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Developing relationships with media relations ▶ 4

CMR college media REVIEW

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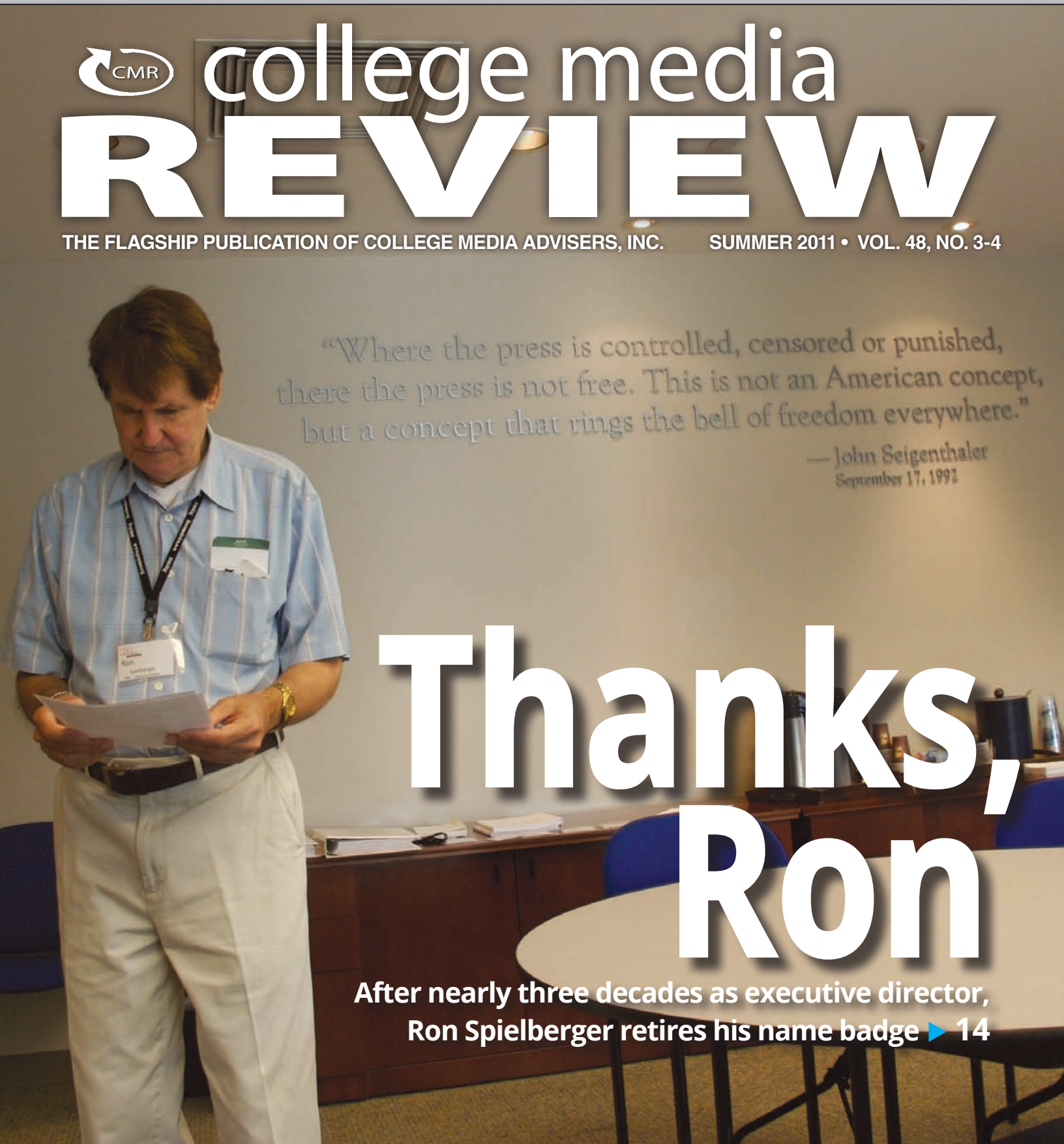

Thanks, Ron

After nearly three decades as executive director, Ron Spielberger retires his name badge ▶ 14

EDITOR'S CORNER

Adapting to Disaster

A recent story in the alt-weekly Nashville Scene describes how Bob Dylan's Blonde on Blonde record came to be produced in the Music City in 1966. At some point in the excruciatingly long process, Dylan, who wanted to pull a looser sound from the session musicians, asked, "What do you guys do here?" Told they played golf in their free time, Dylan surmised they hadn't caught his conscience-altering drift. "That's not what I mean," Dylan is quoted as saying. "What do you do here?" That lifted the veil for the Nashville cats, and a security guard was sent to a nearby restaurant for pints and quarts of a concoction dubbed the Leprechaun. The rest is the history of a pop music landmark.

Most of the discussions I notice online or hear around the water cooler (or whatever passes as one) seem to focus on how student journalists might integrate the newest technologies or social media into what they do, and some of stuff I see as a result is amazing.

But what our students really do came to the fore in the days and weeks following the killer tornados that swept though the Southeast in April. A College Media Advisers listserv post from Rebecca Walker, the student publications coordinator at University of North Alabama, lauded the stellar work of student journalists at *The Crimson White* at the University of Alabama, where as many as eight students at Alabama or nearby Stillman College died as a result of the devastating wreckage. On the day I first visited the newspaper's website, it was filled with story after story of life, death and damages. And victims trying to make sense of what had happened and how to make the next step found plenty of information about public or private aid that could help them at the time.

On a Thursday in May, the website featured these headlines published since the previous Monday:

- Volunteer opportunities for Thursday, May 12, 2011
- Students were some of the first responders after tornado
- UA students help coordinate volunteers
- Southern schools show outpouring of support for Tuscaloosa
- Project Blessings focuses on areas surrounding Tuscaloosa
- Renters with damaged homes must terminate leases by May 11
- City plans comprehensive damage assessment, debris removal
- Colleges implement different relieve strategies
- UA Greek Relief raises nearly $100,000
- Some incoming freshman not discouraged by disaster

Exceptional coverage, and much of it could not have been accomplished without the benefits of multimedia and social media. But it would not have been done without the drive of students, most of them with their worlds upended in one way or another, who felt compelled to help in the ways they are uniquely capable of. We often see our student journalists reach their fullest potentials when the situations are the most difficult. And that's when it becomes cemented in many of them that this is what they want to do with their lives. You'll read more about the efforts of student journalists at *The Crimson White* the University of Alabama at Birmingham in our fall issue.

One of my colleagues likes to point out that students are going to be the ones who find solutions to most of the news media's problems — not the advisers or the pros who got them into the jam in the first place. When it comes to college radio, those opportunities are decreasing as universities increasingly eye them as lucrative options in a down economy. Several prominent stations have been sold in the past year, and at least several are being eyed for sale. As their numbers decrease, so will the opportunities available to students who want to experiment with the form. As Daniel Reimold points out in our featured package, they're exploring other new worlds besides alternative music.

* * *

Former University of Texas newspaper adviser Richard Finnell and I worked together several years ago heading up a student newspaper that covered the national AEJMC convention in San Antonio. One of the few pleasurable memories from that experience was running into University of Memphis professor Ron Spielberger. Not CMA executive director Ron Spielberger, nor convention director Ron Spielberger — just the advertising prof. Know how I knew the difference? His lanky frame appeared about two inches taller, and I suspect that was because the weight of a national convention wasn't resting on his shoulders. Elsewhere in this issue, you'll find tributes to Ron from advisers who've known him better and longer than I. They invariably remark about his grace and good humor and manners and helpfulness while he's done some heavy lifting. And that encounter in San Antonio in its own way revealed how much he's done so.

* * *

For the past three years, the CMR staff has been most fortunate to rely on the design skills of Adam Drew, the production manager at University of Texas Arlington. Adam's ability to create a vision from the content and to transfer it onto our covers and pages, and do so with limited resources, has given the magazine an eye-catching look. Adam steps down as our visuals director with this spring/summer issue, and we wish him the best ... and thank him for his great work. Starting with the fall 2011 issue, Bill Neville, the production manager at University of Alabama Birmingham, takes over the design responsibilities. We know you'll enjoy his work, too.

— Robert Bohler

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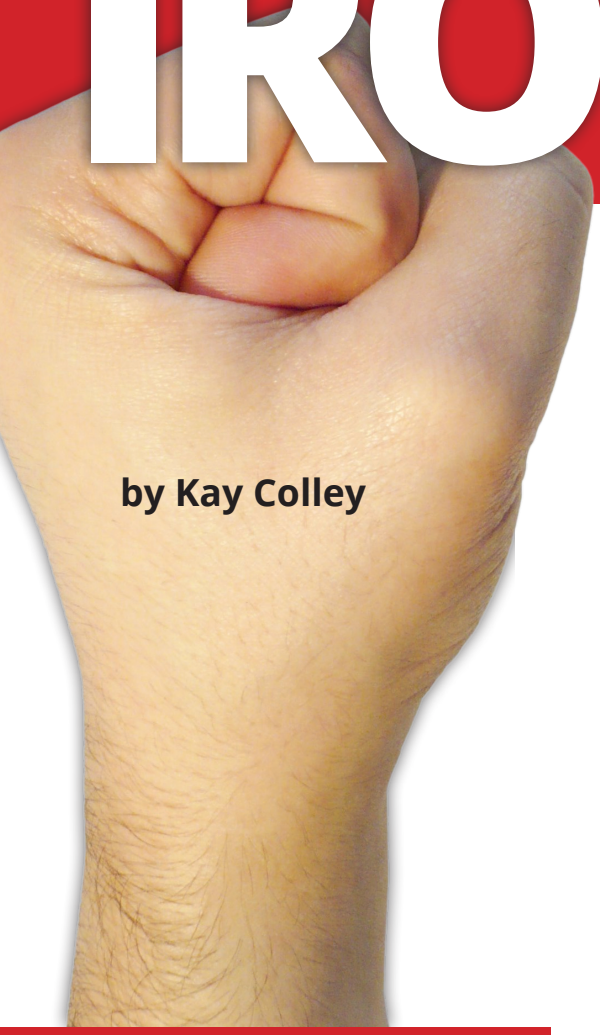
student success, regardless of their interp

IRON FIST



by Kay Colley

Missouri Southern State University has experienced it. So has Stony Brook University. And the University of Texas at El Paso, and Florida Atlantic University, and Harrisburg Community College, and other colleges and universities across the nation — a policy that requires student journalists to go through university relations before doing interviews. **At** some places where it isn't policy it remains the practice. For some college media advisers, it's perplexing. For others, it's just business as usual.

"It's been this way since I've been at this university, and I've been here 20-something years," said Kathleen M. Flores, director of student publications at the University of Texas-El Paso. "It's not new. It seems like even more so recently than in the past they've (university communications) wanted to pull an even tighter rein about any information that gets out to the public or to the media. It's not just the student media; it's all media here.

"If you want to speak to anyone, you have to go through the University Communications Department, and they're supposed to contact anyone you want to interview and set up that appointment," Flores said. "If it involves the police department, they will sit in on the interview. I think this is common at a lot of institutions."

At Florida Atlantic, a similar situation has existed since 2005.

"When I was hired, originally in 1999, that was not the case," said Michael Koretzky, volunteer adviser to the University Press. "The school had a PIO (public information officer), so she was a former Miami Herald reporter. I knew her, and she had a traditional PIO job at the time. We would call on her when we would need her.

"I've always told students PIOs are great references for finding the right people," Koretzky said. "You don't interview the PIO, but you call her, even when it's not mandatory, and then when you call those people she recommends, you can tell them that the PIO suggested them as a source. They're more likely to talk then."

But things changed in 2005. A series of articles written by the student newspaper brought continual negative publicity, and the university tried several tactics to stop the message. Koretzky said it was the university's shift to a more traditional university model, including the implementation of capital campaign, that caused ripple effects.

"I think there was a general shift, and I've seen it at other schools where something like that (a capital campaign) has this ripple effect all the way down to the student newspaper," Koretzky said. "And it affects faculty; it affects staff speaking out. They (university administrators) really want to control the message because now they have donors looking at them, and they don't want anything distracting from the message: Give us money."

But Brenda Wrigley, the chair of the department of public relations at the Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications – named the top school for public relations education in 2010 by the Public Relations Society of America – says public relations practitioners and journalists share the same goals.

"I'm all for more information getting out there," Wrigley said. "I'm all for open interviews. I'm all for student media learning by making mistakes. I think all of that is very important. I think this has been happening for a long time (on college campuses). Any PR person or any marketing communication person worth his or her salt would be a counselor to folks in a position to do media interviews."

The problems seem to occur the more PR practitioners diverge from their traditional practices.

"I'm all for more information getting out there. I'm all for open interviews. I'm all for student media learning by making mistakes. I think all of that is very important. I think this has been happening for a long time (on college campuses). Any PR person or any marketing communication person worth his or her salt would be a counselor to folks in a position to do media interviews."

—Brenda Wrigley, the chair of the department of public relations at the Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications

sity's media relations practitioners is key to retation of interview policies, experts say.

Versus Hand-in-Glove

At Harrisburg Area Community College in Pennsylvania, for example, an administrative policy that requires student media to use marketing and communications officials to set up interviews was expanded to include the practitioner's presence at those talks.

"They have an administrative policy that all media both on campus and off campus have to go through the PR office, and so our PR person creatively interpreted this, among other things, to have a PR person sitting in on any interviews that we did with any administrator or staff person, which, if you can imagine, was a logistical nightmare," said Patty Hanahoe-Dosch, associate professor of English and adviser of the Live Wire at the Lancaster campus.

The Lancaster campus is a 45-minute drive from the main campus in Harrisburg, where all public relations officers work. Logistics became overwhelming.

"This year, they've kind of left us alone I think in part because we have a new vice president who is very supportive of us," Hanahoe-Dosch said. "Previously it had gotten pretty bad. We started finally just ignoring them, doing what we had to do until somebody said, 'Oh no you have to go through PR.' That seemed to work. I don't know that we're that unusual."

Other advisers advocate a similar traditional approach to reporting, encouraging students to do their own reporting and calling on public relations officials when needed.

"I just tell them that you have to be persistent," Flores said. "You have to keep calling and calling. Don't give up. Try to find different people to contact."

Koretzky schedules a one-on-one lunch with public information officers at FAU. The PIO has provided feedback on what students doing well and not so well in interviews.

"It was very instructional," he said. "Once you sit down and have lunch with these people and they have lunch with you, and you put a human face on it, it's very hard to sit there and say they're the big bad evil PIO and they don't care about anything except themselves. That's not true."

As a practicing public relations person in corporate America, Syracuse's Wrigley acted as a counselor to top business executives, often sitting in on interviews with journalists and her chief executive officer.

"That's the way the real world works," she said. "PR people are fundamental to successful journalism. Journalism and public relations have always depended on one another, and with the newsroom shrinking and with budgets being cut in media everywhere, with a lot of stuff going digital, with social media — with all of those things — there's just not the size of staff for journalists to cover as much as they could before. I know a good percentage of news originates with public relations people and people within organizations. I don't see anything wrong with that as long as the public relations person is behaving ethically.

"It comes down to the personal ethics of the journalist and the PR person," Wrigley said. "A trusting relationship has to develop. I think the onus there is on the public relations or the marketing communications person to start that relationship and to cultivate it and to make sure there is a mutual understanding of what our roles are. We're paid advocates. There's no question about that. But if we're ethical, we're not going to advocate for something that's illegal, bad for society, bad for any particular group, bad for business. We're not going to advocate for things that don't have some kind of value to people."

As a former communications director at Tarrant County College and the University of Texas at Arlington, Donna Darovich advocated for those institutions, but as a former journalist was wary when student journalists came to interviews with no notepad, no audio recorder and no prepared questions.

"I think one of the reasons (these policies are in place), these are just technicalities, but one of the reasons is when a student journalist or college journalist comes in to interview you or you are there when they interview anybody, and they don't take any notes, and/or they don't have a recorder, you tend to be skeptical," Darovich said. "And when you see the story, there was good reason. So when they come not prepared and without even the basic tools to do an interview, it tends to make you leery of how much you can trust them.

"My policy was to treat the student journalist just as I would a *Dallas Morning News* or a *Star-Telegram* reporter," Darovich said. "If after you've dealt with a student journalist and you see that they're not prepared, then you tend to not treat them that way."

In the end, both advisers and public relations people believe the key is to foster a good working relationship between student media and PR officials before problems arise.

"I think it's good for the reporters to learn," Koretzky said. "It's the best training ground. Listen, if you can't get around the PIO at a university where you know everybody…"

Kay Colley was named 2011 Teacher of the Year by the Small Programs Interest Group (SPIG) of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. She serves as faculty liaison and student media director at Texas Wesleyan University, where she is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication and teaches journalism and public relations courses. Her professional background includes stints in public relations, magazines, daily newspapers and weekly newspapers. She has advised the student newspapers at the University of North Texas and Blinn College.

In the Fast & Furious Media Age, Editorial Scrutiny is Still Key for Audience Trust

By Stephen Wolgast

>> A press release arrives in your student editor's e-mail, and it catches her eye right away.

"Sex and Intoxication More Common Among Women on Spring Break, According to AMA Poll." A headline like that is too good to pass up, so she keeps reading.

The lead doesn't disappoint. "Alcohol and sex play a prominent and potentially dangerous role in spring break trips of college co-eds," it begins breathlessly.

The news is perfect for the campus paper, and she mentions it as you pass through the newsroom. Intrigued, you take a look. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, a prominent nonprofit devoted to improved health care, sponsored the study. And the study itself was conducted by the American Medical Association. Impeccable bona fides.

Scrolling down the press release, your eyes widen when you come across these bullet points:

- "A majority (74 percent) of respondents said women use drinking as an excuse for outrageous behavior."
- "Almost all (92 percent) said it was easy to get alcohol while on spring break."

Clearly, this is important research, the kind that college students need to be aware of. And it's a science story that's an easy sell, one that includes multiple sex partners, outrageous behavior and binge drinking.

Your student editor and her staff run the story. When it also appears on the news sites of CBS and The Washington Times, among others, you're happy the students got it right.

But the problem is, they didn't. The results weren't reliable, and the clues to their fallibility were printed in the document itself. A close read of the entire press release would have uncovered the flawed logic. And that's probably the catch. Today, many readers get only as far as the sensational details before stopping to draw a conclusion. It's a trait that leads journalists to fall for hoaxes, and for the ordinary public to get—as the students say—punk'd.

The hard truth is that journalists should know better than to rely on only one source for information, particularly when it's juicy. They're taught to be skeptical. To talk to people from all sides of the question before filing copy. To find a secondary source when their mothers profess their love. Still, many of them don't check up on claims, and their copy is weaker for it.

The results of the AMA poll were meaningless, and most news outlets that published them in good faith had to print corrections to their stories about the March 8, 2008, press release.

But how could a student editor have known? How could anyone, for that matter, have teased out the misleading and blatantly misinterpreted results?

If a reporter had looked deeper — and some probably did so, because the release wasn't published widely — this is what he would have found.

- The poll was conducted online, so anyone could have claimed to be a woman who attended college and answered repeatedly.
- Although 92 of women in the survey "said it was easy to get alcohol while on spring break," the president of the AMA is quoted in the release as saying: "… the survey results showed only 27 percent had ever been on a spring break trip …" If that's the case, how could most of the respondents have known if alcohol was easily attainable? Obviously not from any firsthand experience.
- The poll reports that "74 percent of respondents said women use drinking as an excuse for outrageous behavior." Never mind that only about a third of those women had ever been on spring break.

When analyzing information becomes the public's job, we call it media literacy. That's the notion that anyone reading, watching or listening to news should possess basic analytical skills so that he can decide for himself what to believe and what to question. Can we expect today's young consumers of news to analyze news? In a word, no.

So it falls back to the reporter. When the reporter is the one with the duty to look for questionable facts, we call it skepticism.

THE 1,440/24 NEWS CYCLE

Back when there were only a few newscasts a day and two or three editions of the paper between dawn and dusk, journalists could check multiple sources. Modern deadline pressures, however, leave little time for such luxuries. Add to the news mix the content prepared by bloggers, broadcast polemicists and others who have neither training in journalism nor interest in standards, and the gatekeeper job is pushed all the

way down to the person reading the news during breakfast. On a Twitter feed, via her smart phone.

Jim Roberts of nytimes.com recently rechristened the 24/7 news cycle the 1,440/24 news cycle, referring to the number of minutes in a day. With two or three deadlines passing in the few minutes it takes to walk to the water fountain for a drink, reporters and their editors rarely have the time to interview enough sources to thoroughly vet a set of assertions.

They skip that step at their own peril. How could The Associated Press have been so easily fooled by a fake story about GE's income tax? GE, you'll recall, received a tax refund of $3.8 billion this year. A pretend web site (whose url was only one letter different from the GE public relations office's web address) posted a bogus press release on April 13 quoting the CEO saying that GE would return its entire refund to the U.S. Treasury.[1]

The AP distributed a 90-word brief. Needless to say, GE had no such intention, and The AP killed it after 35 minutes. Placing a phone call to GE would have been easy, of course. Did deadline pressure nix the editorial urge to verify a $3.8 billion fact? Perhaps.

Another example became famous in a live TV interview last fall. It's another example of how unverified information that's passed off as news can alter the public discourse.

In the weeks leading up to President Obama's trip to South Asia, a newspaper in Maharashtra, India, published an article with a quote from an anonymous source saying that the president's trip would cost $200 million a day. It was picked up by the Press Trust of India, which distributed it widely enough that the details were soon reported in the U.S., evidently without anyone stopping to realize that the figure, if true, would mean that a presidential trip cost $10 million a day more than the cost of the war in Afghanistan.

Without facts for context, the tone of the reaction was entirely predictable, with the political right becoming apoplectic about the perceived waste.

Enter U.S. Rep. Michele Bachman, R-Minn., a conservative bomb-thrower. (She's claimed that no one has proved that carbon dioxide is harmful, and that F.D.R. led us into the Great Depression by signing the Hoot-Smawley Act, evidently forgetting that her Congressional predecessors were Sen. Smoot and Rep. Hawley and that their bill was signed by President Coolidge.) She was a guest on Anderson Cooper's CNN show, AC360, in November to discuss ideas for trimming the federal deficit. When she brought up the purported cost of the presidential trip, Cooper didn't let the comment go unchallenged.[2]

He points out the actual cost of presidential protection is kept secret for security reasons. "This idea that it's $200 million, whatever, is simply made up."

When Bachmann responds, saying "These are the numbers that have been coming out in the press," she has achieved her goal of spreading a rumor as if it were fact. But suggesting that the figure is reliable simply because it's been printed somewhere is disingenuous. As breezily as she puts faith in the Maharashtra newspaper, she breezily dismisses news she disagrees with—namely, the one Cooper refers to in which the White House says the number is wildly inflated.

Live broadcasts permit no fact-checking, and the guests know it. Hosts have to rely on their wits, and their producers, if they hope to have any chance of getting the record right.

But when their words aren't shared with the audience immediately, journalists retain the obligation to make sure what they're hearing is accurate, and when journalists hear an assertion they are unfamiliar with, the good ones ask their sources where it came from. If it's from a document or report, the good ones may even offer a copy of it. Tenacious reporters plow ahead,ask for names of other people who can vouch for the material, or maybe just provide some context.

Some sources are cooperative, but if one says there's no one else who can provide any verification, reporters do some homework on their own, making phone calls to people who could know the answer and, if they don't, asking them for help identifying knowledgeable sources.

Once the background reporting is done, journalists who find out their source wasn't entirely truthful give him or her the chance to hear what they found out and to respond.

Then, in their reporting, confident reporters aren't shy about pointing out an assertion that has only a tenuous connection to reality. With a reputation for being tough but fair, sources are less likely to pass off a fib in the hopes that a gullible press will simply repeat it.

Unfortunately, that's just what happened with the spring break poll results. They were published despite clues to the problems that the authors didn't realize they left in the press release, perhaps because the suggestion that young women drink to excess and are sexually active fits with preconceived notions. In other words, if it sounds right, why bother checking to see if it's true?

That line in the press release refers to this footnote: "The AMA assumes outrageous behavior is associated with public nudity, dancing on tables/bars and participating in drinking contests." The AMA "assumes"? If the AMA can't be bothered to ask outright what women consider to be outrageous behavior, how can they insert their own interpretation? It's as if their research went no further than a study of the cinematic genre categorized by the "Girls Gone Wild" school.

Within days of the poll's release, statisticians had decimated its methods, relevance and accuracy. Amazingly, by late April the release was still posted on the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation web site, where you can click the "print" button to use it as a teaching tool.

Journalists need to be wary of traps like these so they can avoid becoming conduits of misleading or false information. Savvy politicians, marketers and businessmen have been tricking the media for centuries. If we don't start catching up to their tricks, it will fall on our audiences to start evaluating every article for credibility.

That's a job best left to an editor. We should aim to keep it that way.

Stephen Wolgast is the director of Student Publications Inc. and adviser to the Kansas State Collegian. He is also an assistant professor of journalism and digital media at the Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications at Kansas State University. Before moving to Kansas, he had spent 20 years working at six newspapers, most recently nine years as an editor at The New York Times. He holds an M.S. from the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University and is a fellow of the Burgon Society in London.

Footnotes...

1. http://www.businessinsider.com/ge-press-release-hoax-2011-4

2. http://ac360.blogs.cnn.com/2010/11/03/bachmann-sounds-off-on-spending-wont-identify-specific-cuts/

THE NUMBERS GAME

>> Graphics and numbers must match for objective picture

Text isn't the only place where readers have to watch out for misleading information. Graphics depend on journalists who understand numbers, but with math skills at the shallow end of most reporters' skill sets, charts are ripe for errors.

For example, photos of cleavage may have distracted editors at New York magazine, but at any rate their misread of the numbers led them to make a spatial mistake in a chart last year.

The chart that was published looks like the one in Illustration A. The caption in the magazine reads: "Percent increase in online-dating contacts that women made on okcupid.com by showing cleavage, by age." The shorter line, in magenta, representing 18-year-olds, and the longer line, in cyan, 32-year-olds.

As in the illustration here, no numbers offer guidance for the dotted horizontal lines. So at first glance, when we see the number for teens as 24 percent and the number for 30-somethings as 79 percent, there's nothing to indicate that anything's amiss.

But if the two bars indicate 24 units and 79 units, then the longer line should be 3.29 times longer than the shorter line (because 24 time 3.29 is 79).

If the bars were true to that proportion, the magenta line would have to grow considerably (Illustration B). That should make one wonder what those dotted lines could refer to in the original graphic.

One explanation is in Illustration C. In it, the lowest dotted line sits at 25 units, and the magenta bar comes in just below it, at 24. For the next dotted line, the one in the middle, to make sense, it has to equal 75 units. That's why the cyan bar rises a bit above it.

If we assume that the chart's x-axis starts at zero, then the top dotted line would have to increase by threefold again. Just as 25 x 3 equals 75, then we multiply 75 x 3 for the value of the top line: 225.

That explanation makes sense, but for general readers there's no reason to be so confusing. Illustration D is the better way to go. And why not? It makes the point even clearer. What exactly that point is—fewer buttoned buttons equals more dates?—is up to the reader.

—Stephen Wolgast

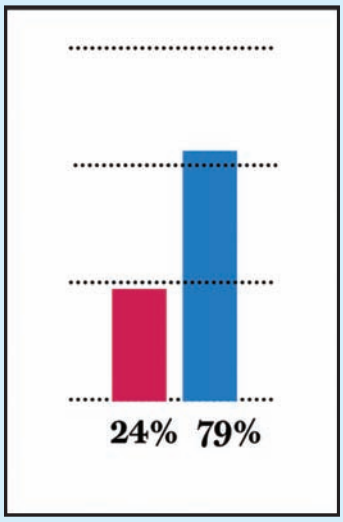


Illustration A

The caption in New York magazine: "Percent increase in online-dating contacts that women made on okcupid.com by showing cleavage, by age." The shorter line, in magenta, representing 18-year-olds, and the longer line, in cyan, 32-year-olds. (New York, February 1, 2010, p. 13.)

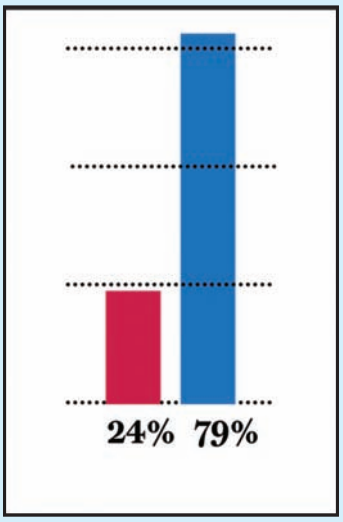


Illustration B

Bars adjusted to the correct proportions.

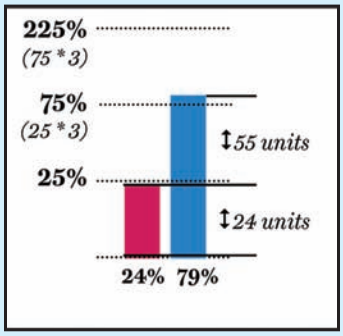


Illustration C

The labeling is now accurate, but confusing.

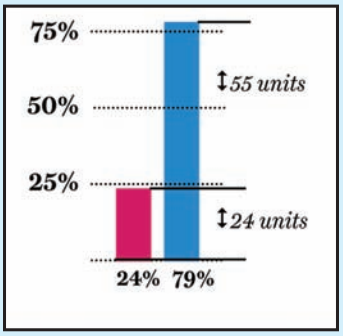


Illustration D

The vertical increments make sense to the general reader.

Add New Comment

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Interacting with readers is easy with online commentary, but policing anonymous comments can force student websites to wade into dangerous liability terroritory. Experts weigh in on what works – and doesn't – in this murky area.

Post as ...

by Pat Winters Lauro

For Ed Morales, the editorial adviser for The Red & Black at the University of Georgia in Athens, the anonymous online commenting system on the paper's website had become nothing but a giant headache.

Nasty name-calling. Rude exchanges. Attacks on student reporters. It got to the point where students who had always embraced the tough stories were suddenly shying away from articles that might embarrass them in the comments section.

"Ninety-five percent of the comments were worthless and didn't add anything to conversation," Morales said. "There's only so much you can take."

In pure frustration, The *Red & Black* ended online commenting all together.

"We don't care about hits," Morales said. "We don't make money from the web site. It's an educational tool. The purpose was to showcase student work in a place where everyone can see it. "

Today, Morales said, they couldn't be happier about the 2009 decision.

If readers want to comment, they have to send a signed letter to the editor just like pre-Web 2.0 days. And the surprise, said Morales, is that they do. The paper is not only getting more letters, but they are more thoughtful and on a wider range of subjects.

"We really like not having commenting, quite honestly," he said. "It's done great things for our letters to the editor."

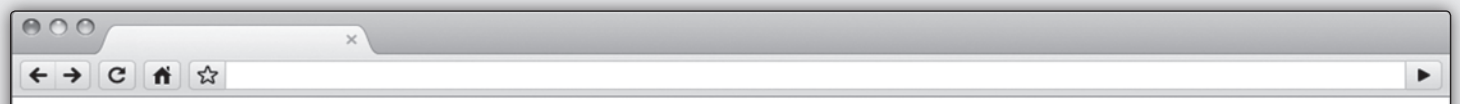
Morales may be on to something. Though data wasn't found, anecdotally it seems there is a movement away from anonymous commenting on college websites. Sites are not necessarily cutting off anonymous online comments, but it seems more are looking for ways to identify the writers of comments.

"I have no scientific evidence, but clearly in both the professional and student press, the trend is moving toward signed comments over anonymous ones," said Frank D. LoMonte, executive director of the Student Press Law Center. "What we hear from people in the field is that when you require a signature, the number of comments containing nothing but racially offensive blabbering goes down exponentially."

A Facebook login system and other new networked commenting systems like Disqus seems to be playing a role in the trend. *Iowa State Daily* began using Facebook logins this year, and the University of Texas at Arlington is using Disqus for *The Shorthorn*'s website. Disqus allows logins by social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and Yahoo. Both schools were launching new systems and used the opportunity to change their commenting structure.

The idea is that by using a Facebook login, or another networked commenting systems like Disqus, the commenter has an identity – and often a photograph as well. Of course, readers can create fake Facebook accounts, although it is less likely, said Adam Drew, production manager for student publications at University of Texas at Arlington and visuals director for CMR. He said creating a fake identity is generally more of a hassle on sites like Facebook than on simple registration sites.

The colleges making the changes are doing so voluntarily to either enhance the reader experience or raise the level of civil discourse,



or both. However, many colleges continue to use anonymous comments without any editorial review, according to Peter Velz, a former editor-in-chief of the *Collegiate Times* at Virginia Tech who has researched the area. He found some 70 colleges in 2010 that had anonymous commenting systems similar to the one at Virginia Tech.

Importantly, the websites that are moving away from anonymity are doing so voluntarily and not to appease college administrations. In fact, when Virginia Tech threatened The *Collegiate Times* last year to stop anonymous comments because of the offensive nature of some the administration was given a quick lesson in freedom of speech. The misguided effort actually backfired and only served to solidify the practice of anonymous comments at the website. (see sidebar)

"There is no evidence that requiring those who post on the Web to be registered would reduce the number of offensive comments," Velz wrote to the university's Commission on Student Affairs."(B)ut even if it did, the *Collegiate Times*' anonymity policy is designed precisely to protect people in those same groups — and many others — who may express themselves without fear of harassment or retaliation.

"Anonymous comments are specifically in place for people in minorities who cannot reveal their identity because what they have to say may leave them open to retaliation."

A few things make the anonymous comments on websites a different animal than those in print. The first – and most important – is that the news organization, under the FCC's federal Decency Act, is not legally responsible for libelous material posted by outside third parties, said LoMonte. The law dates back to early days of the web when Internet service providers such as AOL and Prodigy, terrified that they would be held responsible for libelous or obscene pages posted while using their service, lobbied Congress about it, LoMonte said.

"They convinced Congress correctly that you can't be in the business of policing content of every stranger who comes along and uses the service," he said.

The Student Press Law Center advises news websites to either post or not post comments but to be wary of posting them. Once a comment is edited, the host site becomes the creator and could be held liable for it, LoMonte said.

However, LoMonte warns that those who do allow anonymous comments should be certain that their terms of agreement do not promise confidentiality. He said cases increasingly are being brought in which the attorney is trying to unmask the identity of the anonymous commenter by getting at the Internet address from where the comment was sent.

"It's a mixed bag," he said. "There are judges that allowed the attorney to pierce the anonymity and judges that have protected anonymity. Where it seems to come down to is, if you want the ID of that anonymous author that you've tried every other option first before knocking on the door of the newspaper."

The reason websites say they want to identify writers of online comments is varied but often as old as the ethics code of journalism itself. Prior to the rise of online commenting, anonymity was accorded to sources only as a last resort, and usually because the information would never be brought to light without it. Publishing anonymous letters to the editor was and still is verboten partly because legally, a newspaper is held liable for the content that it publishes.

Then about a decade ago came the advent of Web 2.0, which allowed for interactivity. Suddenly, readers could talk back, creating what some hoped would be a golden age of free thought. In some cases it did. But it also unleashed an unexpected vitriol. Comments that in the past would never have been published without a name attached were now everyday occurrences in the commercial and college press web sites. It didn't take a brain surgeon to surmise that anonymity played a role: it's easy to say whatever you want when you're not held accountable for your words.

The newspaper industry, which has been grappling with anonymous comments ever since is taking a variety of approaches, said Richard Karpel, executive director of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. He said many are trying Facebook logins, and this past spring, a representative of Facebook served on a panel about managing reader comments at ASNE's convention in San Diego.

"There's no perfect answer," Karpel said. "If you remove anonymity, the level of discourse will go up. But on the other hand, you may not get people to be as frank as they might otherwise be."

Another issue is money. Online advertising is based on page views and, depending on your system, every comment is a new page view, Karpel said. Additionally, an active commenting sec-

tion will foster prolonged engagement on a news web site and people will comment when they have to identify themselves, reducing that activity, he said.

At the University of Texas at Arlington, however, the opposite is true. The *Shorthorn*'s website has seen the volume of comments actually double or triple since adopting Disqus, Drew said. The *Shorthorn* previously required registering with the site, but Disqus eliminates the need to create a new login password and identity because readers can use their accounts on Facebook or Twitter, for example.

"We get more comments, especially on contentious issues like concealed carry of firearms on campus," he said in an e-mail message. "Before, it was a hassle for people to register an account, respond to the verification e-mail, activate the account and then comment. I'd say we also have less 'trolling' and name calling since comments are tied to a person's real e-mail address for (their) Facebook account."

The volume of comments, however, has declined at *Iowa State Daily*'s website, though Brian Smith, the online student editor at Iowa State Daily, said he couldn't provide concrete data. However, he said the staff doesn't really care.

"We're not particularly bothered by it because the quality of the comments are better now," Smith said. "The comments are more constructive, more thought out, and without personal attacks."

Before changing direction, Smith researched the commercial press' stance on the subject and found examples of papers requiring a signature. Specifically, he looked at *The Atlantic City Press,* which recently moved completely to Facebook logins for comments, and the *Des Moines Register*, which requires either a Facebook login a new login by registering with the website using the *Register*'s e-mail.

On the Register site, the paper explains to readers that using Facebook is easy because it's "one less password to remember, one-click access when you're logged into Facebook, and easier to share articles and comments with your network." Facebook recently tweaked its system so that comments also can be seen on the commenters' wall or in their friends' news feeds, creating more page hits for websites.

Most commenters opt for the Facebook route, which so far seems to work well, he said, although the paper accepts that even with these safeguards, not everyone is using their true identity.

"Using Facebook isn't foolproof, but it's a lot better than complete anonymity," Smith said. "Generally speaking, it's working fairly well although a few are slipping through the cracks."

To promote higher quality comments, many sites, whether using anonymous comments or not, often offer guidelines about proper commenting, At Iowa State, a pop-up gives advice like "keep it clean."

Similarly, many website comment sections, anonymous or not, feature a community flagging system that asks people to flag offensive comments. Both Iowa State and *Collegiate Times* have systems that alert a staffer to review the comment after a set number of flags.

Smith said *Iowa State Daily* also changed staff policy with its new web system. Previously, staffers were not allowed to respond to comments. Now they can but within certain guidelines of decorum to prevent outright battles.

"The idea is to encourage dialogue, have two-way dialogues on stories they offered," Smith said.

Many in the commercial press encourage reporters to respond to comments and have found it often stops the more outrageous comments, so much so that some see it as a solution, Karpel said. "A lot of people think that is what will solve the problem," he said.

However, even without these safeguards, the world of online comments seems to be morphing into something different from before. Perhaps it's maturing and entering a new phase. At Virginia Tech, Velz said he has noticed a higher degree of civility in recent discussions at collegiatetimes.com. He pointed to one group of posts in which the comments were a discussion about the existence of God.

"People are really trying to use commenting for the reasons it was intended…for important dialogue," Velz said. "I think it might speak louder to a trend overall within the Internet."

The *Red and Black*'s Morales too stuck his toe back into the online commenting pool and said he found a change. This spring, The *Red & Black* opened comments to some of the paper's bloggers who wanted it, and he was pleasantly surprised about comments posted on a blog after the paper did a story with a risqué photo about Playboy Magazine's visit to campus.

"People got on and commented…and the comments were constructive," he said. "I was surprised by the depth of the comments. Maybe the world of online commenting has changed a little since we left it."

CASE STUDY:

An argument some 18 months ago between Virginia Tech and *The Collegiate Times* about anonymous online commenting is now threatening to become a larger issue about the value of the college's independent student newspaper on campus.

In May, Ed Spencer, the vice president for student affairs, said a committee under the Commission on Student Affairs, which is part of the tripartite governing structure at the college, has drafted a student questionnaire on how well the paper is serving the college population in the wake of its online commenting debate. He said the commission will need to vote on it but it likely will be distributed electronically in the fall.

"What started out as (discussion of) online commenting has gotten to be a bigger issue about the usefulness of the *Collegiate Times* in the 21st Century," Spencer said.

The survey follows a threat in February 2010 by the commission to ban student organizations from advertising in the paper and pull $70,000 in funding to the newspaper's nonprofit parent company, Educational Campus Media at Virginia Tech, which uses the funding to run six campus media including the TV and radio stations.

Kelly Wolff, general manager of the nonprofit company, immediately responded and threatened legal action, calling the threat a violation of its contract and of First Amendment rights. The issue in 2010 was dropped, and as far as the paper was concerned, the matter was over.

But Spencer said it's not over and a CSA committee questions whether the paper is representative of the college's population. He said the survey, which is still being refined, wants to determine issues like how well read the newspaper is given that advertising is down and readers in general are moving away from print.

Asked about concern for the paper's First Amendment rights, Spencer said, "It's wonderful to have freedom of speech, but the feeling is there ought to be some accountability as well…anyone can say anything (on the website)…without accountability."

In response to the comments, Wolff said the *CT* has garnered a long list of awards, most recently the 2008 Associated Collegiate Press Newspaper Pacemaker, and as a finalist for the Online Pacemaker in 2009 and 2010. The website is ranked among the top 25 college newspaper Web sites in the country and averages more than 500,000 page views a month.

"It's surprising to hear the vice president of student affairs for a major American university questioning the value of journalism in the 21st century," Wolff said.

Zach Crizer, the *CT*'s 2011-12 editor-in-chief, defended the paper's value to students, to journalism and to the community.

"I would expect Dr. Spencer, as an educator, to have more consideration for the value of the *Collegiate Times*," Crizer said. "The work of all our staff members makes the university community better every day. Our paper acts as a watchdog for students and town residents … It is unfortunate that, in recent years, those same highly professional staff members have had to perform under constant pressure as the university threatens to violate their editorial independence and First Amendment rights."

Peter Velz, the 2010-11 editor-in-chief, said the paper's online commenting policy is designed to foster civil debate. The *CT* filters for things like objectionable language and provides guidelines for civil conversation. The *CT* also has a public editor who reviews objectionable comments and flags or removes them according to policy.

Especially troubling, Spencer said, is *CT*'s policy to "bury" comments is especially troubling, he said. "Buried," comments are flagged as objectionable and removed from public view, but a reader can still click on the "buried" comment to read it.

Virginia Tech and *The Collegiate Times*

by Pat Winters Lauro

"It makes it even worse … it becomes titillating," said Spencer.

CT's community flagging system was intended to allow readers to alert editors about objectionable comments because it is not feasible for the staff to screen the 250 or so comments that are posted daily.

Only comments that are libelous or advocate an illegal or violent act are removed from the website; other comments flagged and deemed objectionable by CT are "buried" as a way to warn the public that they have been removed from public view unless you click on it. About 3 percent of the 12,000 comments annually are "buried," Velz said.

The CSA subcommittee also thinks *CT* comments should have some sort of registration system for comments, Spencer said. *CT* does have a Facebook login, but it's voluntary.

The issue over online commenting policy dates back to February 2009 when some racist comments about Asians, made anonymously, were posted to the *CT* website following news reports of a sensational murder in which a Chinese international student at Virginia Tech beheaded a fellow student in a café, Wolff said. *CT*'s policy was — and still is — that the website allows anonymous comments without editorial screening.

Coming just two years after the tragic campus shooting on campus by an Asian-American gunman, the comments hit a nerve with college officials.

"Staff members at the university started contacting the editor, saying that these types of comments would have never been made if names were put on it," said Wolff.

Wolff said the CSA alluded to some kind of a "speech code" with "worthy" civility goals, and that the CT staff took the issue seriously. They started a long process of research and discussions with college officials.

In March 2009, an open letter signed by 43 administrators and faculty members, was published in the school paper, calling for the end to anonymous commenting. Various discussions followed, including a meeting among representatives of the paper and the Commission on Student Affairs, administrators and various heads of student groups.

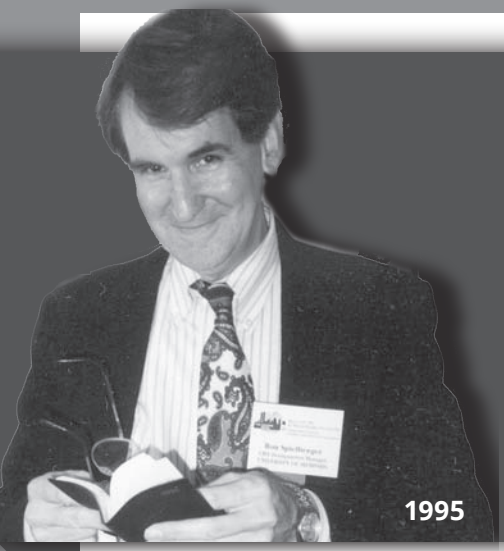
Velz said some 70 colleges – ranging from Princeton University to Michigan State University – also allowed anonymous commenting without editorial screening in 2010. He also wrote a seven-page memorandum detailing the *CT*'s reasons for anonymity that even detailed the history of anonymous comment in the United States, dating back to the Federalist Papers, which were written under the pseudonym "Publius."

But, Velz said, it seemed the administration was more concerned about a negative image than for the rights of the afflicted to be able to tell their stories without fear of reprisal.

"It put an intense focus on our policy when we didn't see any need for it," said Velz. "… It was the administration concerned with image … there was a lot of politics behind it."

Then, in February 2010, in what Velz considered "out of left field," Wolff received the threatening letter from the commission. The controversy was reported in the local paper, The *Roanoke Times*, in a *Washington Post* blog and in several higher education blogs and websites, before it was dropped – but obviously not resolved.

Pat Winters Lauro is an assistant professor of journalism at Kean University, where she advises The Tower newspaper. She is a former staff writer with the New York Daily News and has been a regular contributor to the business section of The New York Times.


1995

Ron Spielberger

— Lillian Kopenhaver —

So many of my recollections from many years of working with Ron center on the New York conventions. We conceived the idea of having an advisers' reception in the CMA Suite at the end of the day, so there were many times we trekked in the snow and rain to the liquor store — first at the old Doral Inn, where we started these gatherings, and later at the Marriott Marquis. Ron was a regular fixture on his runs to replenish the reception supplies, no mean feat in New York City weather in March. He always was loaded down with packages to set up a nice event during which advisers could network and relax before an evening at the theater or dinner. His work was the genesis of the receptions that today are a staple of our conventions in fall and spring, providing an opportunity for CMA members to gather to greet friends and build new relationships with colleagues.

Dr. Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver is dean of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Florida International University. She was CMA president from 1975-79 and is a member of the CMA Hall of Fame and a recipient of the Ron Spielberger CMA Distinguished Service Award.

— Steven Chappell —

When I started advising in the summer of 1993 at University of Alabama Birmingham, I attended my first fall convention in Dallas, Texas, as a newlywed and a newly minted adviser. My bride spent what she was calling our "second honeymoon" in the room with a flu bug, so I avoided that room like the plague (bad pun intended), which meant I spent a lot of time in sessions. That led to me being in a session where a speaker had dragged in what we today would call a dinosaur of a projector for a computer, as well as a full-sized desktop computer system for use in the session. The problem? Neither the speaker nor the committee chair knew how to set it up, so I volunteered to get it working.

That afternoon, I met Ron for the first time when he came up to me and said something to the effect of, "I hear you solved a major technology problem for a speaker today. How would you like to be our tech guru at conventions?" As a young, naive, eager-to-please adviser, I thought it would be a great way to get involved. Besides, how hard could it be? One speaker a year doesn't know how to set something up — this will be a breeze!

Eighteen years and 18,000 dongles later, I rue the day my wife got that flu bug ... but still thank Ron Spielberger for making me feel like a valued and needed member of an organization that, at the time, I knew very little about. He started an adventure for me that includes dozens of new friendships and hundreds of new acquaintances I likely never would have come to know without his invitation. Thanks Ron, for a lifetime of new memories and the world's largest dongle collection.

— Steven Chappell is the adviser to the Simpsonian student newspaper, KSTM-88.9 FM radio and the Storm Tracker student life magazine at Simpson College. He is the on-site technology guru for conventions after accidentally helped someone at his first convention.


1996


1996

CMA Executive Director Ron Spielberger has been a member of College Media Advisers since, well, before there was a CMA — you can look it up. For most current advisers, he's been the only face of the fall conventions they've known.

Spielberger, who teaches advertising as an associate professor at University of Memphis — and he was there before its more recent name change, too — joined CMA, then the National Council of College Publications Advisers, in 1973, was named its executive director in 1982 and subsequently began as fall convention director with the 1997 convention in Chicago.

Ron soon will step down as executive director as CMA headquarters shifts from Memphis to Nashville, Tenn., although he'll continue with the planning for this fall's convention in Orlando.

***CMR* asked some veteran advisers to offer their impressions of Ron. Here's what they said.**

— *Lesley W. Marcello* —

Ron Spielberger always has been a tireless worker, especially in convention preparation. However, there was one duty I thought he needed to shed – procurer of libations for the reception in CMA's suite.

In most cities, he found stores near the hotel and then lugged the booty back to the suite. Limited by what he could carry, he usually had to make the supply trip daily. Sometimes, he had other advisers help him.

When I was site chairman and incoming president for the 1989 convention in New Orleans, I told Ron I would handle purchasing snacks and adult beverages for the suite, a task made easier in Louisiana because all those items were sold in grocery stores, not specialty stores.

My concern was that the hotel would not allow us to bring in bags and bottles for three days of suite activity; they wanted us to purchase from them as part of our food and beverage contract (always at much higher hotel prices). I had an easy solution – I packed the party supplies in 22 yearbook boxes which were sent to the CMA suite. I vaguely remember that we even disposed of the trash ourselves so that the hotel would not realize we had brought our own supplies in.

As far as I know, they never realized that all those boxes of yearbooks actually contained the food and drink for celebrating in New Orleans.

— Lesley W. Marcello served as CMA president from 1989-91 and was inducted into the CMA Hall of Fame in 1996. She retired as adviser at Nicholls State University in 2001 and continues to conduct national college yearbook workshops.

— *Jan Childress* —

It must have been during a CMA board retreat when this happened. I was CMA president, Dave Reed, vice president, and along with Ron we were making our time off from the board agenda into New Orleans adventure. It was unbelievably hot and humid — much more so than during the fall convention on this particular June day.

Dave had assured Ron and me that the well-known Camellia Grill was "just down the street" from our hotel. We walked and talked for what seemed like miles (I believe it actually turned out to be some six miles) before we sighted the restaurant. Even for two Southerners, Ron and I were glistening by our final arrival. The orange juice was icy cold, and we drank buckets.

Ron and I laughed about that "easy stroll in New Orleans" at every board meeting that followed. And I know we always exchanged a glance with Dave's future restaurant suggestions.

P.S. Ron, CMA would not be where it is today without your amazing contributions and friendship. Let's have an adult beverage and share more great stories. Best of luck in a much deserved retirement.

— Jan Childress is associate vice president of student affairs at Texas Tech University. She was CMA president from 1995-97 and is a member of the CMA Hall of Fame.

2007


2008

— RON SPIELBERGER —

— Bonnie Thrasher —

My memories of Ron Spielberger are punctuated by interruptions — the interruptions of the many people in need during a convention. Anyone who ever sat with Ron for more than a convention minute quickly realized he was a very popular guy constantly at the beck and call of conference goers, speakers, hotel staff, and seemingly thousands of others, possibly even from other planets.To stay in touch with these people meant he toted around some communication device from the moment the conference started to the point at which the last hung-over students from some far-away U.S. city crawled from the hotel.

No matter what he was doing during a conference, people were relentlessly beeping, ringing, buzzing or crackling at him to answer questions, to avert crisis, or to fetch some item that was critically needed at the other end of the convention center or on some faraway hotel floor. During a convention, he constantly talked into a device or had one pressed to his ear – sometimes both.

As the years of conferences went on, one thing that did change was the chief piece of technology Ron used to stay connected to this mass of needy people. In the beginning, there was some early model of pager he carried on his hip somewhat in the way John Wayne packed a pistol. The pager evolved into some primitive walkie-talkie device. And, having been present many times when people tried to reach him using this contraption, I know only Ron with his super powers could understand what the person on the other end was saying. He excelled at interpreting a sentence after hearing only every other syllable.

Eventually, the cell phone became his chief form of communication with his flock. Of course, the cell phone presented some real communication pitfalls, (Can you hear me now?) such as when conventions were in hotels where reception was limited to certain floors — remember the last one in Washington, D.C.? — or when text and voicemail messages were delayed

However, through the evolution of communication technology and despite the unreliability of some of these devices, there was one thing you always could count on, and that was Ron.

-- Bonnie Thrasher is the adviser at Arkansas State University at Jonesboro and CMA's current secretary

— Laura Widmer —

When it comes to food and conventions and/or retreats, Ron knows the best places to eat and what to eat. Ron was the first person I saw order and eat raw oysters at Acme Oyster House in New Orleans. He almost convinced me to eat a raw oyster, but not even Mr. CMA could convince me that would be a good idea. One year, we had our CMA Board retreat in Memphis. This was a first time a board had met at headquarters, and on that trip, Ron wanted to show off his hometown. Our first lunch was at a local spot and we had collard greens and hominy. Ron convinced me that would be harmless, and it was, but it remains my only greens and hominy experience. However, in the evening we went to Beale Street and experienced everything Memphis — barbecue, beer and jazz. Also, the trip to the Peabody Hotel to check out the ducks was another plus to the night.

Everyone knows that CMA is such an incredible organization because of Ron's personality and role as executive director.

Gentleman. Professional. Everything CMA. Those are just a few words I associate with Ron Spielberger. He is quite the guy. Here is a man you can't help but love, respect and admire, and CMA has been so blessed to have him at the helm for all of these years

We have been truly lucky to have him lead so many executive boards over the years. His institutional memory, personality and professionalism is truly priceless. Ron, you're a class act and will be missed, but you've earned this retirement. Enjoy!

— Laura Widmer, the student publications director at Northwest Missouri State University, was CMA president from 1991-83 and is a member of the CMA Hall of Fame.


2008


2008


2009

— RON SPIELBERGER —

— Kate McCarty —

I met Ron Spielberger at the second CMA meeting I ever attended. It was in New York City at the old Doral Inn when he, the late Flip DeLuca, Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver and James Tidwell were among those I hung out with during that conference. This was the beginning of my most cherished professional relationships that have grown over the years with CMA.

Ron works efficiently and quietly behind the scenes to make sure the organization is working effectively and that conventions come off as planned. He's never been a whiner or complainer. He's not a gossip, either.

He is, however, a workhorse who always has CMA's best interests at heart. He's the one you can count on during a protracted board discussion about some new initiative to point out the budget and volunteer staffing constraints of various proposals.

I've spent countless hours with Ron doing such things as stuffing adviser packets, tracking down missing pieces of mailings at the hotel, meeting with hotel officials for various arrangements and even – when I was about seven months pregnant — pouring through old CMA archives with Ron and Lesley Marcello as we were arranging for a new home for them at the University of Alabama.

The key way to describe Ron is as a guy with class. His professional demeanor has represented CMA well over the years, and no doubt he'll be tough to replace. There won't be another Ron. They just don't make 'em like that anymore.

— Kate McCarty is retired from the University of Texas Austin. She was CMA president from 2003-05 and is a member of the CMA Hall of Fame.

— David Reed —

John A. Boyd was headquarters manager for the National Council of College Publications Advisers and then College Media Advisers from 1965 until he retired in 1982. John was the ultimate gentleman — except maybe for the time he and Louis Ingelhart led a midnight Halloween parade of CMA conventioneers around the fountain at Maryland Plaza. John was such a splendid anchor for CMA boards in his 17 years or so on the job that CMA's ultimate distinction, the CMA Hall of Fame, was named for him.

Now, we'll have to find another award to name. Ron Spielberger, who succeeded John as headquarters manager and then CMA executive director, has emulated John in every way except one — he's lasted in that difficult job almost twice as long.

Having directed six CMA fall conventions, and working before/during/after with Ron, I think of him as the calm at the center of CMA's storm of conventions, workshops, seminars, advice, you name it. I can attest to his amazing ability to juggle all the balls tossed to him with patience, grace, good humor. And never a, "No," — always a, "Yes, we can get that done."

When John Boyd retired, CMA's great First Amendment champion, Louis Ingelhart, distributed mini-posters that said, simply: "I am a better person because John Boyd is my friend." It is a most fitting epitaph also for Ron Spielberger's service to CMA, its dedicated members and the student journalists they strive to serve. We have all been enabled to be much better at what we do and who we are because of Ron Spielberger, our friend.

— John David Reed is a former chair of the Department of Journalism at Eastern Illinois University and long-time publications adviser for the newspaper and yearbook. He is a former CMA convention director and was elected to the CMA Hall of Fame in 1996.

— Lance Speere —

Two things stick out about Ron. He was always the hardest one working at any convention I ever attended. He was the first to arrive, hauling in suitcases and giant boxes of materials, and the last to leave, packing up all the same material.

The second is that whenever he would have a moment, he would ask

about how my wife was, how her research was going, and then, when she was pregnant with our son. He would always ask how she was doing and comment on how much things would change for us, but in a way that was positive — that we were going to enjoy parenthood.

I really appreciated the fact that despite all of the work that went into CMA administration and being on the executive board, Ron always wanted to how things were at home.

— Lance Speere is an journalism instructor at Central Florida University and former student publications director at Southern Illinois University Carbondale and SIU Edwardsville. He was CMA president from 2005-07.

— Bill Neville —

"We're in the making people happy business."

Ask Ron Spielberger what he does, and that's the answer you will get.

It doesn't matter if this means expediting a membership, resolving a scheduling issue at a convention, helping an adviser push through paperwork for workshop payments, or making sure the bar is well-stocked at conventions for the adviser late-evening happy hour — the bottom line is "making people happy."

For several years, I've been lucky enough to work with the CMA home office as marketing director and managing some of the Memphis headquarter's technology needs and web services. What I have taken away from that experience was Ron's mantra that CMA was all about making people happy.

The mindset for association work, even one that serves journalists, always comes back to Ron's bottom line – "making people happy."

That seemed an impossible task but was one well-suited for the laid-back Ron's genteel manners and sense of civility.

When, somewhere around the 50th time a member would ask how to login to the CMA web site — and the curmudgeonly news guy inside me wants to abruptly deal with the situation by saying "shove a sock in it" — I would pause, remind myself that when you work for Ron you are in the "making people happy business," take a deep breath and try to make people happy.

Ron's knowledge of CMA's history, its movers and shakers and how to stage conventions or negotiate with hotels and vendors is encyclopedic. He has forgotten more about such matters than most of us will ever know.

And if he was pushed to the wall, and this happened from time to time, his gentlemanliness would kick in and he became the ever so patient educator, coaxing folks along while he diligently tried to solve their problems.

When Hurricane Katrina forced the fall convention to be relocated at the last minute to Kansas City, and all of the preliminary work – room assignments, scheduling and so on —that had been done for New Orleans had to be repeated at the last minute and for two hotels a quarter-mile apart, Ron was outwardly unfazed.

When he confided there were just a few minutes available on his schedule to move a bulky display of past Hall of Fame winners from one site to a luncheon site located even further away, my inclination, especially given the daunting challenge of having to rebuild a convention from the ground up in a very short time, was to cut what I view as a superfluous and non-essential task.

So, I e-mailed Ron: "Hell, why don't you just photocopy that thing and we'll pass it around."

In his unmistakable understated style, he replied: "Thanks. You have brought humor to my morning."

Nonetheless, Ron got the job done, and the display was moved, set up and packed up afterwards. All this was done without complaint. Just another example of nearly 30 years invested in "making people happy."

— Bill Neville is the student media production manager at University of Alabama at Birmingham and manages technology and the CMA website for CMA headquarters.

— Mark Witherspoon —

It was a bright spring day in 1999 when Ron Spielberger called to ruin the rest of my second year as CMA president.

We were just starting to plan the fall convention in Atlanta when Ron called to tell me he was having open-heart surgery. Of course, I was sympathetic and listened to the details, which were that he was either having some arteries cleaned out or a valve replaced or a pacemaker put in or some combination of those three. But what I was really thinking about was, "How the hell are we going to do the Atlanta convention without him?" As always, though, Ron already had a Plan B and Plan C and even a Plan D.

And as it turned out, Ron came through surgery with flying colors, John David Reed took over as convention planner (which he had done many times before) and both Ron and the CMA convention were fine.

Ron even made it to the Atlanta convention and had just as good a time as he usually does at conventions, if you know what I mean, and those who know Ron know what I mean.

Ron Spielberger memories are scattered throughout my 23 short years as a CMA member, from the mountains of booze he's carted to and from hotel rooms to the quiet talks we've had late at night about CMA business and non-business to the respectful way he treats each and every other human being on this earth to the many marvelous ways he has helped CMA become what it is today.

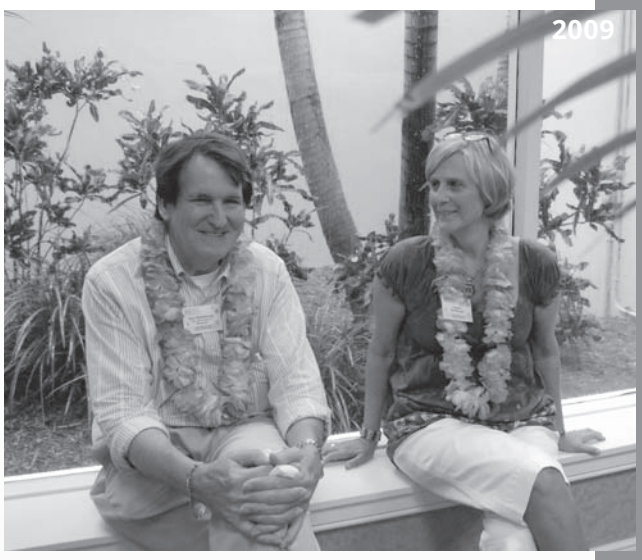
I love Ron Spielberger, and I want you all to love Ron Spielberger. There are few better people on this planet.

— Mark Witherspoon is the adviser at the Iowa State Daily, a past-president of CMA., and a Hall of Fame honoree.

Spielberger on Spielberger

In his own words: It Has Been an Interesting Time and Adventure

I could probably write a book about hotels. Coffee shouldn't cost $102 per gallon even if the beans were picked by Juan Valdez and brought down the mountain on his burro. Pizza shouldn't cost $20 per person, or how could Pizza Hut stay in business? And if a hotel says that the ballroom seats 2,000 people, doesn't that mean that they have enough chairs for that many people? Ask the question before the contract is signed. Water in large jugs may not be free, but not $35 per gallon, either. And you thought gasoline was expensive.



Ron and wife Debbie share a break from workshop activities in St. Petersburg

Early on, we designed the newsletter and put labels and stamps on it each month. We received the quarterly copies of the old *College Press Review,* labeled them, sorted them for bulk mail and loaded them into giant mail sacks. Then I looked like Santa with them sticking out of the trunk of my car heading to the loading dock of the Post Office. We kept records one year as to the number of sacks. It was more than a hundred. We designed an annual membership directory, had it printed and processed it for mailing. We moved from our index card database of members to our first computer and thought we really had made progress.

There have been a lot of interesting calls from members and the media over the years, but two really stand out. An adviser from a small school in Arkansas phoned in a panic about a photo her sports photographer had captured over the weekend at the college game. As he turned to get a shot of the players on the bench, he saw one of them pouring a quart of vodka into the Gatorade tank. The question was, "Should we publish it?" My response was, "Sure, but expect a call from the athletic director and college president on the day the photo appears." I have no idea if the photo ran or not.

The media call was from a *New York Times* reporter who was on the train going in to work. She wanted to know how many college newspapers had sex columns. She was rather upset when I told her that to know that I would have to subscribe to all the college newspapers and read each one. I had no idea, but I did know they existed.

Has it really been 29 years? Wow! That is about half of the life of CMA, begun in 1954, and longer than some marriages. All in all, it has been fun, and I have learned a lot these 29 years.

I will miss you all.

—Ron Spielberger

ZOMBIE RADIO

Boston U's WTBU offers other-worldly experience for its radio audience

by Daniel Reimold

In October 2010, a zombie escaped from a bio-engineering research facility and feasted upon a Boston University student. The pale creature– sporting lesions on his face and a white shirt speckled with blood– bit the student's neck outside a house party while friends ate pizza and drank beer nearby.

A shaky handheld video recording captured the nighttime ambush and the chaos that ensued. As the partygoers are heard shouting, "What the f--- just happened?! . . . Call 911! . . . You've got to send someone. My friend's been attacked!"[i]

Boston police identified the attacker as patient zero in a "genetic human enhancement" experiment gone wrong. The man-turned-zombie had contracted a virus "the likes of which no one has ever seen before."[ii]

The virus quickly spread, causing thousands of Bostonians to experience symptoms including skin decay, numbness, "erratic behavior," death, and subsequent reawakening as bloodthirsty beasts. The rash of infections led to a citywide quarantine and a military invention that transformed Boston into "a battleground of the living versus the dead."[iii]

Throughout the crisis, a single media outlet provided exclusive reports: WTBU, the student radio station at Boston University. Yet, WTBU did not just cover the blood, the biting, the battles, and the zombie apocalypse they ultimately brought about. It also created them.

At Boston University, radio's reinvention began four years ago. As a BU freshman, Nate Goldman wrote his first college research paper on the mass hysteria caused by Orson Welles' historic radio serial "War of the Worlds." Goldman, an avowed zombie and radio enthusiast, envisioned an updating of the Welles classic.

"I see the Welles performance as some 70 years ahead of its time," he said. "A radio drama used to simply unfold over radio. In our current transmedia landscape, we can tap into all sorts of storytelling platforms . . . to more powerfully blur fiction and nonfiction and create an alternate universe."

Goldman's universe first took shape in meetings with the executive board of WTBU, over time leading to the launch of a Performance Department. He then recruited roughly 50 student volunteers to help with marketing, sound engineering, video recording, make-up, and construction of online and multimedia elements. At Goldman's request, a pair of student musicians also created an original, hauntingly spare instrumental score. There were even open casting calls held in September 2010 for undergraduate actors to play dead/undead.

Only four days after the auditions, the first episode of "The Undead End" aired on WTBU and streamed online. Four more episodes followed weekly in October, culminating in a zombie takeover just before Halloween.

The faux news reports at the core of "Undead" were complemented by a slew of interactive extras aiming to create a more "immersive storytelling experience." As Goldman put it,

"Basically, people were exposed to the show whether they liked it or not," Goldman said. "Because they were attacked on all fronts, they were able to engage with our show in a way that they wouldn't have been able to with plays or radio of the past."

The "Undead" crew maintained a full-blown faux news site and a dedicated Facebook page. They set up an integrated voice response line for callers to receive updates about the fictional virus's spread. They filmed and posted viral videos of two separate zombie attacks, including the infamous house party ambush. They hosted an online Zombie Virus Support Group forum for those (pretending to be) infected or affected by the illness. And they organized a Massive Zombie Run that involved filming dozens of students racing across campus in full zombie make-up. To get into character, students caked themselves in a smorgasbord of liquid latex, toilet paper, tissue paper, stage blood, prosthetic skin, chicken bones, red and black lipstick, green and yellow eye shadow, and other cosmetic foundation. [iv]

Yet, in the end, radio, not rouge, was still the broadcast's main foundation. A majority of the apocalypse's action and emotion existed solely in the story spun over the airwaves. The two-hour sci-fi serial squeezed in reports about top-secret genetics testing; a U.S. military cover-up; a monster virus; public panic; and a cast of baffled doctors, overwhelmed police, angry protestors, religious zealots, researcher villains, at-risk field reporters, and two news anchors slowly losing their cool inside a studio that became one of the last refuges from a "zombie-infested world."

Goldman was heavily involved in theater in high school. He looked at the "Undead End" performance as an analogous "theater of the mind." As he shared months after the show's premiere, "In old Greek plays, they actually had the most violent scenes off stage or behind sheets. The idea was that the imagination could create a much more horrifying reality than actually seeing it. I think radio is wonderful in that respect. For the audience and the storyteller, it really lets you use your imagination."

Ultimately, along with embracing the imaginary, Goldman's aspirations for "Undead" were very real: He wanted to prove his father wrong.

"My dad is a radio engineer," said Goldman, an advertising major who graduated from BU in May. "He's been in the industry for decades. He's been telling me for years and years to not get into radio and that it's a dying industry and everything like that. . . . I wanted to show radio is evolving. Students are showing that radio still has potential. Radio is far from dead."

RADIO WITH A SENSE OF ADVENTURE

I went off-script in early April. On a weekday afternoon, while stuck in traffic, I found myself cursing at Cee Lo Green. "Forget You," the tame version of his hit break-up anthem, was playing on three of my car's FM preset stations at the same time. It was simply another step in the single's all-out aural invasion in recent months. The song had become the soundtrack to my life, without my permission. It played, seemingly nonstop, wherever commercial stations roamed– cars, cafeterias, computer labs, office waiting rooms, malls, and once in a class I was leading (via a radio app on a student's iPhone).

At that moment, alone in my car, caked in the waning light of the Florida sun, my top-40 musical tastes soured. I looked at a portion of my reflection in the rearview mirror as the lyrics rang out: "I picture the fool that falls in love with you / Well, oooooh / I've got some news for you / I really hate yo a-- right now."

I sighed, while muttering the song's title– not the tame version. I turned commercial radio off. And for the next three weeks, I carried out what I called CRIME– the college radio immersion experiment. For 20 straight days, I streamed programming from more than 90 college radio stations nationwide and into Canada.

What I learned: College radio is still all about the music– and most of it is stuff I have only rarely, if ever, heard before.

On my streaming adventure tour of student stations across the U.S. and Canada, I stumbled across close to 200 musical genres and sub-genres. After compiling and alphabetizing a partial list, I noticed I began reading through them silently to the beat of Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire": A cappella, acid folk, ambient, Americana, big band, blues, bossa nova, Britpop, Cajun, Calypso, Celtic, Christian hip hop, city rhythms, classic rock, classical, country, dance hall, disco, doo wop, downtempo, dubstep, electroclash, electronica, ethereal, film soundtracks, folk, freak folk, funk, garage rock, girl group, gospel, goth, grunge, hard rock, heavy metal, hip-hop, indie rock, industrial, instrumental, jazz, krautrock, Latin, lounge, mariachi, math rock, meringue, midtempo, neo-folk, no wave, oldies, opera, polka, post-hardcore, powerpop, progressive, psychedelic, punk, R&B, reggae, retro, rock, salsa, samba, satanic, show tunes, "skiggity skat," slow jams, slowcore, soca, soft rock, soul, southern gospel, space music, streetbeat, subterranean, surf, swing, synthpop, techno, Tejano, third-wave ska, thrash, trance, trip-hop, Triple-A, turntablism, twee, urban, and vaudeville.

I also heard music emanating from– or inspired by– countries on nearly continent. I stumbled upon shows featuring sounds that I had never registered as music. Among the especially offbeat styles (to me): 8-bit and chiptunes, chopped and screwed, crunk, drone, grime, musique concrète, noise, and sludge and thrash metal.

After years of mostly top-40 commercial exposure, my ears were born again.

I also took in readings of poetry; , life and love advice,; a theater performance,; a church service,; children's programming,; interviews with student leaders, campus officials, and local musicians,; live performances of local music, ; and talk programs on public affairs, sports, LGBT issues, science, technology, religion, the paranormal, the environment, musical theater, movies, food, and "all things woman related with style and sass."

I heard host slips, missed cues, random spurts of dead air, a few introductions of music that ended up not being played, some cursing, occasional spotty sound quality, and several shows that left me picturing the student hosts sitting in the studio literally laughing at me for tuning in. I even heard, and saw, a surprise in-studio marriage proposal– a guy got down on bended knee after playing his partner an original love song and asked her to be his wife. She said "yes."

What I did not hear: mainstream radio's stale sameness; its way-too-slick professional sheen; and (for the most part) commercial interruptions. I also did not hear Cee Lo Green.

Late in the evening on day 10 of my experiment, the music featured on Georgia Tech's WREK struck me as so strange and powerful I pulled out a reporter's notebook and began journaling what I was hearing.

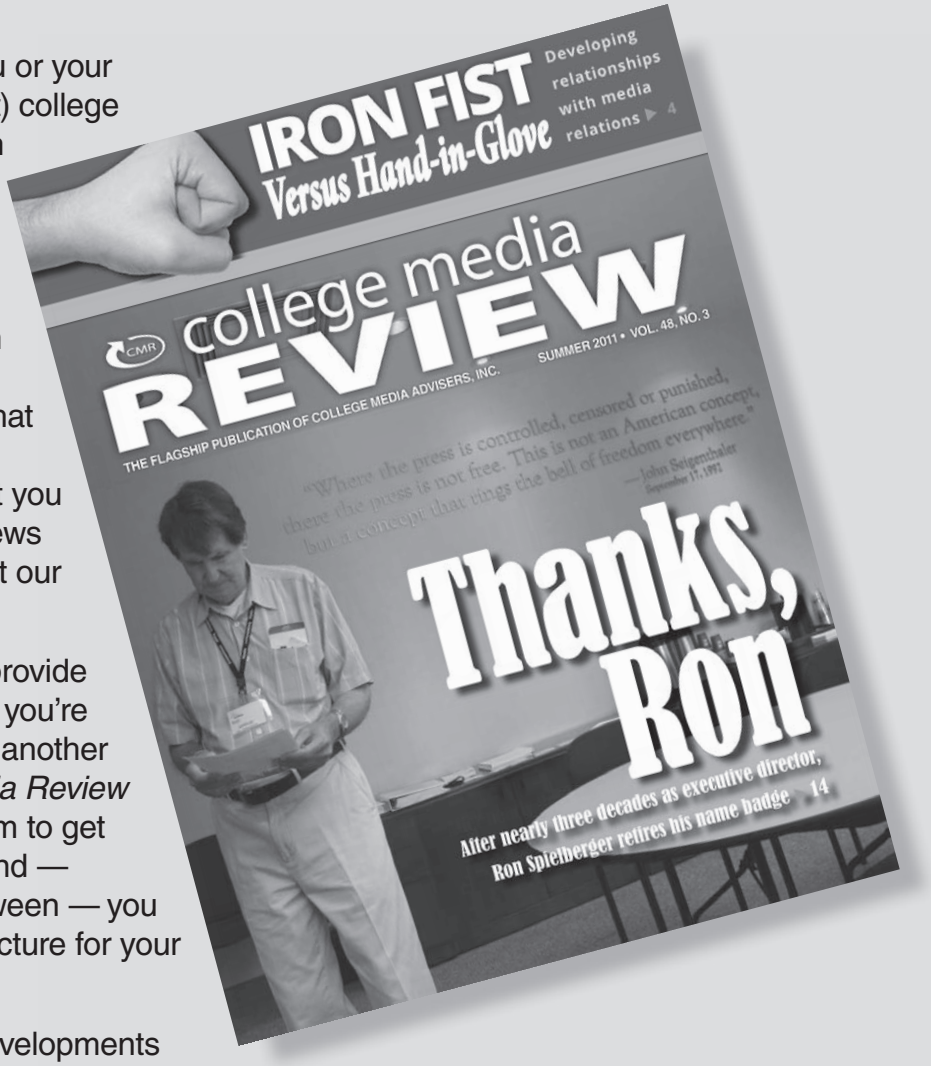
Here is a portion of my scribbling from the first 20 minutes of the hour-long program: "It equates to the sound emanating from my television when it's staticky– with a repeated series of thumps that make me picture angry Morse code operators or a teacher tapping her fingers on a desk. . . . Whispers of the night and sonar-like beeps and steady hums meld slowly into the prolonged sound of a bowling ball rolling down an alley. . . . Heartbeat-type pitter-patters give way momentarily to a single guitar-style twang, then some type of liquid being poured into a beaker, then more quick-burst sonic beeps, and then what sounds like jelly being sloshed together. Zigzagging spurts of computer-type code cry out, followed by a high-pitched screech and then what amounts to nails scraping across a blackboard so forcefully it's making me cringe. . . . It sounds like an amplifier being fiddled with before a concert or a radio station struggling to be clear when you're driving in the middle of nowhere– never quite reaching the point when it's tuned in."

I was listening to "Friction," a weekly show of "easy listening for the hard of hearing." As its description explains, "No, your radio isn't malfunctioning. Expand your perception of music."

Daniel Reimold, Ph.D. advises The Minaret, the campus newspaper at the University of Tampa, where he is an assistant professor of journalism. He maintains a blog, College Media Matters (collegemediamatters.com), which is affiliated with the Associated Collegiate Press.

College Media Review wants you.

This past year, *CMR* contributions from you or your colleagues have examined how well (or not) college journalism and publication programs match up when it comes to teaching news media convergence, illustrated how your reporters can produce multimedia content even with limited resources, shown how those mobile journalism talents prime them for community journalism jobs, and offered some quick and simple market surveying that can strengthen improve the quality of your news organizations. *CMR* has also brought you scholarly research, features and book reviews that provide additional understanding about our workplace and our profession.



In the end, we're reliant on you to help us provide that steady flow of reporting and opinion. If you're working on convention session for CMA or another journalism organization, then *College Media Review* could very well provide you another platform to get your message out. If you've identified a trend — troubling, reassuring or somewhere in-between — you may be just the scribe to develop the full picture for your colleagues.

Bottom line, we want CMR to reflect the developments and issues in the world of publications advising. And we can't do it without your help. You can convey those great ideas of yours to CMR editor Robert Bohler at r.bohler@tcu.edu or 817.257.6556.

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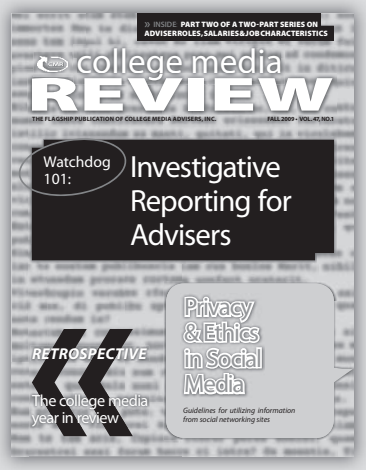

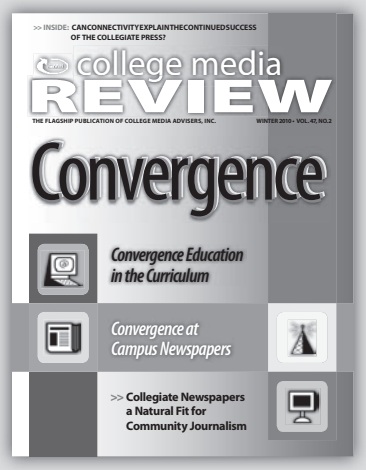

About Us

College Media Review, the flagship journal of College Media Advisers, Inc., is the leading academic journal on advising collegiate media, both print and electronic.

CMR *is a comprehensive journal for popular and refereed articles serving collegiate media advisers and reaches more than 800 subscribers.*

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.

college media REVIEW

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.

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