



# K A P P A T A U A L P H A NEWSLETTER

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## Raphael book wins Mott Award

Chad Raphael's book on investigative and television documentary is the winner of the Frank Luther Mott/Kappa Tau Alpha Research Award for the best book on journalism and mass communication based on original research published in 2005.

The award is named in honor of Mott, Pulitzer Prize winner, educator and long-time leader of KTA, the National Honor Society in journalism and mass communication. The \$1000 award will be presented Aug. 3 in San Francisco during the annual AEJMC convention.

In *Investigated Reporting: Muckrakers, Regulators and the Struggle over Television Documentary* Raphael places the growth of investigative television documentary into its institutional, regulatory and cultural context, focusing on the 1960-1975 development era.

The book provides insight into the growth of television, including details about many of the major documentaries of the era. The concluding chapter offers implications for several theories of news.

Much of the book is devoted to the relationship between federal regulators and television. Indeed Raphael writes that "the very existence of investigative reporting on television from 1960 onward owed a debt to government regulators." He thinks that "the mission of investigative reporting and its ability to serve the public interest were better served under the regime of the 1960s than they are today."

Advocates of a watch dog role for the media may find Raphael's concluding paragraph intriguing: "although government forces are often investigative reporters' targets and tormentors, officials and jurists are also often reporters' best sources, collaborators, defenders and regulatory champions. Investigative

journalism will not survive without sustaining the web of relationships with government that ensures that this most important kind of news for democracy is funded, distributed, and protected from extinction at the hands of media owners, advertisers, corporate targets, and government itself."

"The way theory frames Raphael's argument and evidence is arrayed to support argument and theory is impressive," notes Tony Rimmer, California State University-Fullerton and one of the finalist judges.

Michael Sheerin, Florida International University and a contest judge, writes "Raphael's *Investigated Reporting* is a must read for anyone teaching journalism

students. It is precise, well-written and dispels many media witch tales. I will keep this one on my desk and share with colleagues."

Raphael is associate professor of communication at Santa Clara University. The book is published by University of Illinois Press.

Other finalists were Donald Ritchie for *Reporting from Washington: the History of the Washington Press Corps* and David T.Z. Mindich for *Tuned Out: Why Americans Under 40 Don't Follow the News.*"

The deadline for books published in 2006 is Dec. 6. For information about the contest, held annually since 1944, see: [www.KappaTauAlpha.org/mott-kta.html](http://www.KappaTauAlpha.org/mott-kta.html).

## Popovich is Adviser of Year

Mark N. Popovich (Ball State) is the 2006 William H. Taft Chapter Adviser of the Year.

The award, named after the executive director who served the Society for 30 years until retiring in 1991, will be presented at the Kappa Tau Alpha / AEJMC Awards Luncheon Aug. 3 in San Francisco.

Popovich took over the Ball State University chapter in 1997, succeeding former national KTA President and long-time adviser Earl Conn. He has been a frequent judge of the Mott-KTA Research Award and a regular participant at the annual meeting of the National Council. As a regular contributor to scholarly journals, he is an admirable role model for student and faculty scholars. He was initiated into KTA at Ball State in 1968. He received his Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University.

Under his direction, the Ball State

University chapter has continued to flourish. The chapter has a very high acceptance rate. Dr. Popovich oversees the end-of-the-year scholarship luncheon, which, according to department chair Marilyn Weaver, is an annual highlight event attracting more than 80 students and parents.

Popovich is the 22nd recipient of the award. Previous winners include: Jane B. Singer (Iowa), J. William Click (Winthrop), Karen List (U-Mass.), James Whitfield (Louisiana-Monroe), Tony Rimmer (Cal State-Fullerton), Sam Riley (Virginia Tech), Thomas Schwartz (Ohio State), Emmanuel Onyedike (Hampton) and Gil Fowler (Arkansas State), Milt Holstein (Utah), Luther Sanders (Arkansas State at Little Rock), George Abney (Georgia), Marion Marzolf (Michigan), Whitney Mundet (Louisiana State), Daniel Pfaff (Penn State) and David Sloan (Alabama).

# Arizona State, Nebraska-Omaha approved

Arizona State University and the University of Nebraska-Omaha are the newest institutions hosting Kappa Tau Alpha chapters. The chapters were approved overwhelmingly in balloting by members of the National Council this spring.

The Arizona State journalism program began in 1931 under the direction of Ernest Hopkins and has grown today to enroll 1800 undergraduates majoring in journalism, public relations, media production, media management and media analysis and criticism. There are about 100 masters degree students. In recognition of its growth and stature, ASU President Michael Crow in 2005 granted the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication independent status, hired a founding dean (Christopher Callahan) and allocated new resources.

ASU students have been frequent winners of Hearst Foundation and Society of Professional Journalists awards. More than 500 Cronkite School students received scholarships last year, including 42 National Merit Scholars. Because the campus is located in a Top 20 media market, students have access to a variety of internship opportunities.

The full-time faculty of 17 contributes regularly to scholarly and professional media publications.

Arizona State University is located in Tempe and has a main campus enrollment of more than 51,000 students. Dr. Fritz Leigh, associate dean, will serve as chapter adviser.

The University of Nebraska-Omaha was founded in 1908 as the University of Omaha as a Presbyterian liberal arts college. It became a municipal institution in 1930 by vote of Omahans. It joined the University of Nebraska system in 1968.

Journalism was taught as early as 1911. Initially part of the English Department, it became the Journalism and Speech Department in 1968 and the Department of Communication in 1975, then evolved into the School of Communication. Dr. Jeremy Lipschultz is director.

The Omaha campus has an enrollment of more than 14,000. Within the three journalism concentrations of news-editorial, public-relations/advertising and communication studies, there are more than 400 majors. The UNO PRSA student chapter is a recent Bateman Competition winner and students have done well in other regional and national competitions. Twenty-six majors in the last two years have graduated *cum laude* or higher.

Two faculty members have received university-wide teaching awards for excellence in the classroom and five

have won Alumni Teaching Awards. The nine member faculty is active in local professional organizations as well as national scholarly groups. Two members have served as AEJMC division heads. Dr. Chris Allen will serve as chapter adviser.

The addition of these universities brings the number of active chapters to 95. A total of 117 chapters have been chartered. Four chapters were inactivated when their journalism/mass comm programs were eliminated. Charters were withdrawn from 21 chapters for failing to initiate new members on a regular basis. One charter was revoked for noncompliance with membership rules.

Information about how to name a chapter is in the Adviser's Handbook or at [www.KappaTauAlpha.org](http://www.KappaTauAlpha.org), or by contacting the executive director.

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## 2005 Council Highlights

Having observed its 95th anniversary on March 10, the Society turned its attention to planning for its centennial in 2010.

Gil Fowler presented the 100th Anniversary Committee report on behalf of chair David Sloan. Among the proposals was a special celebration at the KTA/AEJMC Awards Luncheon in 2010.

Executive Director Keith Sanders presented a financial report that projected a substantial loss for the year due to a drop in new members and a two-year charge for certificate printing. A budget for 2006-2006 was approved. Although the Society is financially sound, there is an increasing need to project budget figures four or five years into the future.

President Thomas Schwartz proposed an increase of \$2000 for the executive director, noting that it had been four years since the last raise. The proposal was approved unanimously.

In the annual Executive Director's Report, Sanders noted that the compliance review went well, the transition to an outside printer for our certificates went smoothly and the new Top Scholar Awards were well received.

## Trayes honored by Temple

For 40 years at Temple University Ed Trayes has mentored students and junior faculty, championed innovative teaching and served as a source of inspiration. In recognition, the Department of Journalism in January voted unanimously to name its chapter the Edward J. Trayes Chapter of Kappa Tau Alpha.

The faculty managed, with Mary Trayes' help, to keep the honor secret until a ceremony April 26, when he was presented with a framed charter certificate.

Trayes has been honored with "Great Teacher" awards by Temple University and the Freedom Forum. He founded *Mass Comm Review* (now *Mass Communication and Society*), the journal of the

Mass Comm & Society Division of AEJMC. He is co-founder of the Dow Jones Editing Internship program, on which he continues to work.

He serves as director of the masters degree program, head of the photography sequence and head of the School of Communication's Tenure and Promotion Committee.

In nominating Trayes, Thomas Eveslage, department chair, wrote: "Ed Trayes has been and continues to be a force for journalism education excellence in the department. He represents the highest ideals of Kappa Tau Alpha."

Trayes was initiated into KTA by the Penn State chapter in 1961.

time, many papers openly proclaimed association with a particular political party. Two economic changes, however, led to the rapid decline of the partisan press. The development of expensive high-speed presses made it possible for a newspaper to serve many more readers within a given city. To reach more readers, and therefore spread the high fixed costs across many consumers, newspapers stopped talking about politics in an explicitly partisan manner. Independent papers could draw readers from across the political spectrum. At the same time, advertising became an important way for nationally and locally distributed brands to raise awareness of their products. Papers with larger audiences attracted more attention from advertisers, another incentive to increase readership. As a result, papers began to drop overt political bias and proclaim their independence in covering news of government and politics.

Though nonpartisan newspaper coverage emerged from technological change, elements of partisanship reemerged in television because of changes in channel competition. In the 1990s the three major network evening news programs faced increasing competition for viewers from cable programs. In analyzing the content of network news programs, I show that producers attempting to halt the slide in ratings focused in particular on the marginal viewers, those who sometimes tuned into the network evening news and sometimes chose other fare. The programs focused on retaining young female viewers, who carry a greater premium in the advertising market because they often make family purchase decisions. Covering political issues of interest to younger females meant more coverage of gun control and dealing with the problems of families with children. Because younger females were more likely to be Democrats, talking about political issues that interested them meant that on the margin the network news programs devoted more time and stories to liberal issues. The motives of network producers were not ideological. The commercial pressure to retain the interest of younger viewers translated into coverage that focused on topics traditionally associated with the Democratic party.

Laments that the rise of soft news reflects a general decline in tastes also miss

the economic factors driving news content. Consumers today can choose from a wide spectrum of news products that vary in their emphasis of news about government and politics (hard news) or human interest and entertainment figures (soft news). A number of factors may lead editors and producers to favor soft news. In broadcast markets viewers age 18-34 command higher advertising rates. News outlets may cater to the preferences of these younger viewers, who are much less likely to express interest in traditional hard news stories.

**"Part of the fun in writing the book came from devising ways to quantify contents."**

Hard news topics such as international stories will lose out if they involve greater expense, such as the travel costs involved in original international coverage. Now that media are part of large publicly traded firms, the focus on profits demanded by shareholders means less attention to public affairs reporting.

Part of the fun in writing this book came from devising ways to quantify concepts. To measure trends in coverage

of hard and soft news stories by network evening news programs, I needed ways to track these different news types. Each year *People* magazine develops its list of "25 Most Intriguing People." *The Harvard Law Review* publishes its compilation of the term's major Supreme Court cases. *Congressional Quarterly* summarizes key votes that occurred in Congress. The Americans for Democratic Action select a set of votes to measure the liberalism of candidates, while the American Conservative Union tallies the key conservative votes in Congress. In my analysis of news content I used *People's* people to represent soft news topics and the law review cases, *CQ* key votes and interest group ratings to define hard news topics. I used the Vanderbilt Television News Archive to determine whether the network evening news programs covered these particular celebrities, court cases and congressional votes over the 30 year period 1969-1998.

Overall, the results indicate growing coverage by the networks of soft news personalities. The analysis indicates that network news decisions about covering hard and soft news were influenced both by the partial deregulation of television and the increasing competition from cable channels.

I did not want the book to be yet another lament about changes in the media, so in the concluding chapter I focused on ways to increase the production of hard news; lowering the cost of information creation by expanding the Freedom of Information Act; encouraging nonprofits to generate more information and expand into the ownership and operation of news outlets, furthering the creation of norms that lead journalists to give readers what they need to know, not just what they want to know; and supporting the use of spectrum auction fees to create the Digital Opportunity Investment Trust. I also hoped the book would generate discussions of media markets, so if you have any reactions to this essay or the book, I hope you'll e-mail me at [jayth@pps.duke.edu](mailto:jayth@pps.duke.edu)

*James Hamilton is Charles S.Sydnor Professor of Public Policy at Duke University. For information about the award, go to [www.KappaTauAlpha.org](http://www.KappaTauAlpha.org) and click on Mott Award*



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# Writing about markets and media

James T. Hamilton received the Frank Luther Mott Research Award for the best research book on journalism and mass communication published in 2005. Below he describes how he researched and wrote *All the News That's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information into News*.

You often find strange volumes on the bottom shelves in used bookstores. Eight years ago I found a very dusty book entitled *N.W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual 1897*. The book was designed to give advertisers a list of every newspaper in the country. For each newspaper the directory provided the title, establishment date, subscription fee, and circulation (with indicators for whether this was sworn, in a detailed statement, from publishers' reports, or merely estimated). For type of publication, the newspapers often listed themselves as Democratic, Republican, or Independent. Looking at the listings arrayed on the page, I could see that in large cities the product variety was greater (e.g., you had foreign language publications, third-party newspapers, and interest group outlets such as labor papers). The array of newspaper offerings on each page also underscored for me how political affiliations of papers were similar to brand locations of products. I discovered that I could use these newspaper directories to analyze how newspaper markets had changed from 1870 to 1900, an analysis that became the first chapter I wrote for my book *All the News That's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information into News* (Princeton University Press, 2004).

I came to write about the media through a circuitous path. In the first five years after I got my PhD in economics, nearly all my work focused on environmental policy. One program I studied was the Toxics Release Inventory, an EPA program that requires companies to report yearly on their releases of toxic chemicals. One day I read in the paper that Congress was debating whether to compile a listing of companies that advertised on violent television programs as a way to influence the desirability of supporting those programs. This policy of using information provision to affect company behavior caused me to see a parallel between

television violence and pollution. In the case of toxic emissions, it is clear that companies often make decisions about how much pollution to release without factoring in the costs to society of their actions (costs which are reflected in damages to human health and the environment). If television violence causes increases in aggression and/or violence for some children, then the same logic applies. Companies that use violent programs to attract audiences may not be led to consider the costs to society that arise when children are in the audience for these programs.

I explored how TV violence arises from a market failure akin to pollution in a book entitled *Channeling Violence: The*

**"...five economic Ws determine what information actually emerges in the marketplace as news"**

*Economic Market for Violent Television Programming* (Princeton University Press, 1998). I traced out the demographic market for violent TV programs, showed how channels used violent content strategically during sweeps periods and as counter programming, and estimated how viewing audiences changed when programs carried viewer discretion warnings. In one chapter I studied how local television news stations use crime stories to appeal to audiences.

After coding the content of news programs in 19 different markets, I found that within each market there were high crime stations and low crime stations. High crime stations focused on crime, accidents, and disasters, had shorter stories, and did not cover government much. Low crime stations were less likely to lead with crime, and were more likely to talk about public affairs and government stories. The amount of crime coverage in a local market was not predicted by crime statistics. It rather was related to ratings for the reality program *Cops*, which I interpreted as evidence that local news directors were selecting stories on the basis of local audience interests.

Writing the local news chapter in

*Channeling Violence* led me to reflect on how economic concepts help explain media content. Journalists often talk about stories in terms of the 5 Ws (Who, what, when, where, and why). I came to believe, however, that a different set of five economic Ws determines what information actually emerges in the marketplace as news:

1. Who cares about a particular piece of information?
2. What are they willing to pay to find it, or what are others willing to pay to reach them?
3. Where can media outlets or advertisers reach these people?
4. When is it profitable to provide the information?
5. Why is this profitable?

A reporter will not attempt to answer these questions explicitly as she writes a story. Indeed, a journalist would probably prefer to think about stories in terms of their impact on society rather than their impact on profits. But the answers to these economic questions ultimately do determine the ideas favored by editors, the images selected by producers, the audiences and advertisers attracted by content, and the nature of the news outlets that survive in the market.

Popular explanations for problems with the media focus not on economic choices but on more human, and more entertaining, dilemmas. According to current accounts, the media are biased because of the left-wing or right-wing designs of journalists. Hard news loses out because of the dumbing down of reader and viewer interests. These stories of media bias, soft news, and celebrity culture often point to misplaced values as the culprit in media markets. In writing *All the News* I tried to show how these phenomena are better explained as arising from economic choices rather than from human foibles or failings.

To see how economics can be used to predict news content, consider the question of media bias. Using the (dusty) data from the N.W. Ayer news directories I show that nonpartisan reporting emerged as a commercial product in American newspaper markets in the 1870s. Before that

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