

# Spot News

Vol 8, No. 7

October 2003

A publication of the East Tennessee Chapter  
of the Society of Professional Journalists  
on the Web at <http://www.kornnet.org/etspj>



Jean Ash  
and Adina  
Chumley  
visit the  
food table  
at the  
ETSPJ  
picnic at  
UT, Oct. 5.

## Supreme Court review topic for Nov. meeting

In honor of the 200th anniversary of *Marbury v. Madison*, the November ETSPJ chapter meeting will feature a discussion of significant recent cases before the Supreme Court.

The program will begin at 6:30 p.m., Nov. 17, at the West Knoxville Branch Library, Kingston Pike at Papermill Road.

## Online journalism needs standards, Poynter speaker says

by Tim Vacek, UT journalism student

TAMPA, Fla. – Poynter Institute faculty member Howard Finberg conducted a study two years ago that showed 47 percent of consumers were neutral toward the credibility of online journalism.

To Finberg, that meant 47 percent of the people could be swayed to trust online journalism.

“That’s our opportunity to bring them to the positive, not the negative,” Finberg said at the Society of Professional Journalists’ National Convention in September.

With the growing influence and importance of online journalism, it was one of the main topics of discussion at the convention. And one of the main concerns of panelists at the convention is the recent trend of using online as a place to publish material that wouldn’t fit in printed versions.

While online needs to have different standards than print or broadcast, it still needs to have standards, Finberg said.

“It is a different medium that needs different ways to present information,” Finberg said. “But online should not be a dumping ground.”

Some publications are using online for information that may not be fit to publish otherwise, said Staci D. Kramer, senior editor for Online Journalism Training Review.

“If you wouldn’t run it in print or in broadcast, don’t run it online,” Kramer said.

A concern voiced by many in attendance at the convention and echoed by the panelists was the accuracy of online journalism.

“The demands for immediacy are making it tougher for us to get the story right from the get-go,” said Steve Geimann, the co-leader of the policy team at Bloomberg News.

With the frequency of inaccuracies in online journalism, it makes it more important to run constant updates and corrections, Kramer said.

While most online news is spread by word of mouth, there are a growing number of people who hear about a story and consult online sources to learn more information, Kramer said.

*Continued on page 4*

# ETSPJ, PRSA hold joint ethics meeting

by James Fields

A panel of four journalism and public relations practitioners discussed professional ethics in a joint meeting of their local chapters on Sept. 18 at the Knoxville News Sentinel's new building.

Jack McElroy, editor of the News Sentinel, described newsroom decisions about what to publish. Examples included a DUI charge against the son of a local politician, content from divorce proceedings of a university administrator, and election coverage when a news person's spouse is a candidate. He said newspapers should be willing to explain their publishing decisions process.

Becky Huckaby, president of PRSA's Volunteer Chapter, said PRSA had initially tried without success to enforce provisions of its ethics code. Compliance is now voluntary. She described some code provisions such as safeguarding confidences and avoiding leaks, conflicts of interest, and preserving intellectual property rights. Huckaby emphasized the need to build credibility: admit mistakes and correct them.

Georgiana Vines, former national president of SPJ, described the organization's "calm approval" of revisions to its code of ethics and said to expect more changes. She added that some SPJ members feel strongly about enforcement. Vines called attention to the SPJ Hotline for advice when confronted with an ethics problem. She noted that SPJ's recent national convention included a program on "Ethics Disasters."

Mary Beth West, a PRSA national board member, said PR persons emphasize the need to involve top management in the ethical decisions process. PR is still placed in a position of trying to control damage after the fact. Now the bar has been raised for all covering business and those who represent corporations. West emphasized a commitment to "not dishonoring our [PR] profession." She said individuals should guard their reputations, "even quit clients or resign from a job if need be."

Bonnie Reichert, a board member of both organizations, served as moderator for the meeting.



Lisa Skinner (standing), president of ETSPJ, introduces moderator, Bonnie Riechert (left), and two panelists, Georgiana Vines and Mary Beth West. Not pictured are Becky Huckaby and Jack McElroy.



Many attendees at the joint ETSPJ/PRSA meeting took some time to tour the News Sentinel's new facilities.

## Officers and Board ETSPJ

**President** Lisa Hood Skinner  
**First Vice President** Alan Carmichael  
**Second Vice President** Michele Silva  
**Secretary** Jean Ash  
**Treasurer** Dorothy Bowles

**Board Members**  
 Larry Aldridge  
 Adina Chumley  
 Ed Hooper  
 Aaron Ramey  
 Bonnie Riechert

**Membership Chair** David Smith  
**Program Chair** James Fields  
**Ex Officio** Georgiana Vines

**Communications Coordinator**  
 Sally Guthrie (588-1474)

## From the Board . . .

The ETSPJ board plans to look at ways to set up a foundation to fund scholarships for area students. If you are interested in serving on a committee to look at ways a foundation might work, please contact Georgiana Vines, ex officio board member, at the News Sentinel or vines@Knews.com.

Of interest to smaller circulation newspapers . . . we are adding a category to the Golden Press Card awards program for daily print media with a circulation below 25,000. Details will be published in the call for entries at the beginning of 2004.

ETSPJ is compiling a directory of e-mail addresses for members so we can alert you to upcoming meetings and events. We promise no spam. Please send your e-mail address to sallyguthrie@mindspring.com.



Michael Larkin (left) of the Boston Globe was the featured speaker at the October meeting of ETSPJ. He talked about the paper's coverage of the scandal in the Boston Diocese of the Catholic Church for which the Globe

## Baker Center's inaugural program examines 'embeds'

by James Fields

With U.S. news organizations and military personnel still active in the Iraq war zone, 127 persons came to learn about "Embedded Journalists" on Sept. 23 in a day-long program supported by ETSPJ. They heard from academicians, working journalists, military personnel, and a Pentagon spokesman—all helping to inaugurate the new Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

Bryan Whitman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, described the "embed" program flowing from an assumption that the "public does not embrace preemption," the first strike concept he subsequently described as our "new national security strategy." The most contentious issue was reporting of U.S. casualties." Responding to a question about battlefield censorship, Whitman said it did not happen in Iraq, but there were some news embargoes.

Lt. Col. Rock Marcone of the U.S. Army, giving "a commander's view" of the embedded journalist concept, said "We can't be afraid of the media" who "see honesty, integrity, and truth as essential." Initially, he received story drafts from some "embeds" who sought factual accuracy. But there were other "unilateral" reporters, not embedded, with whom he had little contact. Showing emotion, Marcone shared his sorrow at the death of a journalist he had come to know personally.

A six-person panel discussed the impact of embedding, noting that it was not really new while describ-

ing legendary journalists of previous wars. A general view was that on-site reporting from Iraq offered better information than some critiques from afar; but the system worked best for large news organizations.

Photojournalists concluded the program with both commentary and on-screen presentations of their work in Iraq—some of it quite removed from the relative safety of travel within large U.S. military groups. They brought out other dimensions of war coverage: the need for personal strength, physical and emotional, as well as logistical challenges such as transporting their own spare batteries, food and water—plus fuel for their rented vehicles.

Although more than 700 journalists covered the "war" phase in Iraq, only a remnant (including photographers) has remained for follow-up activity such as reconstruction. Some have become close to the civilian population, and their photos may have given the audience at UT some new perspective. Asked "Were there photos you took that did not get seen by the American public?" the consensus response was that the photographers did not censor their work before transmission, but others in the news chain make their own decisions.

The Baker Center is planning future programs related to public policy. The center will host a program next spring on the "Watergate" episode leading to a president's resignation, and it plans a program for Fall 2004 on the Clean Air Act.

## Online journalism

*continued from page 1*

“You may not be able to get it right for the original person who saw the story,” Kramer said. “But you can get the one who follows the link.”

Another problem Geimann encounters in the online version of Bloomberg is that immediacy does not give room for much detail, and it doesn't allow for being unprepared.

In many cases, Bloomberg will have as many as three different versions of a story prepared to be released, one for each possible outcome of a story, Geimann said. When the story breaks, all Bloomberg has to do is put a lead, a quote and a time element in the story.

Bloomberg also bans the use of almost all adjectives and modifiers to cut down the size of its copy, Geimann said.

“If it's not a noun or a verb, we don't want it,” Geimann said. “It may sound simplistic, but it works.”

*Vacek won a first-place Mark of Excellence award at the 2003 SPJ National Convention in Tampa for sports column writing.*

## Mark Your Calendar

Nov. 17, 6:30 p.m., Chapter Meeting, Supreme Court Review: 200th Anniversary of Marbury v. Madison, West Knoxville Public Library

Dec. 4, 6:00 p.m., Holiday Party with crazy gift exchange, Cherokee Bluff Condominium. Bring a covered dish, too.

## Scholarship donations requested

Because the Toys for Tots program gets so many contributions, the ETSPJ board has decided that instead of donating toys, members can donate to the chapter's scholarship fund for UT and Pellissippi State students. Checks should be written to ETSPJ with a notation it is for the fund. As a long-range plan, the chapter is looking into establishing a Foundation for scholarships.

There will be a holiday box at the Christmas party for donations. You may want to put your donation in an envelope for privacy considerations. The money will be put in a special account for scholarships only. You can also mail a donation to the treasurer, Dorothy Bowles, 1828 Chicadee Drive, Knoxville, TN 37919.