in 2010 if allowed to.

SIMMONS' RULES

Rapid technological evolution. Adoption of new platforms, and the replacement of old. Increasing public sentiment against the press. These swirling factors can make it difficult for advisers, new and old, to keep their bearings. Longtime adviser Trum Simmons offers his keys to staying the course and surviving, if not thriving, in a chaotic environment.

- **No adviser is an island.** Stay engaged with other advisers and colleagues who may be finding solutions to the problems you're facing or about to face.

- **Keep your eyes focused on the students;** this is a learning experience for them, too. They should be first and foremost served.

- **Take the long view.** Don't let the the day's crisis make you overreact. Most, if not all, things shall pass.

- **Your credibility is your biggest asset.** When mistakes are made (they're inevitable, by the way), acknowledge them. And don't take things personally..

- **Keep the faith,** because it may be shaken daily.

MY THOUGHTS

I became an adviser to our student newspaper in 1972 during other tumultuous times. Our college president had in effect shut down the paper after a very poorly done April Fool's issue appeared that spring and the call had gone out to faculty to see who wanted to help resurrect the publication.

As a new professor I had wondered why the paper was so poor in general, and I discovered that a main reason was its lack of a good adviser. I volunteered because of the values I had developed while in college and grad school in the 1960s. I saw journalism as a high calling, one that required devotion to truth with the goal of giving our citizen-students the information and knowledge to make the campus and the world a better place.

Over the years we made the publication more professional, one that was read by more students, faculty and staff—a paper that could be taken seriously. Today's emphasis on professionalism, however, has too often become muddied by the idea that being professional means "behaving," means following the examples--whether good or bad--of what I prefer to call the commercial press.

Many well-meaning folks in higher education today forget that a student publication is a learning experience. Students are here, or there, to learn, a process that includes doing their own work and making mistakes along the way. Student journalists have to deal with advisers and faculty who do some teaching along the way, so students are receiving as good an education outside the classroom as in.

We never again published a poor April Fool's issue; instead, we published only good ones. The first--four years after the previous debacle--showed the campus that there is something called satire that can be both entertaining and educational when done well. Any dread that preceded the students' new approach soon dissolved into laughter and reader compliments.

A student newspaper is just that. And students will be students—remember?

—Trumbull L. Simmons, Jr.

From plate spinning to multitasking

I'm old enough to remember watching "The Ed Sullivan Show" on CBS, a Sunday night fixture for 23 years. Yeah, I recall my older sister going gah-gah to the point where my father had to threaten to clobber her when Elvis appeared in 1956. I also held a spot in front of our family tube in 1964 when the Beatles were Ed's guests. Real TV history there.

However, of all the acts I recall seeing, my favorites were the plate spinners. Often performed to a tune such as "Sabre Dance," a person would spin plates, bowls, and other flat objects atop poles, called wands, increasing the number of plates, one by one, to several dozen or more [the world record is 108).

Watching is fascinating to the point of frenetic, especially as earlier plates begin to slow, wobble and threaten to fall just before the spinner gets them going again.

Of course, today we might liken such an experience to multitasking, a practice probably familiar to most of us.

Scientific American reported in 2004 that multitasking while working is most prevalent among young adults and decreases with age, ranging from 51 percent of 18-34 year olds to 23 percent of 55-64 year olds. Playing computer games while doing office work was especially popular among young adults aged 18 to 34. Sixty percent of adults aged 25 to 34 admitted to talking on the phone while reading or writing e-mail, while nearly four in 10 of 25 to 34 year olds said they read while driving.

However prevalent the practice may be, nearly six out of 10 adults agreed that, despite being busier than ever, they often feel like they are getting less done.

In February 2003 *Wall Street Journal* columnist Sue Shellenbarger cited increasing evidence that multitasking erodes rather than enhances productivity. As people divide their attention between two even simple tasks — reading e-mail and talking on a phone —comprehension, concentration and short-term memory suffer. Switching from one job to another doesn't work either. Research suggests that that eats up more time than waiting to finish one job before beginning the next — an inefficiency that increases as tasks become more complicated.

The August 2008 issue of Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance reported that multitasking can lead to dangerous distraction, mental burnout, anxiety and depression. Multitasking can become tiring and, in some cases, ultimately can create more work.

While many of us certainly can claim to multitask, at least at times, evidence indicates that we're wiser to limit that practice, especially as we're attempting to complete somewhat taxing or complex work.

More important, perhaps, than multitasking, we advisers must be multitalented and multi-experienced. When I began advising more than 30 years ago, I was pretty good at shooting pix and writing news, features and opinion. My main concerns as adviser involved teaching effective reporting, writing, editing and page design — with a smattering of ethics tossed in for good measure. Technology amounted to working with an IBM Selectric, with the pivoting "typeball" or using a Honeywell Strobonar electronic flash.

Life was simple.

Today, media advisers must know more about a wider range of topics and skills than ever. Even if you've advised for only a few years, consider how much you've had to learn since walking in the door. As a result, advising is tougher and more demanding.

I had a phone call a few weeks back from a new adviser who wanted to know the best way he could learn what he needed to know. Of course, I suggested two things: 1) that he subscribe to the CMA Member List, where he could daily pick up important tidbits from CMA colleagues and 2) that he attend our fall convention in Kansas City, where he would be able to feast from the marvelous smorgasbord of sessions we offer across that wide range of topics and skills that advisers should know.

Plate spinning is fun to watch. Multitasking is alluring but should be limited. Wisdom suggests that our best efforts should be focused on improving our skill sets and experiences. In that way we can most likely do our best to lead our students to do their best.

Image courtesy of Flickr user Theremina

Ken Rosenauer is president of College Media Advisers. He is a professor of journalism and English at Missouri Western State University.
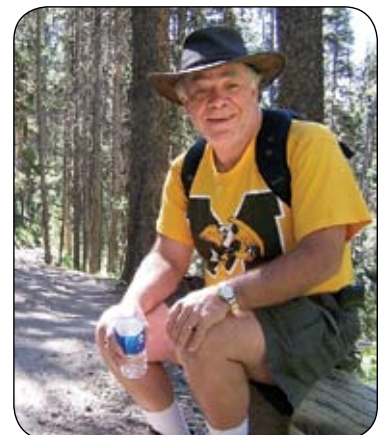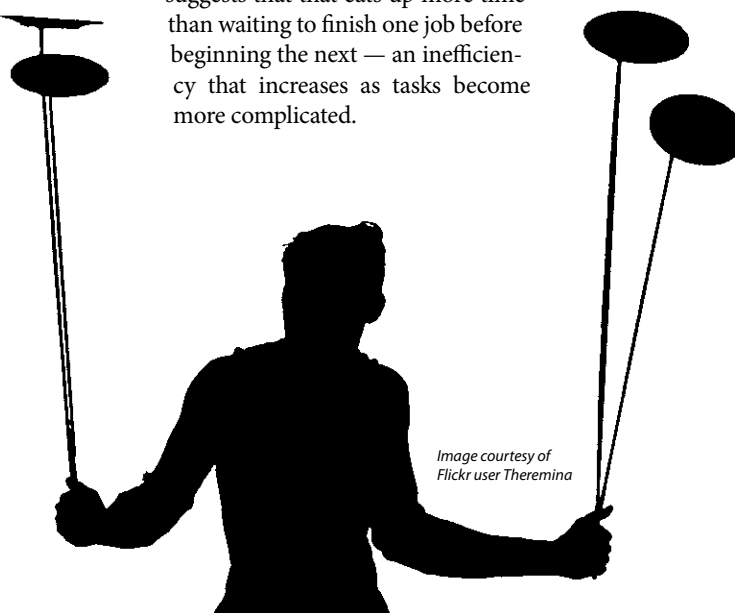
college media REVIEW

College Media Review is the flagship journal of College Media Advisers, Inc.

It is the leading academic journal on advising collegiate media, both print and electronic.
It is an all-encompassing journal that serves collegiate media advisers.

MISSION

- It educates and informs advisers on how to teach, advise and produce collegiate media.

- Its refereed section quantifies trends, documents theories, identifies characteristics and disseminates research and information for and about collegiate media and advising.

- Its non-refereed section offers essential information on all facets of collegiate media advising - teaching, training, recruiting, diversifying, motivating and challenging students to media excellence.

GUIDELINES

- Our audience is primarily faculty and staff engaged in college media advising. Content is tightly focused to the concerns of college media.

- Length limit is 5,000 words.

- Style: Text for non-refereed articles follows Associated Press style; text for refereed manuscripts follows Chicago style.

- Art: Black-and-white and/or color photography or graphics may be submitted in digital format. Art files (particularly charts and graphs) may be embedded in the text of an article for placement but should be submitted as additional stand-alone files. Please provide credit/copyright information for all art submitted.

Non-refereed section:

- *College Media Review* will consider articles for publication; a query is suggested. CMR prints first-time material, unless the material has been specifically requested from another publication.

- *CMR* seeks authoritative articles rather than anecdotal.

- For all articles for which it is appropriate, a service journalism approach is encouraged.

- *CMR* prefers articles written in third person; exceptions may be made under extenuating circumstances.

- Articles must be submitted electronically, in either Microsoft Word or basic text format. E-mail articles as attachments to Robert Bohler (r.bohler@tcu.edu). Include a 60-word biography that includes current position, media advised, and key prior experience.

Refereed manuscripts:

- Each manuscript should be submitted as an attachment to Associate Editor Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver (kopenhav@fiu.edu). Manuscripts should be submitted in MS Word format and double-spaced in 12-point Times Roman. Refereed articles that are rejected may be resubmitted for the non-refereed section of *CMR* and will be considered if appropriate.

- Contributing writers will be notified within 90 days in most cases. Once an article is published, the author will receive two complimentary copies of that issue by first class mail, prior to regular second-class mailings. *College Media Review* will gladly comply with any requests for verification letters confirming acceptance of an article.

KANSAS CITY SHOOTOUT

1st place
Chantal Anderson
University of Washington
Kristin Millis, adviser

The assignment: take a photo that represents a "portrait" of Kansas City, proved to give the photographers the flexibility they needed to shoot in a strange city under deadline pressures. However, it also proved to be the bone of contention as the images were critiqued. Many excellent images didn't rate as highly as they would have because they didn't fit the assignment.

When it came right down to it, the group of some 50 photographers who attended the final critique debated what the assignment meant and what images represented that assignment. The professionals who judged the images had the same discussion. The top three images unquestionably were little vignettes of Kansas City.

Originally, nearly 90 photographers indicated their interest in the all-digital contest. But only about 40 actually completed the assignment and turned in a digital image or two. All of them learned from the critique and the process used to create the images for display at the final session and online. At the very least, they learned the importance of following directions. Some excellent photographers got a chance to show off their skills and obtain bragging rights until the next convention.

—*Bradley Wilson*

2nd place
Jordan Wilson
Baylor University
Robin O'Shaughnessy, adviser

3rd place
Chris Asadian
Washtenaw Community College
Keith Gave, adviser

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