

# *Historiography*

in Mass Communication



Volume 4 (2018). Number 2

# *Historiography in Mass Communication*

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This journal invites historians to submit essays. They may be original ones written specifically for this journal, or they may be from material that the authors already have (such as classroom lectures, AJHA presidential addresses, etc.).

Essay length may vary from 500 to 5,000 words.

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# Choosing the Year's Best Book on Journalism and Mass Communication History

By John P. Ferré ©



Ferré

On the first Monday in February for the past nine years, I have shipped three file boxes of books, one to each judge of the AEJMC History Division Award for the Best Journalism and Mass Communication History Book. In a typical year, each judge receives two dozen books and spends three months reading and comparing them. In early May, they rank order their top five choices. From these lists I compile a master rank order and then ask the judges their thoughts about the top-ranked book. Sometimes consensus has been immediate, sometimes agreement has emerged after further conversations, but in every case, judges have chosen thoroughly researched books marked by originality, illumination, and clarity.

I learned the hard way that identifying the year's media history books is not a straightforward process. The first year I coordinated the award, I sent out a call for entries months before the early February deadline to media most likely to be read by media historians: *AEJMC News*, *CLIO* (the AEJMC History Division newsletter), *AJHA Intelligencer*,

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and the online JHistory network. The call specified the award criteria: first editions of non-edited volumes with a copyright date from the year before the next AEJMC convention. That method netted just 11 entries. Although we did find a deserving winner that year, I realized that simply announcing the award was a precarious method of attracting entries. In order not to risk repeating 2004, the year no award was given, I needed to be more deliberate.

Rather than wait for whatever books that advertising would attract, I decided to become more proactive. I would search online through the Library of Congress catalog to identify every media history book published during the competition year, then search the publishers' websites to identify the staff member in charge of publicity and awards in order to send the call for entries to that individual. But that task was more complex than I anticipated because the Library of Congress doesn't use a single subject heading for books about media history. The very first winner of the award, *Real Fantasies: Edward Steichen's Photography* by Patricia Johnston, is filed under the subject "Advertising photography--United States--History." Last year's winner, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* by Robert G. Parkinson, is filed under "Racism--United States--History--18th century," "United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Propaganda," and "United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Social aspects." The 17 other winning books are filed under no fewer than 71 unique subject headings.

Figuring that the past is prologue, I now search the dozens of subject headings of past winners in Library of Congress's online catalog for the year's media history titles, adding to this list any other appropriate titles reviewed in *American Journalism*, *Journalism History*, and *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. The result is a list of as many as 50 books on media history published in a year. (This year I identified 34 appropriate books on media history with a copyright date of 2017.)

## Choosing the Year's Best Book on JMC History

Sending the call for entries to publishers has its own challenges. The websites of university presses are fairly straightforward — they usually have a staff directory that identifies a Director of Publicity or an Awards Manager with an email address. By contrast, commercial publishers tend not to publish staff directories. Contacting them often means submitting an online form or sending an email to customer service. Five out of every ten media history books (47%) I was able to identify for this year's competition were published by university presses, yet university presses published six out of every ten of the nominations I received (59%). It is possible that university presses are more interested in receiving awards for their books than their commercial counterparts are, but I suspect that the personal contact with university presses had something to do with their higher entry rate. Regardless, contacting publishers directly works better than simply advertising for entries. Twenty-two of the 29 entries I received for this year's competition (76%) came from publishers I contacted directly.

The judges do the heavy lifting for this award. After they receive the entries, they have three months to produce a rank-ordered list of their top five selections. I purposefully leave the criteria vague, trusting the highly qualified judges to choose worthy recipients by their own high standards. Last year's judges articulated their criteria with their selections. Linda Steiner of the University of Maryland said, "My choices are based on importance and breadth of argument, freshness of topic, depth of research, and writing." Kathy Roberts Forde of the University of Massachusetts said, "I look for books that contribute important new historical understandings about the role of news media in political, social, or cultural life." And Fred Blevens of Florida International University said, "I look at these books as tools to help me be a better teacher. Most of what I teach these days involves global information literacy, law, and history, and *The Common Cause* is a book that will change how I do all three of these things." Despite their different ap-

proaches, the judges typically submit overlapping top-five lists. Last year, each judge named three of the books on the final top-five list that I compiled.

After some discussion, the judges choose the winner, but that doesn't mean that the decision is easy. Forde called last year's entries "an impressive collection of books." Steiner described the process as "unusually difficult because so many of the books are worthy." Blevens said, "This year there were seven or eight winners."

Predicting which book the judges will choose is impossible. Although a few books about international media history are entered every year, so far none of these has won. So my wager would be on a book about the United States. I would also bet on a book published by a university press because only one book published by a commercial press (Counterpoint) has won. No one university press has won more than twice so far. So there's no bias toward the most prestigious names of Oxford (one), Harvard (one), or Chicago (two). I wouldn't bet on the gender of the author, because even though three out of four past winners have been men, entries in the award are increasingly written by women. In 2012, for instance, women wrote just one-fourth of the entries, but more than half of this year's entries were written by women. I wouldn't bet on a particular time period or medium, either, because the books have spanned American history from the colonial period to the late twentieth century and they have spanned print and broadcast media. Other than saying that a university press book on some dimension of American media history will probably win, no feature of the next winner other than the quality of the research and writing can be anticipated with confidence.

Given the high quality of the finalists, it's good that there are other awards that recognize media history books. The American Journalism Historians Association has given its Book of the Year Award since 2001. Only twice has AJHA selected the same book as the AEJMC History

## Choosing the Year's Best Book on JMC History

Division (first in 2001 for John Hartsock's *A History of American Literary Journalism* and again in 2012 for Peter Hartshorn's biography of Lincoln Steffens, *I Have Seen the Future*). The American Historical Association gave its first Eugenia M. Palmegiano Prize in the History of Journalism last year to Amelia Bonea for *The News of Empire: Telegraphy, Journalism, and the Politics of Reporting in Colonial India, c. 1830-1900*.

This year's entries are with the judges now, and I am looking forward to seeing which ones rise to the top and which one the judges will ultimately choose. I relish reading the winning entry, introducing the author to the History Division at the annual AEJMC convention, and hearing what he or she has to say about the experience of researching and writing the book. That occasion is meaningful because it celebrates a colleague's achievement as well as the shared mission of a community of scholars. The winner takes home a plaque and a check, and the rest of us leave with insight into a new book that advances the discipline in a significant way.

### **Best Journalism and Mass Communication History Book Award History Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication**

- 1998 Patricia Johnston, *Real Fantasies: Edward Steichen's Photography* (University of California Press, 1997)
- 1999 Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Indiana University Press, 1998)
- 2000 Jeffery A. Smith, *War and Press Freedom: The Problem of Prerogative Power* (Oxford University Press, 1999)
- 2001 John Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism: The Emergence of a Modern Narrative Form* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2000)
- 2002 Jeffrey Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (University Press of Virginia, 2001)

- 2003 Joshua Brown, *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of Gilded Age America* (University of California Press, 2002)
- 2004 no award
- 2005 Brian Ward, *Radio and the Struggle for Civil Rights in the South* (University Press of Florida, 2004)
- 2006 Chad Raphael, *Investigated Reporting: Muckrakers, Regulators, and the Struggle over Television Documentary* (University of Illinois Press, 2005)
- 2007 Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, *Everyday Ideas: Socioliterary Experience among Antebellum New Englanders* (University of Tennessee Press, 2006)
- 2008 Bruce Lenthall, *Radio's America: The Great Depression and the Rise of Modern Mass Culture* (University of Chicago Press, 2007)
- 2009 Kathy Roberts Forde, *Literary Journalism on Trial: Masson v. New Yorker and the First Amendment* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2008)
- 2010 Hugh Richard Slotten, *Radio's Hidden Voice: The Origins of Public Broadcasting in the United States* (University of Illinois Press, 2009)
- 2011 Richard R. John, *Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications* (Harvard University Press, 2010)
- 2012 Peter Hartshorn, *I Have Seen the Future: A Life of Lincoln Steffens* (Counterpoint, 2011)
- 2013 Chris Lamb, *Conspiracy of Silence: Sportswriters and the Long Campaign to Desegregate Baseball* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012)
- 2014 Jinx Coleman Broussard, *African American Foreign Correspondents: A History* (Louisiana State University Press, 2013)
- 2015 Matthew Cecil, *Hoover's FBI and the Fourth Estate: The Campaign to Control the Press and the Bureau's Image* (University Press of Kansas, 2014)
- 2016 Finis Dunaway, *Seeing Green: The Use and Abuse of American Environmental Images* (University of Chicago Press, 2015)
- 2017 Robert G. Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

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# Historical Roundtable: Mass Media and the Vietnam War

By Robert Rabe, James Landers, Chester Pach,  
and Michael Sweeney ©



Rabe

The performance of the American news media during the Vietnam War remains a deeply contentious subject in American history and culture. Did the government manipulate the press and lie about the progress of the war? Did liberal young reporters set out to undermine public support by distorting the true story of the war? Did news organizations fail to ask tough questions? Were they too tough? Did Americans get turned off by violent images dancing across their television screens during dinnertime? Over four decades after the fact, raising these questions can still evoke strong feelings and finger pointing.

But what about historians who study the American news media? The history of the media during the war, the relationship between the press and the government, and the role of the media in influencing public opinion have been the subject of a great deal of insightful work. In this roundtable, three scholars who have made noteworthy contributions to the field discuss many of the key issues and ideas that make up the historiography on the subject.

**Rabe:** What makes this subject area important in the field of journalism

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history? Why is it important to study the history of media during the war?

**Pach:** Vietnam was America's first television war, the first in which television journalists provided daily coverage, the first in which a majority of citizens relied on TV as their primary source of news. Television journalists reported from Korea, but they weren't stationed there, as during the Vietnam War, for extended tours. TV news consisted of fifteen-



Landers

minute programs in the early 1950s, including such programs as Camel News Caravan with host John Cameron Swayze, with a carnation in his lapel and a cigarette burning in an ashtray. The news was a frothy mix of the day's main stories, newsreel features, and even the afternoon baseball scores. Even by the end of the Korean War in July 1953, only about half of American



Pach

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*James Landers teaches journalism at Colorado State University. He is author of the books *The Weekly War: Newsmagazines and Vietnam (University of Missouri, 2004)* and *The Improbable First Century of Cosmopolitan Magazine (University of Missouri, 2010)*.*



Sweeney

*Chester Pach teaches history at Ohio University and is the author or editor of four books, including, most recently, *A Companion to Dwight D. Eisenhower (2017)*. He has written extensively on television news and Vietnam and is working on a book titled *The First Television War: TV News, the White House, and Vietnam*.*

*Michael Sweeney, a journalism professor at Ohio University, has written a number of books and is a recognized expert on the history of the press and war. He is a recipient of the American Journalism Historians Association's Kobre Award for lifetime achievement.*

homes had television. By the time the first declared U.S. combat troops went to Vietnam in March 1965, the CBS and NBC evening newscasts were thirty minutes long (ABC didn't follow suit until January 1967), all the networks had Saigon bureaus and full-time correspondents covering the war, and more than 90 percent of American homes had TV. Vietnam was the big story on TV; the networks gave it extensive coverage. Many people learned about what was happening in Vietnam primarily on TV. It's important that we know how this first extensive TV reporting affected the American experience in Vietnam.

**Sweeney:** Historians often are quick to label a particular event or era as a “turning point” in history. Some of these designations are subject to debate. In the case of the Vietnam War, there can be no doubt that it marked a dramatic break in the relationships that define our public life. These include the media and the military, the media and the government, the public and the media, and the public and the government/military (a relationship historically mediated by the press). The best way to describe these breaks is by saying distrust increased even as those involved sought to maintain good relations. In the end, familiarity planted seeds of contempt that still echo today — and, in some cases, are being encouraged to grow by those in power. In Vietnam, the media learned to say to the public, “Don't trust everything your government tells you.” And the government and military replied in kind, urging Americans to not trust the media. Does this not sound familiar in the Trump era?

**Landers:** Contemporary media evidently have relegated study of the history of media during the Vietnam era to a matter of interest rather than importance. Today's diffusion of informational media available to the public and diminution of traditional procedures among news practitioners have eradicated meaningful comparative generational media

scholarship. Informational media accessible to the general public during the Vietnam era consisted of books, magazines, newspapers, radio, and television. Typically, the dissemination process required information to be reviewed by an editor or director or producer, with the exception of breaking news (“bulletins”); the public then received information affected by these organizational policies and practices. Media practitioners selected and presented information predicated on presumptions about reified cultural and social norms for a geographical distribution area. Almost none of these criteria are applicable now because New Media have supplanted Old Media. So what is a scholar of media history to do? My answer is to examine occurrences of recent discrete incidents during moments of national crises or war involving the American military that are comparable to the Vietnam era, assess the content of select contemporary informational media for comparison, and determine the attitudes and values of the people directly involved in the presentation of the information. At this point a scholar of media history can contribute a worthy then-and-now examination incorporating appropriate theoretical dimensions.

**Rabe:** What would you say are the most important historical insights or interpretations in the literature on this subject. Feel free to refer to specific books or authors, including yourself if you like.

**Sweeney:** In Vietnam, the U.S. government and its armed forces gave journalists the most access they ever have enjoyed in wartime. This is due in part to the initial belief in the White House and Pentagon that the war was a necessary bulkhead against the spread of communism; that Americans and their South Vietnamese allies were fighting on the side of the angels; and that the war would be won with conventional military weapons and tactics, which had been the case in every previous American conflict. Under this assumption, the U.S. employed a policy of

“Maximum Candor” in the war’s early years: Let the journalists go, see for themselves, and report, for the facts would back up the assertions. But there was a more pragmatic side to the granting of near-total access. The Vietnam War was asymmetrically fought. On one side was the greatest military force on earth, organized into conventional Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine units. On the other side was a small, weak, developing nation (North Vietnam) and its ideological allies in South Vietnam (the Viet Cong). Any attempt to fight army-to-army, *a la* World War II, would inflict major casualties on the communist forces, as was the case during the Tet Offensive of 1968. The North Vietnamese/Viet Cong strategy for unification of North and South was to avoid major, set-piece battles, and instead wear down the opponent with a stream of surprise guerrilla raids when the particular place and moment gave the communists an advantage in short, focused combat. This meant that there was no line marking a “front” between opposing forces. In most cases, there was no way to know when or where a battle might break out. Therefore, journalists might witness combat virtually anywhere, and do so without military oversight such as the “minders” and “liaisons” of other wars. Under these circumstances, the U.S. military could not control access to combat as they could, say, in World War I. What was the result of this freedom to report the war? That is what is still being debated, and has shaped news coverage of every major combat since then.

In the short run, the Vietnam War gave rise to a belief that became popular among mid-level officers at the time that the media were to blame for the American defeat. The idea was that the broad access granted to journalists — and particularly to television cameras — created images of warfare far more realistic than the sanitized versions previously seen. The argument says that when American civilians saw the carnage on TV — its fire, blood, injuries, civilian casualties, etc. — they didn’t have the stomach to continue it, especially considering that

the rationale for fighting the war seemed less coherent than, say, in World War II when the Axis declared war on the United States. We now know that this idea of TV flipping opinion against the war is hogwash. If you track public opinion about the war, both in the mass media and in the civilian population, what you will find is that the media as a whole turned against the war, editorially, only *after* the public had begun to swing from hawks to doves. In other words, the media as an institution are conservative, not daring to take stands that would antagonize their subscribers and advertisers. No, what turned public opinion against the war, more than anything else, was the rising body count and the failure to articulate a clear path to victory and peace. Nevertheless, out of the Vietnam War there arose in some corners of the military — particularly at the level of lieutenants, captains, and majors, who later became generals, such as Norman Schwarzkopf — that the media lost the war, and therefore should be kept on a tight leash in future conflicts. We saw this in Grenada, in Panama, and in the first Gulf War. On the flip side, the media developed a strong sense of skepticism about the U.S. military and government in Vietnam. They could see with their own eyes what was happening in the field, and then they would hear contrary information from the official spokesmen. Given the two versions, they trusted what they witnessed themselves.

I also think we have to link the rise of New Journalism to the Vietnam War and the counterculture movement it helped birth. When I taught journalism history to undergraduate honors students, I had them read Michael Herr's book, *Dispatches*, taken from his *Esquire* articles, to get a feel for the way New Journalism altered the traditional rules of reporting in order to provide a truer feel for the war.

I like James Landers' *The Weekly War*, in which he traces popular support for the war vs. news magazines' support for the war, and demonstrates that the magazines followed instead of led. Daniel C. Hallin's *The Uncensored War* is a favorite of mine.

**Pach:** I think Hallin's work has shaped this area of media history to a great extent. Especially important were his arguments connecting news coverage to the spheres of consensus, legitimate controversy, and deviance and his rebuttal of the argument that the media was somehow responsible for the U.S. defeat in Vietnam. Also important have been William Hammond's two volumes for their detailed analysis based on extensive archival research about military media relations. I still think that Michael Arlen's concept of "living room war" — the title of his book of essays written as TV critic for the *New Yorker* — is fundamentally important.

In addition, I believe my own work in a series of articles and book chapters has advanced two important themes. The first is that TV reporting of the war was far more insightful — and critical — of U.S. policies than many contemporaries and some scholars have thought. Superb journalism during 1965-66 by reporters such as John Laurence, Morley Safer, Ron Nessen, and Dan Rather, among others, showed that heavy firepower didn't necessarily translate into battlefield success and pacification programs suffered from many deficiencies. They also showed that despite the optimistic, misleading, or mendacious statements from the Johnson administration, the war was difficult and deadly and that U.S. policies, at times, weren't working. Of course, there was also quite favorable reporting of the U.S. war effort during these first years of U.S. combat involvement. I think, though, it's wrong to assert that TV reporting didn't begin to have a critical edge until 1967.

The other theme I've developed in my work is the extent to which Johnson and then Nixon saw television as the crucial medium that would shape public understanding of the war. Their views rested on the belief that a visual medium had more profound effects on public understanding — and emotions — than print media. Johnson thought TV was so important that he concluded by 1967 that the war would be won or lost in American living rooms. He admonished aides to "sell our prod-

uct” and “get a better story to the American people.” The Progress Campaign during the last half of 1967 aimed at using TV to persuade the American people that the war wasn’t a stalemate and the United States was achieving its goals in Vietnam. Nixon demanded that his aides use even more elaborate tactics to challenge the credibility of Vietnam reporting while using television himself to provide direct “un-filtered” public messages aimed at building popular support for administration Vietnam policies.

**Landers:** Scant recent research exists about Vietnam era journalism. For perspective about news practices and values during the Vietnam era a useful resource is Herbert Gans, *Deciding What’s News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time* (Vintage Books, 1980). In addition to those mentioned above, scholarship about news media performance during the Vietnam era includes Lawrence W. Lichty, “Comments on the Influence of Television on Public Opinion,” *Vietnam as History: Ten Years After the Paris Peace Accords* (Wilson Center, 1984); and Clarence R. Wyatt, *Paper Soldiers: The American Press and the Vietnam War* (W.W. Norton, 1993). Scholarship about discourse analysis includes Lisbeth Lipari, “Journalistic Authority: Textual Strategies of Legitimation,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 73 (Winter 1996): 821-34; and Douglas M. McLeod and J.K. Hertog, “The Manufacture of Public Opinion by Reporters: Informal Cues for Public Perceptions,” *Discourse and Society* 3 (1992): 259-75.

**Rabe:** How has the field changed since you began doing your own work?

**Landers:** Quantitative analysis has become dominant. Consequently, qualitative scholarship is more difficult to publish. Qualitative scholarship has merit because it provides cultural and social context to infor-

mational media performance. What are some of the newer ideas to emerge from recent scholarship? Although tangential, recent scholarship about attitudes and values among journalists can provide useful context concerning contemporary informational media presentations and processes — because much information available to the public, whether from social media, websites, or standard media originated from journalistic presentations and is merely relayed rather than produced.

**Pach:** The field has changed partly because the more recent wars — especially Iraq and Afghanistan — have changed military-media relations and, in some ways, made Vietnam seem an even more pivotal event in war coverage even as it recedes into the past. For decades — and maybe still today — Vietnam was a generic term for another failed war or another conflict in which the United States could become deeply involved with no clear exit strategy. Was Nicaragua or Iraq or Afghanistan likely to become “another Vietnam?” Those damning words, though, applied in another way. In the minds of many government or military officials concerned with media relations, Vietnam was the negative paradigm — the war during which uncensored coverage undermined public support on the home front. As a result, our perspectives on Vietnam have changed whether or not we accept the argument that critical reporting was a significant factor in eroding popular support for the war. The putative “lessons” of Vietnam have shaped thinking about military-media relations, war reporting, and media bias for a half century. Any scholar who studies media coverage of the war in 2018 does so in a very different context than someone who worked two or three decades earlier.

What’s also new — or, at least, newer — are theories about how media organizations operate. I’m no expert in this field. I’m a contemporary U.S. historian who studies TV coverage of Vietnam, not a jour-

nalism historian or organizational sociologist. That said, I've found some theories about how news organizations operate, particularly those that emphasize, the commonalities, even homogeneity, of reporting not very useful. My own work has made me appreciate how reporters working for the same news organization could have remarkably different views about the war that produced very different perspectives in their reporting. For example, John Laurence and Don Webster both reported from Vietnam for CBS, but their reporting showed fundamentally different views of the war.

What's also changed is the number of memoirs from TV reporters who covered Vietnam. Individuals produced those reports from Vietnam that appeared on the evening newscasts, and we have more information about how they did so and how they saw the war. While there are many fine personal reminiscences, none is better than John Laurence, *The Cat from Hue*.

**Sweeney:** I think there is a broader emphasis on what is worthy of historical investigation. We have gone beyond the American military presence and how it was portrayed. Scholars have expanded into sources from fresh points of view, such as from Soviet archives opened after the fall of the USSR, and from the lives of ordinary soldiers.

I think Fredrik Logevall's books, *Embers of War* and *Choosing War*, are important for expanding the parameters of investigation and for asking new questions (was the war avoidable?).

I like Chester Pach's work. He has looked at the true impact of television on public opinion and diplomacy in the war. We have seen this in detail with regard to LBJ, but Dr. Pach has examined the ways in which television reports on the war undermined public opinion of Richard Nixon's presidency and helped launch Nixon's anti-press assaults of the early 1970s.

I also am enamored with Meredith Lair's work in her book *Armed*

## Historical Roundtable: Mass Media and the Vietnam War

*with Abundance*. This is bottom-up history, based on interviews with soldiers in non-combat roles, whose memories of Vietnam are more about a vacation with swimming pools and ice cream than the nightmare seen in the mass media.

**Rabe:** How has access to new archives or other research material affected the field in recent years?

**Pach:** The availability of personal paper collections of journalists has allowed us to know much more of what it was like to cover this war and how individual journalists saw their work. Also beneficial is the online availability of the NBC reporting on the web site of the Vanderbilt Television News Archive. (If only it were possible to gain the same access to the ABC and CBS reporting.) For me, what has been especially valuable is the opening of U.S. government records and the files or papers of individual policy makers concerned with Vietnam in the Johnson and Nixon administrations. It usually takes decades for the release of these records and papers. The Nixon material took longer because of litigation involving the Nixon family and estate. Having those records, however, has made it possible to see how high government officials viewed TV coverage of the war and how they devised policies to build public support during the first television war.

**Landers:** Digitalization of news presentations from the Vietnam era and archival material has made access incredibly easy. My research conducted from 1997 to 2010 required expenses for travel and photocopying, and many days on the road. Later research included digitalized resources.

**Rabe:** How do you see the contribution that your own work has made to our understanding of this subject?

**Sweeney:** My work pales in comparison with those scholars who dig deeply into primary sources on Vietnam. My greatest depth of understanding lies primarily in the history of censorship, and certainly there are lessons to be learned when comparing World War II and Vietnam. Overall, I think of my work as broad synthesis and comparison, for a lay audience.

**Landers:** My scholarship examined development of news sources by journalists during the Vietnam era, explained the procedures of reporter assignments and newsgathering, and analyzed the role of editors at *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *U.S. News & World Report* within an economic and organizational framework. Another component was establishing direct responses or consequences by government policymakers to articles published by newsmagazines. Also, my work focused on describing the demographics of the intended audience to define the readership of newsmagazine articles rather than to speculate about effects. Audience demographics are essential to the study of media presentations.

**Pach:** In addition to what I've already said above, my own work has aimed at moving the debate over TV coverage away from the issue of how TV coverage affected public support for the war. I think this is an unanswerable question. We lack good data to know the overall effects on TV reporting on public opinion. I think there's enough evidence to make a plausible argument that TV coverage wasn't the main cause of the decline in public approval of the U.S. military effort. There are too many other good reasons why the public became weary of the war — the tenuous connection between Vietnam and U.S. national security, the costs and length of U.S. combat involvement, and especially the inability to achieve meaningful victory or success. Beyond, though, arguing that media coverage didn't win the war, it's hard to draw conclusions about how it affected public thinking. There's precious little polling data

about public reactions to TV coverage of Vietnam.

In my own writing, I've concentrated on analyzing how high U.S. officials viewed TV coverage of the war and shaped policies based on their reactions. There's plenty of information about what Johnson and Nixon thought about Vietnam reporting and how they were highly conscious of fighting a war that was covered extensively on TV. It seems to me that we can learn much more from studying how presidents and their top advisors understood what it meant to fight a war covered extensively on TV than we can in engaging in unresolvable debates about the effects of TV coverage on the public.

**Rabe:** What challenges have you faced as you've engaged in research and writing on this topic during your career?

**Pach:** Among the biggest challenges have been gaining access to the network coverage of the war before Aug. 5, 1968, the date when the Vanderbilt TV News Archive began recording the evening news programs. The Johnson White House didn't systematically record the evening newscasts. The best source is the "DOD kinescopes" — the films in the National Archives of selections of the network nightly newscasts. The kinescoping began in August 1965 because of Morley Safer's famous Cam Ne report. The kinescopes include much, but not all, the stories related to Vietnam. Some stories that aren't in the kinescopes are reports of antiwar demonstrations that didn't involve U.S. government facilities or programs, such as local draft boards, military bases, or ROTC programs. Also missing are some reports concerning war-related politics in Vietnam. Filling in those gaps has been a real challenge.

**Landers:** Initially, peer reviewers and journal editors were not receptive to qualitative research that emphasized discourse analysis and

“journalistic” (anecdotal) interviews with newsmagazine correspondents and editors. The absence of prior scholarship about the newsmagazines during the Vietnam era apparently concerned peer reviewers and journal editors, too.

**Rabe:** What can a journalist covering military conflict today learn by reading about the history of the media during the Vietnam War?

**Sweeney:** The biggest lesson of the war is the need to rely on one’s own eyes and ears. The Vietnam War rightfully taught journalists to be skeptical of authority. This is a lesson that must be relearned with each generation. I think the war also taught journalists that the rules about how to cover combat evolve — sometimes dramatically — from war to war. To that end, a journalist going to war should limit as much as possible any preconceived idea of what the conflict is like on the ground, and how to best go about reporting it. Covering war is a game in which the rules change while you play.

**Landers:** Critics of news media during the Vietnam era lamented the emphasis on drama and conflict, which remain values for most informational media presentations; contemporary scholarship should determine whether appropriate economic, political, and social context is absent or present. Also, news media during the Vietnam era were reliant upon official sources and “establishment” experts, meaning those who endorsed anticommunist policies formulated by the U.S. government; contemporary practitioners must identify sourcing for informational media, and also must differentiate between named and anonymous sources. Finally, we must all be aware of the presence or absence of advocacy within informational media presentations.

**Pach:** A journalist can learn the importance of good writing. There are

so many powerful images that came from the war and so much memorable film. But the best film reports succeeded not mainly because of the video but because of the script. Many, if not most, of the best network TV correspondents in Vietnam had either worked in print media or radio. They knew how to write; they were skilled at reaching audiences. Pictures don't speak for themselves. The best Vietnam reporting on TV came from correspondents who knew how to communicate. Even in our "post-literate" age, writing matters.

The other thing they might learn is the importance of knowing about the nation, the people, and the culture about which they're reporting. That depth of knowledge made for better war reporting.

**Rabe:** What work remains to be done? Are there still unanswered questions and important gaps in the literature?

**Landers:** Vietnam era media have been adequately examined. Unexamined are similarities or differences between informational media presentations then and now; in other words, is advocacy of a different sort now a component of informational media? Are there still unanswered questions and important gaps in the literature? Manipulation by government and military remains relevant because manipulation still occurs, although from various sources beyond government and military.

Scholars should also make every effort to interview reporters who covered the war. Nearly a half-century has passed and many journalists, if not most, who reported about the Vietnam era are dead — but not all are; also, numerous journalists wrote first-person memoirs about their experiences, available from a variety of archives.

Finally, comparisons between Vietnam-era and contemporary manipulative efforts affecting informational media would be a contribution.

**Pach.** I agree. To my knowledge, there's not nearly enough work on how Vietnam was covered in other nations. There's also not sufficient literature on TV reporting of the war after the departure of U.S. combat troops in 1973 and the fall of Saigon in April 1975. I'd also like to see more about how media reporting of the war affected U.S. service personnel, both those in Vietnam and those stationed elsewhere. Finally, I hope there's still room for a detailed overview of TV's Vietnam and its effects on the Johnson and Nixon administrations. I've written ten articles on various dimensions of this broad subject. I've now gone back to using them as the foundation for a book, *The First Television War: TV News, the White House, and Vietnam*. I hope my colleagues will find it a worthy addition to the scholarly literature.

**Rabe:** Thank you for your time. This has been extremely informative. Good luck with the various projects you are all pursuing.

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## Historian Interview: Debbie van Tuyll ©



van Tuyll

Debbie van Tuyll, who teaches at Augusta University, is author or editor of six books. Her most recent work is *The Confederate Press in the Crucible of the American Civil War*. Her book *Knights of the Quill: Confederate Correspondents and Their Civil War Reporting*, for which she served as co-editor, was a finalist for the AEJMC Tankard Award in 2011. She has twice received awards for her research presented at the annual Symposium on the 19th Century Press, Civil War, and Free Expression. She has served as head of the AEJMC History Division and is a member of the Board of Directors of the American Journalism Historians Association. She received her Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina.

**Q:** *Tell us a little about your family background — where you were born and grew up, your education, and so forth.*

**van Tuyll:** My parents were both from farming families in southeastern Arkansas. My father received an associate's degree in auto mechanics after serving in the Marines during World War II. He raced cars and motorcycles to make money during college. My mother put a stop to that when they got married. My mother did not go to college; she thought college was a waste of money for girls, I suspect because that's what her family taught her. Her two brothers were college graduates,

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but none of the girls went to college. However, my father was persuasive; he believed the world had changed sufficiently that anyone who wanted to succeed in life needed an education beyond high school.

I was born in Jackson, Mississippi, but moved to Columbus, Ohio, when I was about six weeks old. We lived in Columbus for five years — my memories are mostly of building igloos in the snow. When I was 5, we moved to Birmingham, Alabama, where we stayed until the summer before my senior year in high school. That summer, we moved to Williamsport, Maryland. I thought my life was ending; there was a boy.... Anyway, the move ended up being the best thing that could ever have happened to me. My senior English teacher truly awoke the writing skills I'd been messing with since I was 8 and a semi-colon made me realize that I wanted to be a writer (another story for another day). I was anticipating being a fiction writer. So, I majored in English at the University of Montevallo, planning to teach high school English and write fiction.

However, I discovered that I despised teaching high school English, and fortunately, I had worked for school newspapers ever since I'd moved to Maryland. I'd also run into a problem with the "charismatic young educator" (as the head of the board of trustees referred to him) who was in his first year as president at Montevallo. I was working on a story that he didn't want to get out, and I knew I didn't want to pursue a career in journalism until I knew more about what my rights and responsibilities were. I'd met and been awed by Marian Huttenstine, who taught law at the University of Alabama, at a student press gathering, and so I went to Alabama to get my master's with an emphasis in law.

Master's students then had to choose between three core cognates: law, history, and theory. No way was I going to do theory. So I did end up taking Charles Arrendale's history class and writing a history of *Southern Living* magazine. That was an interesting experience in that

*Southern Living* absolutely did not want to cooperate by giving me access to their archives. Someone, I want to say at a Midwestern university, had just written a master's thesis that raked them over the coals for running KKK ads during their early years of publication, and they were gun-shy. So I just went to the Birmingham public library and read all of the magazines there.

**Q:** *What did you do professionally before going into teaching?*

**van Tuyll:** I started my career working for John Roberts, at one time Alabama's version of William Allen White, at the *Robertsdale (Ala.) Independent*. I covered six city councils, the school board, and the county commission, as well as serving as agriculture editor (I chose that over editing the women's page; I didn't want to deal with brides and their mothers. I figured fishermen and farmers were a better choice). I loved working at that paper because I learned almost everything there was to know about putting out a newspaper. I did photography and darkroom work, typesetting and layout, as well as writing and editing.

Robertsdale is just up the road from Gulf Shores, which is where the Alabama Press Association used to hold its annual meeting, and just after the 1980 meeting, I got a call from an editor at the *Decatur (Ala.) Daily*, asking if I'd like to apply for a job there. He'd seen a profile I'd written about a retiring county judge and had been impressed with my work. Decatur was closer to home, and the job paid better than the *Independent*. So I said sure. Within a month, I'd moved from the Gulf Coast to the Tennessee River Valley in north Alabama, and I was assigned the Lawrence County beat. That was a great beat for a young reporter. I covered everything that happened in the county, and for a small county that was made up mostly of a national forest, a whole lot went on there. In my two years at that paper, I covered a tar and feathering, the gang murder of a retarded man, the Ku Klux Klan, a serial killer who escaped

from prison and ran rampage through the county, a *Deliverance*-type deer hunter prosecution, an impeachment trial, a copyright-piracy trial, and even a school official who was stealing milk money.

My newspaper career ended when I got married and moved to Texas with my new husband. I looked for a newspaper job, but there was only one paper in town, and a PR job opened up on the Texas A&M University campus at the Texas Engineering Experiment Station. I worked there for four years as a general PR practitioner, doing everything from design to writing to helping translate Engineeringese into English for grant proposals. The most interesting proposal I ever worked on was one for a plant-based life-support system for the space station.

*Q: Where, and what courses, have you taught?*

**van Tuyll:** I've taught at Union College in Barbourville, Ky., Augusta University, University of South Carolina at Aiken, and once as an adjunct at the University of South Carolina. I've taught the full array of journalism and public relations skills courses; communication theory (when I finally had to take it as a Ph.D. student, I loved it!); media law and ethics; media history; and research methods. Because of the way the honors program works at Augusta University, I've also had the opportunity to co-teach courses in the press and war, medievalisms in popular culture, and music as a means of communication.

*Q: Tell us about your background in history — When did you first get interested in historical research? How did your education prepare you to be a historian?*

**van Tuyll:** I came to history late. When I was teaching at USC-Aiken, I had a student who wanted to do a paper on something connected to the

Civil War. I suggested she write about how the *Augusta Chronicle* covered Sherman's March to the Sea. She didn't want to read six weeks' worth of newspapers. So she chose another topic. However, one day, I was in the library with some time to spare. So I slipped into the microfilm room and pulled out the *Chronicle*. By the time I was done, I was hooked. When I started my Ph.D. a couple of years later, I'd initially thought I was going to do a dissertation on media management, but those Sherman stories kept tugging at me. Also, at the time, AU was a teaching school, and there really wasn't anyone to team up with to do social scientific research, as seemed to be the norm. So, I decided history might be a better choice since I was going to be a "lone wolf" of sorts.

I had the advantage of having so many outstanding mentors along the way. At the University of South Carolina, I worked with Ronald Farrar, who was my dissertation director, and Thomas Brown, who was the Southern historian on my committee. I got contradictory advice sometimes, but between the two of them, I think they crafted me into at least a competent historian. Along the way, I attended the AJHA Southeast Symposium and saw a woman there who looked vaguely familiar. The more I looked at her, the more I became convinced she was Susan Thompson, a former colleague at the *Decatur Daily* and student in one of the Media Law classes for which I was a teaching assistant at Alabama. She was working on her Ph.D. at Alabama and introduced me to her mentor, David Sloan, who also took me under his wing and opened so many doors for me. Also as a graduate student, I started attending the annual Symposium on the 19th Century Press, Civil War, and Free Expression in Chattanooga. The conference organizer, David Sachsman, has been another invaluable mentor, as others who attend (or attended) the conference have been, including the late Dwight Teeter (Tennessee) and Gene Wiggins (Southern Mississippi), Barbara Strauss Reed (Rutgers), and Hazel Dicken-Garcia (Minnesota).

*Q: Who or what have been the major influences on your historical outlook and work?*

**van Tuyll:** In an inverse way, Hinton Helper, Frederic Hudson, and Frank Mott were major influences. Each of these authors made claims about the antebellum and Confederate press that contradicted what I was seeing when I read the actual newspapers. As I could find no evidence that they'd ever looked at any Southern newspapers, I decided the record needed to be set straight. Tom Brown at USC was a major influence in my thinking about how journalism history and history fit together, as was his graduate school classmate, Jeff Pasley. Jeff wrote an excellent book (*Tyranny of Printers*) on the early party press that really influenced my thinking about the connection between politics and the press up through the Civil War. David Nord and John Nerone and their work on communities of journalism and the place of news organizations within communities also were key to shaping my interpretation of the Confederate press.

*Q: What are the main areas or ideas on which you concentrate your historical work?*

**van Tuyll:** My earliest work focused exclusively on the Southern press in the antebellum and Civil War periods. I've expanded to some new areas lately, including the earliest Irish-American press and transnational journalism history, which looks at the flow of journalists, journalism practices, technologies, etc., without regard to national boundaries.

*Q: Summarize for us the body of work — books, journal articles, and so forth — that you have done related to history.*

**van Tuyll:** I've published (as author, editor, co-author, or co-editor) six

## Historian Interview

books. Most of them — such as my most recent ones, *Journalism in the Fallen Confederacy* and *The Confederate Press in the Crucible of the American Civil War* — are about the press and the Civil War. In the last ten years, I've also written about fifteen research articles and book chapters.

**Q:** *Of the books you have written, from which ones did you get the most satisfaction?*

**van Tuyll:** The most satisfying book I've been involved with was the history of WGAC radio station in Augusta. Students in my undergraduate journalism history course wrote the book with the help of a WGAC reporter, Scott Hudson (a former student). He and I edited it, found a publisher, and published it. It won the best book on Georgia history award from the Georgia Department of History and Archives. I was so excited to see the students really work so hard on this project and meet such success.

**Q:** *We realize that it is difficult to judge one's own work — and that the most accomplished people are often the most modest — but if you had to summarize your most important contributions to the field of JMC history, what would they be?*

**van Tuyll:** There will likely be those who disagree with me, but I think my most significant contribution has been opening up discourse on the Confederate press. Before Ford Risley, a few others, and I started writing about the Southern press, most of the literature dealt only with the Northern press. When the Southern press was addressed at all, it was usually done so without proper research or academic dispassion. It's a difficult area to write about — there are scholars who don't think anything should be studied regarding the Confederacy (you should see

some review comments I've gotten over the years). What they're overlooking is that the Confederacy is the only example America has of how a domestic war influences the press. The press of the Revolutionary war was insufficiently developed and too small to give a good look at the questions of how war affects the press.

*Q: As you look back over your career, if you could do anything differently, what would it be?*

**van Tuyll:** I would have liked to work with doctoral students. Augusta University only has an undergraduate program, and my husband is a tenured history professor here. So it really didn't make sense for us to try to move elsewhere. I've channeled my desire to work on research with students, though, into getting undergraduates involved in research, some of which has been pretty exciting.

*Q: Tell us about your "philosophy of history" (of historical study in general or of JMC history in particular) or what you think are the most important principles for studying history.*

**van Tuyll:** Succinctly: Eschew present-mindedness. Nothing annoys me more than listening to someone opine about those who lived in earlier times while holding them to contemporary standards. Historians must take their subjects as they were — warts and all. Or no warts and all. This is especially relevant for those of us who work in the area of Confederate journalism history at the present time. Many of our readers — many other scholars even — like to think of the Confederacy as a monolith. It was anything but that. There was an active peace movement, an opposition press (which is my favorite to study); the vice president of the Confederacy led the peace movement! Try to imagine something like that happening today! The Confederacy and the Confederate

press are worthy of study, despite the fact that they both supported slavery. That, in and of itself, makes them worth studying. I'm convinced, as I wrote in an article for Mary Cronin's latest book, *An Indispensable Liberty*, that slavery is the reason white southerners were so intent on protecting their own freedoms. The explanation for that is long, and I know Mary would like to sell a few more books. So I'm not going into the argument here, but slavery is inimical to the Confederacy, and to its journalism. There are more slaves in the world today than at any time previously. If we understand one slave society and its press, that might give us insight into those that are burgeoning today.

*Q: How would you evaluate the quality of work being done today in JMC history — its strengths and weaknesses?*

**van Tuyl:** Research in journalism history has advanced tremendously in the twenty years I've been involved in it. So much of the earlier work focused on how events, ideas, etc., were covered, and did not really address the history of journalism as a thing in and of itself. I think David Nord's work on communities of journalism, which brought readers into the equation, was one important mile-marker in that it helped us get past thinking about journalists and their work as the only topics available for study. I also think those researchers who have been influenced by the history of the book approach have made valuable contributions by looking at production and business models, reading practices, and circulation/distribution methods. That sort of information is harder to ferret out, but it's out there (to a greater/lesser degree, depending on the time period), and it gives us a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of journalism in whatever period we're studying.

One of the greatest weaknesses (and I know I'm prejudiced) is that most journalism historians focus on the 20th century and later. The

journalism of the 20th century was an anomaly in press history. Objectivity, the mass press, those were flukes. If you take a longer look at journalism history, you realize that news is inherently partisan and that, for the most part, ordinary citizens either did not have time to care about news or preferred entertainment.

*Q: What do you think we in JMC history need to be doing to improve the status of JMC history in (1) JMC education and (2) the wider field of history in general?*

**van Tuyll:** So, this may sound strange, but I think the best thing we can do to improve the status of JMC history in education is to ensure we have undergraduates engaged in journalism history research. And you don't necessarily have to do that through a traditional journalism history class. Last academic year, I taught our undergrad research class. I have two students from that class who got interested enough in journalism history research that they're going on a research trip to the American Antiquarian Society with me. I've got five students from my fall journalism history course presenting at the Southeastern AJHA Symposium, and I've got another three from a class in academic publishing I'm teaching who are going to the symposium to talk about the "back side" of research — what happens once you've finished your paper and send it off for publication. I think we can improve JMC history education by realizing that it may be better to do it outside the classroom than inside. That said, I do realize a certain base of knowledge is required, but teaching moments will come up where you'll have the opportunity to do that. This approach requires a bit of courage, I think, and a bit of deciding what's more important — that the students know the dates the Alien and Sedition Acts were passed or that they're reading the Acts and the letters from Federalist politicians who're basically saying the laws were needed to keep immigrants from [the 18th centu-

ry equivalent of “s\*\*\*hole”] countries from polluting American shores?

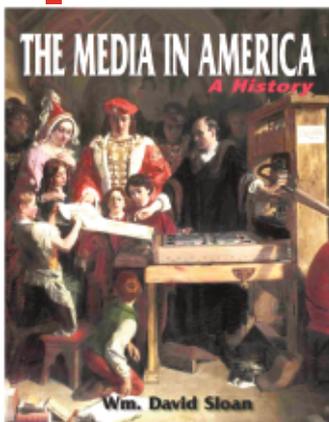
So, I think in general, we need to be getting students involved in doing history rather than studying history. The doing will get them interested in studying — or that’s been my experience. Yes, there may be some gaps in their knowledge, but you’d get that, anyway, in a traditionally taught course.

*Q: What challenges do you think JMC history faces in the future?*

**van Tuyl:** I hate to say it, but I suspect our greatest challenge is going to be proving the relevance of our work as journalism historians and keeping our field of study within the mass comm discipline. With the rise of new media, the continuing demise of legacy media, and the decline in history in K-16, it’s getting harder and harder to justify why anyone ought to care about how the Civil War influenced newspapers and vice versa. I fear those kinds of topics may become the domain of history departments rather than journalism departments. Should that come to pass, we’ll lose an important perspective — that of scholars who are trained to understand and assess the role and influence of the press on society, which means our understanding of journalism history will be diminished.

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## Book Award Interview: Richard K. Popp ©



Popp

Richard “Rick” Popp won the American Journalism Historians Association’s award for the year’s outstanding book in 2013 for *The Holiday Makers: Magazines, Advertising, and Mass Tourism in Postwar America*. He teaches mass communication at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee.

**Q:** Give us a brief summary of your book.

**Popp:** *The Holiday Makers* looks at the role magazines played in selling tourist travel in post-World War II America. It goes into the greatest depth on *Holiday*, a travel-themed glossy the Curtis Publishing Company launched in 1946, but more generally the book explores how midcentury photo-magazines marketed tourism, not just in terms of showcasing destinations, but also by promoting the general idea that travel was something people could do to improve themselves and make the world a better place. This was an era when many people expected a truly mass market to develop for long-distance vacation travel. So the amount of travel advertising Americans saw, and the sophistication behind it, grew by leaps and bounds. But this was also an era that saw the emergence of the United Nations and the rise of the Cold War. So there were a lot of politicized meanings — on both the left and the right — that could be projected onto travel. It could

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symbolize the prospects of a more connected, humane, and cosmopolitan world. Or in other cases, it could be used as a tool in the cultural Cold War — symbolizing something like the freedom of mobility or the high standard of living offered in the capitalist west. Sometimes, people managed to wrap all of the above together.

*Q: How did you get the idea for your book?*

**Popp:** Here, I really have to thank Carolyn Kitch, my advisor at Temple University, who pointed me toward *Holiday* and mentioned that no one had ever really looked at it closely. Talking with Carolyn, I had brought up travel as an interest because at the time I was taking some electives in the history department and ended up writing a historiographic essay on the history of tourism. I've always been interested in travel — especially foreign travel — and in the little bit I'd done, I was struck by the extent to which Americans abroad were seen as a kind of anomaly. People from the UK or Australia would actually commend you on venturing outside the US. I have a lot of relatives in England, all of whom are pretty much middle-class, and I'd also been struck by how much they traveled and how far abroad they went. So one thing I wondered was how and why that sort of international travel didn't become a core part of American consumer culture the way it had in places like the UK or Germany. When I started feeling out *Holiday* as a possible dissertation topic, it looked like a good way to try to answer part of that question by understanding how travel fit into mass marketing at a time when postwar consumer culture was taking shape.

*Q: Tell us about the research you did for your book — What were your sources, how did you research your book, how long did you spend, and so forth?*

**Popp:** Initially, I thought it might be possible to work from the Curtis Publishing Company papers, which were across town at the University of Pennsylvania. That's a big collection, but as it turned out there's not much in there from the early 1940s onward. Given that *Holiday* was launched in 1946, there wasn't much I could draw on. So, that really ruled out writing a straight history of the publication and forced me to take a different approach.

What I ended up doing was thinking about the magazine in terms of components. There was the publication itself, which came out of a pretty sophisticated development process. Some of the market research reports in the Curtis archive were pretty helpful here. What I really leaned on, though, was the contemporary marketing literature. Curtis's marketing research people were so linked in with the business-school world, especially marketing professors, that they did a lot of writing for that audience. That meant I was able to glean quite a bit of *Holiday*-specific material from articles in publications like the *Journal of Marketing*, as well as textbooks and trade articles written by people connected to Curtis.

In terms of any given issue of *Holiday*, it was made up of editorial and advertising pages. That's the case for any magazine, but in *Holiday*'s case that usually meant geographic profiles (usually a photo spread and a descriptive essay) and travel-oriented ads. *Holiday* generally worked with writers that were high-profile enough that their papers might end up in special collections somewhere. There were a good ten or twelve that I tracked down in WorldCat that, judging from the finding aids, appeared to have extensive documentation on stories written for the magazine or the back-and-forth with *Holiday*'s editors. It just so happened, and here I was really lucky, that about seven of the writers' papers were at the Harry Ransom Center for Humanities Research at the University of Texas-Austin. Aside from all being in one place, the group represented a nice cross section of the sort of writers that

*Holiday* tapped for stories. A few were highly successful, others you'd probably put in the category of frustrated working writers. Those collections gave a nice window into how and why the editors approached the authors they did, and after that how they tried to steer articles in certain directions. There was also a case study I found that *Holiday's* editors produced for journalism students at the University of Wisconsin in the late 1950s. It took a single issue and went into extensive detail on how it was planned and executed. So, in combination with the writers' collections, that gave me a pretty good sense of how the editorial material took shape. Also, the stacks at the University of Pennsylvania had a near complete run of *Holiday*. So I was able to spend a lot of time with the magazine itself — paging through issues, finding patterns, reading stories in depth, and so on.

Along with destination stories, it wasn't unusual to see editorials or articles that explored the social and cultural implications of tourist travel. This kind of commentary took a lot of forms, but it tended to treat paid vacations and mass tourism as emblematic of some larger social development: the birth of a more cosmopolitan world, the coming of a truly egalitarian nation, the possibilities of a post-work society, and so on. This was harder to get at through the archives. I dug up a few things in the Advertising Council papers at the John W. Hartman Center at Duke. By and large though, I relied on the articles themselves. I read and reread just about everything related to the "travel boom" that showed up in *Life*, *Look*, *Ebony*, *Collier's*, the *Saturday Review*, *American Magazine*, *Reader's Digest*, and the newsmagazines over the course of about two decades and looked for themes, narratives, and imagery that showed up over and over again.

On the advertising side, I lucked out because David Ogilvy was really the person most associated with postwar travel advertising and his papers are at the Library of Congress. Ogilvy produced a pair of very influential campaigns for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the

## Book Award Interview: The Holiday Makers

British Travel Association and both of them are extensively documented in the collection. These gave me a really good window into how different sorts of places were packaged and essentially turned into lures intended to attract American tourists. The trade press was also really helpful. Travel was seen as a fast-growing advertising sector of it. So there was a lot of coverage and quite a few detailed case studies in titles like *Ad Age* and *Printers' Ink*.

*Q: Besides the sources you used, were there any others you wish you had been able to examine?*

**Popp:** The main person behind *Holiday*, Ted Patrick, was a really fascinating figure. He had been a star copywriter on Madison Avenue in the 1930s and was heavily involved in the World Peaceways movement, which was a kind of shock advertising campaign aimed at exposing the horrors of war. Those politics definitely carried forward to *Holiday*, which devoted a lot of attention to the UN and ran several ambitious photo-essay series that were very similar in tone and objective to Edward Steichen's "Family of Man." I tried to track down any papers Patrick may have left somewhere and ultimately came up empty. He died fairly suddenly, and by that point was already a widower. So my guess is that they're just not out there. I also wish I'd been able to find a really good window into the photography in *Holiday*, which in many cases stole the show. The closest I could get was Eliot Elisofon's papers at the Harry Ransom Center. Elisofon wasn't a *Holiday* photographer, but he handled a lot of the travel-oriented photo spreads for *LIFE* and there was good material in there documenting some of those stories.

*Q. Based on your research for the book, what would you advise other historians in our field about working with sources?*

**Popp:** I wish I'd reached out to a few people to do interviews or oral histories. Roger Angell had been an editor at *Holiday* and he was still doing a lot of writing for the *New Yorker* when I was working on the project. Frank Zachary, who was *Holiday's* art director, was also still alive then. I'm sure that both would've offered really valuable insight on the magazine, the people involved, and the times as well. I think it's easy, especially when you're new at research, to just assume that people in the industry — especially really accomplished figures — will just say no. I know that's what I assumed, but I was probably just intimidated. Now, I wish I'd gotten in touch with them. Ultimately, I think it's worth stepping outside your comfort zone to try to gather that type of material.

**Q:** *What were the challenges you faced in researching your book?*

**Popp:** I was very lucky in that I didn't run up against too many. The travel, which a lot of times is the hardest thing to pay for, was really pretty easy. When I think back on it, the big thing was that when I traveled to archives, there were people I could stay with. I grew up in the DC area. So there were plenty of folks I could stay with when I was doing research at the Library of Congress. I also have a brother who lives in Austin. So I stayed with him when I went to the Harry Ransom Center. I also benefitted from being able to draw on several top-notch research libraries in Philadelphia. It was a little tougher in Louisiana, but the interlibrary-loan department at LSU was incredibly helpful and managed to get their hands on just about everything I ever asked for. The other big challenge tends to be time, but back then I had all the time in the world.

**Q:** *Is it possible to get too close to a research subject? How do historians maintain their neutrality of viewpoint when conducting and interpreting*

*research?*

**Popp:** I think it would be really hard to work on a project for years without having some kind of inherent interest in the topic. But at the same time, I've never tried to turn my deepest personal interests or concerns into research projects. I know plenty of folks who are very good at that, but for me it would make work a little too all-consuming. Since wrapping up *The Holiday Makers*, I've tried to build projects around material that for some reason or another strikes me as interesting and then figure out the social import of it. For me, it would be harder to do it the other way around. Either way, I think you have to stay very close to your sources. I think the most useful history describes some phenomenon in the contexts of its time, and I've tried to follow that model in my own work.

**Q:** *What new insights does your book provide?*

**Popp:** At the time, there was a lot of good work about tourism in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century America, but not much at all that looked at the midcentury decades. Inevitably, when you have a hole in the literature like that, there ends up being several people working on filling it at the same time. So, there were a couple of very good books that appeared while I was working on *The Holiday Makers*. Luckily, they didn't overlap much with my project. I think the reason for that is that my primary focus was on travel as a marketing phenomenon and I think that focus on media and advertising is what made it different.

I also think the book offered a new angle on postwar magazine publishing. There's always been a lot of good work on *LIFE*. David Abrahamson's book really covered the area of special-interest magazines, especially those published by the upstart publishing houses, very well. There's also really good work on the women's and men's maga-

zines in the postwar years. Most of that started appearing while I was working on *The Holiday Makers*. There wasn't much out there, though, about how the big, established publishers like Curtis and Time Inc. were moving in the same direction toward more specialized content and more narrowly-defined audiences with titles like *Holiday* and *Sports Illustrated*. So, in that way I think *The Holiday Makers* helped to fill in the picture some, in terms of how magazines fit into the broader postwar media landscape and the push toward a more fragmented media culture. Finally, I think it offers one of the more detailed looks at postwar advertising, in terms of describing the actual work that happened at agencies to produce specific campaigns. And because the book focuses on travel, it offers a pretty early look at how service sectors — which were beginning to surpass manufacturing — were translated into art and copy on Madison Avenue.

*Q: What findings most surprised you?*

**Popp:** There were two things that ended up surprising me quite a bit. For one, I was very surprised at how much enthusiasm surrounded foreign travel in late 1940s and 1950s America, which is often painted as a time of middle-class Americans turning inward and hunkering down in suburbia. The numbers of middle-income people traveling long distances to see London or Rome, or even New York City, never materialized in the numbers expected. But the idea of it — and more generally, the sense that ordinary people would not only have the money but the time necessary to explore the far-off places that had long fascinated them — really embodied the democratizing possibilities of a consumer society. The fact that it didn't work as imagined, also says something about the limitations of a "consumers' republic," to borrow Lizabeth Cohen's term.

The second thing that surprised me was how much of a blueprint

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postwar travel marketers put in place for many of the themes that would dominate late-twentieth-century marketing. People like David Ogilvy were among the first to emphasize the experiential nature of consumption — this trip is a life experience and it will have a transformative impact on you. Along the same lines, they were very early to arrive at authenticity as a primary theme. In the case of travel, that meant going off the beaten path to experience somewhere that was real, or outside the “artificiality” of mainstream consumer culture. Together, that idea of the “authentic experience” would be used to sell everything from shampoo to running shoes by the end of the century. In this sense, travel marketing was one of the first places, if not the first place, where you see a new vocabulary of distinction taking shape within American consumer culture.

***Q:** What advice would you give to people in our field who are considering doing a book in JMC history?*

**Popp:** The big thing, I'd say, is that it's really worth putting the time into getting to know an era extremely well. You end up having to read a lot of work that is pretty far afield from media history, but there really isn't any other way to get to know the social, cultural, and economic terrain in a nuanced way. And ultimately, it's out of that terrain that any media phenomenon worth studying takes shape. And similarly, I think if you had to prioritize one or the other, I think it's more worthwhile to focus on figuring out how a media phenomenon fit into its times, rather than how it fit into the broader evolution of a particular genre or industry. There's definitely great value to the latter, but when it takes priority it can lead to some pretty ahistorical arguments.

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