

Report of the
AJHA Task Force on History in the Curriculum

September 2007

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The Task Force on History in the Curriculum was originally appointed in 2000. Then, in October 2005, it was reconstituted under the AJHA presidency of Ford Risley and vice-presidency of Fred Blevens.

The intent of the Task Force was (1) to determine which schools offer what courses in journalism/mass communication history and (2) to explore ways (a) to encourage more schools to offer history and (b) to encourage schools to attach greater importance to history at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Most of the work of the Task Force has been involved with (1) surveying schools and (2) developing proposals to achieve the several charges given to the Task Force.

The charges included the following:

1. Continue to work on ways to expand history into communication programs
2. Activities at the undergraduate level
 - a. Determine which schools of journalism/mass communication do and do not offer a history course.
 - b. Develop a proposed "Statement of Principles" — to be considered as the AJHA's official position — about history in the undergraduate curriculum.

- c. Encourage all schools to offer a history course.
- d. Encourage all schools to require a history course of their majors.

3. Activities at the graduate level

- a. Determine the nature of historical study that each school offers.
- b. Develop a proposed "Statement of Principles" — to be considered as the AJHA's official position — about history in the graduate curriculum.
- c. Encourage all schools to offer history courses in their masters and doctoral programs.
- d. Encourage schools to consider the study of history as essential as the study of theory or any other area to a graduate program.
- e. Encourage all schools to offer students the opportunity to study or specialize in history equal to the opportunity for any other area of study.
- f. Develop a proposal for a review procedure of schools' offerings in history.

4. By May 31, 2008, complete brochures that discuss the advantages of incorporating mass communication history into the curriculum.

5. Widen discussions of history in the curriculum

6. Consider ways to promote mass communication history beyond the collegiate level, perhaps into secondary schools

During 2005-2007, the Task Force addressed charges 1, 2, and 3. Pending approval of the AJHA Board of Directors, along with any direction it might give, the Task Force members believe the AJHA will be in a position to begin work on the remaining charges.

The following two reports present the proposals from the Task Force's two subcommittees on charges 1, 2, and 3.

Report of the Undergraduate Subcommittee

The charges for the undergraduate subcommittee were as follows:

- a. Determine which schools of journalism/mass communication do and do not offer a history course.
- b. Develop a proposed "Statement of Principles" — to be considered as the AJHA's official position — about history in the undergraduate curriculum.
- c. Encourage all schools to offer a history course.
- d. Encourage all schools to require a history course of their majors.

a. Schools offering history courses

David Sloan and Jim McPherson conducted a survey of more than 600 schools to identify those that offer history courses and the ones that do not.

They also tried to find out what history courses were offered at each school. David and Erika Pribanic (a doctoral student at Alabama) then used the Internet to research schools that did not respond to the survey, with Erika coming up with the following stats for an article that appeared *The Intelligencer*:

A total of 229 schools offer history courses that encompass all mass communication or mass media. Other courses that concentrate on the history of specific media were:

358 — film

149 — print media

112 — electronic media/broadcasting

15 — advertising, public relations, and/or marketing

17 — media technology

21 — historiographical or methodological courses

Of all of the courses, 37 were identified as graduate level.

A list of schools that offer some form of mass communication history, compiled from the original survey and later online research, is available to the AJHA as a digital file. Because of its length, it was decided not to include a printed copy with this report.

b. Statement of Principles

The undergraduate subcommittee proposes the following “Statement of Principles”:

American Journalism Historians Association Statement of Principles on History in the Undergraduate Curriculum

We, the members of the American Journalism Historians Association, an organization of scholars and educators founded in 1981, consider the study of history to be central to the understanding of the media today.

History informs the instruction of basic media writing classes through enriched understanding of the evolution of news media form and content.

History explains the crucial role the media play in American public life.

History also underscores the importance of mass communication in virtually all academic disciplines.

Understanding the media's social and democratic functions requires knowledge of mass communication history.

History helps students appreciate their world and their place in it.

Therefore, the American Journalism Historians Association calls on the administrative units that house university- and college-level mass communication programs to do the following:

1. Require a course in mass communication history for all academic programs that offer a journalism or mass communication major.
2. Require a mass communication history course, or incorporate units of mass communication history into existing classes, for all programs that include journalism, mass communication, or media studies, regardless of whether those programs offer a journalism or mass communication major.
3. Offer a mass communication history course as an elective for students not majoring in journalism, mass communication, or media studies.

Adopted XX day of October, 2007

c and d. Encouraging an increase in mass communication history programs and courses

The AJHA can do a number of things to help promote mass communication history. The graduate subcommittee has offered several activities that could also apply to undergraduate programs. Discussed in more detail elsewhere in this report, these include:

- providing a resource center on the website with course syllabi and other materials, and providing support for the teaching of mass communication history in other ways
- recognizing worthy programs through awards and other means
- promoting the value of mass communication history to the discipline
- providing mass communication historians as guest speakers for schools that do not offer history

In addition to applying these suggestions as relevant to undergraduate education, the subcommittee offers the following recommendations:

1. Forming a mass communication history “common market” through which a professor from one university would be invited to another school to teach in his or her specialty. In some cases this might be done through satellite technology
2. Publicizing — perhaps free of charge — jobs that include the teaching of mass communication history

3. Tracking departures (particularly through retirement) of known mass communication historians, and encouraging institutions to replace historians with historians
4. Sponsoring an annual convention breakfast or dessert round-table event in which an expert in some aspect of mass communication history would host a table for other interested people to stimulate research. One such table might be a teaching table for a master teacher and interested grad students and/or faculty. AJHA interest groups especially might make use of this event.
5. In areas of obvious joint concern, conscious ties should be made with the history division of AEJMC and with other academic history organizations, which in some cases have a wider reach than the AJHA.

Report of the Graduate Subcommittee

The Graduate Subcommittee was instructed to propose activities related to the following six charges:

- a. Determine the nature of historical study that each school offers
- b. Develop a proposed "Statement of Principles" — to be considered as the AJHA's official position — about history in the graduate curriculum
- c. Encourage all schools to offer history courses in their masters and doctoral programs
- d. Encourage schools to consider the study of history as essential as the study of theory or any other area to a graduate program
- e. Encourage all schools to offer students the opportunity to study or specialize in history equal to the opportunity for any other area of study
- f. Develop a proposal for a review procedure of schools' offerings in history

Following are the Subcommittee's findings and proposals related to its various charges:

a. The nature of historical study that graduate schools offer

From a survey of all schools that offer graduate programs in mass communication, we found that 52 schools offer at least one history course, while 140 offer none. Some of those with history courses offer more than one. We have identified the names of courses at all those schools along with, in most cases, the professors who teach the courses. The results of the complete survey are available to the AJHA as the Task Force continues its work.

b. Proposed "Statement of Principles" – to be considered as the AJHA's official position – about history in the graduate curriculum.

American Journalism Historians Association
Statement of Principles on History in the Graduate Curriculum

No one argues against the importance of mass communication as a force in modern culture. The late *Washington Post* publisher Philip Graham coined the phrase "journalism is the first draft of history." To be adequately educated, everyone needs to have a knowledge of history. Likewise, in mass communication education, all graduate students need to be familiar with mass communication history. Many journalism and mass communication graduate students have no background in mass media, and a history course at the very least can help provide them a base of knowledge necessary to succeed. Since mass communication history courses should play an important role in graduate education, all schools with graduate programs should commit to the teaching of history at the graduate level.

The American Journalism Historians Association is committed to promoting the creation and/or strengthening of graduate courses and programs in mass communication history. These courses and programs should be rigorous and involve not only the teaching of historical facts, but research methods as well. Students should know and understand the role of the media in culture and society and how it relates to the past, present, and future. Whether students go on to work in the profession or continue their graduate education and eventually become teachers or researchers, it is important that they understand mass communication's role in society from a historical perspective.

Because of the importance of mass communication history in the life of a well educated individual, the AJHA recognizes the following principles:

1. All schools that have a masters or doctoral programs should offer history courses in those programs.
2. All schools should consider the study of history as essential as the study of theory or any other area to a graduate program.
3. All schools should offer students the opportunity to study or specialize in history equal to the opportunity for any other area of study.

To assist schools in achieving those objectives, the AJHA will periodically review schools' offerings in history, and it stands ready to assist schools interested in creating a course or a program in mass communication history.

Adopted XX day of October, 2007

c & d. Proposed means to encourage all schools (1) to offer history courses in their masters and doctoral programs and (2) to consider the study of history as essential as the study of theory or any other area to a graduate program

1. We recognize that graduate programs will offer history courses only if they have the faculty to teach them. Smaller programs without historians on their faculty might have someone who is interested in teaching graduate-level history but who is reluctant to start from scratch developing a syllabus and course. Therefore, the AJHA will provide a resource center on its website with the following items:

a) Syllabi for courses in historical research methods in mass communication; surveys in mass communication history; and special topics courses in mass communication history

b) Sample readings lists, updated regularly, with classic and current books and articles suitable for graduate-level classes. Where practicable, the book listings will be linked to journal reviews.

c) Samples of creative research projects and assignments

The resource center will provide material that will help instructors in arguing for the study of history at the graduate level.

To provide a rich and diverse sample, any interested AJHA member is welcome to participate. This resource center will help new, prospective, and even experienced mass communication history instructors.

2. Some graduate programs will be more likely to offer history courses if their prestige is enhanced by doing so. Therefore, the AJHA will take the following steps:

a) Occasionally recognize programs that have significantly enhanced their efforts in teaching history or that have been consistently excellent

b) Establish, as past president Ford Risley has suggested, an annual mass communication history teaching award and publicize it. The AJHA will promote the award among schools with graduate programs and ask the winner to write an article on teaching for the *Intelligencer*. Copies of the articles will be sent to graduate programs in mass communication

c) Widely publicize the history research awards the AJHA already gives annually, both nationally and in winners' local and university media.

3. Since some graduate programs will be able to offer history courses only if they can hire new professors who adopt history as a research and teaching specialty, the AJHA will encourage doctoral students to make history their main research focus. To help accomplish that goal, the AJHA will take the following actions:

a) Publicize widely the AJHA's long tradition of welcoming and supporting graduate students

b) Establish a mentoring program for graduate students and new assistant professors

c) Compile information about publishing opportunities in mass communication history and include it as part of the aforementioned resource center. (Journal editors [such as Jim Martin and Pat Washburn] will be asked to contribute tip sheets for preparing successful manuscripts.)

4. Since some graduate programs will offer history courses only if they are convinced of the importance of history and historical research to the field of journalism and mass communications, the AJHA will prepare a booklet celebrating mass communication history. It will argue for the important role of studying history at the graduate level, touting its worth in the graduate curriculum. The document will be sent to deans of colleges and programs of all strengths and sizes.

5. Faculty teaching graduate-level survey, research methods, and special topics courses in mass communication history need encouragement just as much as those teaching undergraduate courses. Therefore, the AJHA will promote the discussion of teaching at the AJHA annual convention by committing to include at least one panel on teaching excellence at every conference and will make every effort to include graduate teaching in these discussions. The panel should help instructors in arguing for the study of history

e. Proposed means to encourage all schools to offer students the opportunity to study or specialize in history equal to the opportunity for any other area of study.

The AJHA believes that all schools should offer students the opportunity to study or specialize in history equal to the opportunity for any other area of study. The AJHA recognizes that graduate programs will offer the opportunity of studying or specializing in history only if it benefits the program or if the students can use that expertise in the three academic areas of teaching, research, and service. Interest must also be stimulated among the graduate students, who will be helpful in lobbying for the addition

of historical study. AJHA will encourage schools to do so through the following actions:

1. For school recognition:

a) Continue to promote the dissertation award among all graduate programs and increase promotion of past winners through brochures to the graduate divisions of the schools and on the AJHA website

b) Include publicity follow-up on past dissertation winners and runners-up and where they are currently teaching

c) Publicize awards and accomplishments in research (and teaching, after the start of the new AJHA teaching award) and the national/international recognition of members (both students and faculty)

d) Establish a program to assist well-known and respected mass communication historians as guest speakers (or to conduct seminars) for schools that don't offer history, especially in the graduate student colloquium classes

e) Prepare and distribute a list identifying schools that offer graduate courses and specializations in history, along with other pertinent information, such as names of professors who teach the courses

2. To stimulate interest among students:

a) Expand outreach specifically to graduate students at other conferences (broadcasting, advertising, public relations, history, English, Pop Culture, etc.).

b) Encourage the establishment of a Senior Scholars program, similar to the one at North Dakota State University, which invites nationally known researchers to teach a weeklong 3-4-hour seminar on mass communication history. This way, mass communication historians have the opportunity to interact with the students (who have never been exposed to mass communication history) and the faculty (who probably also have had no opportunity to see how historical research is conducted). The AJHA will contribute to the small stipend or expenses for a well-known member to travel to a school for the weeklong seminar.

c) Demonstrate the research and publication potential of historical research through publicity of the top AJHA research awards and journal articles. The award-winning papers and journal articles will be placed on the AJHA Website.

d) Prepare and distribute a brochure that focuses on the success of schools that offer history and of people who have a history specialization. The AJHA Website will add a section on "historians in the news" and "top young media historians" (much like George Mason University's History News Network Website) as a way of showcasing work and activities.

f. Develop a proposal for a review procedure of schools' offerings in history

Every three years, the AJHA will review schools offering either a masters or a doctoral degree to ascertain the nature of their offerings in communication history. The AJHA will compile and distribute periodic reports of the findings. A copy of the report will be sent to every school that offers a graduate program.

Review procedure for masters programs:

At the outset of the review process, the AJHA will notify all schools of the information gathered as part of this Task Force's effort to fulfill Charge A of this Report of the Graduate Subcommittee: "a. Determine the nature of historical study that each school offers."

As part of the notification process, the AJHA will provide an opportunity for each school to supply corrected information.

As part of the three-year review, each school will be requested to provide the following information:

1. By semester, all masters-level courses in communication history offered during the previous three years.
2. A statement of whether the program requires a history course of all of its masters students

Each school will be ranked on the following checkpoints, and the AJHA will maintain and publicize a list of schools and their rankings on the checkpoints:

1. Requires at least one communication history course of all of its masters students
2. Offers a history course but does not require it of students
3. Offers no history course

Review procedure for doctoral programs:

At the outset of the review process, the AJHA will notify all schools of the information gathered as part of this Task Force's effort to fulfill Charge A of this Report of the Graduate Subcommittee: "a. Determine the nature of historical study that each school offers."

As part of the notification process, the AJHA will provide an opportunity for each school to supply corrected information.

As part of the three-year review, each school will be requested to provide the following information:

1. By semester, all doctoral-level courses in communication history offered during the previous three years. This list is NOT to include masters-level courses.

2. In the previous five years, the number of doctoral students (with their names) who specialized in communication history — that is, those students whose main area of study was communication history — and the number of course hours in communication history that each student completed

3. In the previous five years, the names of doctoral students who completed a dissertation on a topic in communication history and the title of each dissertation

Each school will be ranked on the following checkpoints, and the AJHA will maintain and publicize a list of schools and their ranking on the checkpoints:

1. Requires at least one communication history course of all of its doctoral students and offers a specialization in communication history

2. Offers a specialization in communication history but does not require a history course of all its doctoral students

3. Requires at least one communication history course of all of its doctoral students but does not offer a specialization in communication history

4. Offers a history course at least once every four semesters but does not require it of students

5. Lists a history course in its catalogue but has not offered it during the previous four semesters

6. Offers no history course