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The AJHA Margaret A. Blanchard Doctoral Dissertation Prize, established in 1997 and named in 2003, is awarded annually for the best doctoral dissertation on media history. Named in honor of the late Professor Margaret A. Blanchard of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill -- superb scholar and the source of guidance and inspiration for generations of doctoral students of journalism history -- the prize is accompanied by an honorarium of five hundred dollars. A two-hundred-dollar honorarium is awarded to each honorable mention.

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**2007 AJHA ANNUAL CONVENTION  
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# AMERICAN JOURNALISM HISTORIANS ASSOCIATION

## 2007 MARGARET A. BLANCHARD

### DOCTORAL DISSERTATION PRIZE

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#### PRIZE WINNER

Michael Stamm: "Mixed Media: Newspaper Ownership of Radio in American Politics and Culture, 1920-1952"

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#### HONORABLE MENTION AWARDEES

Butler Cain: "Contempt by Publication in Nineteenth Century America"

Director: David Sloan, University of Alabama

Juanita Darling: "When the Pen Becomes the Sword: The Mode of Information in Revolutionary Media"

Director: Lucila Vargas, University of North Carolina

John McMillian: "Smoking Typewriters: The New Left's Print Culture, 1962-1969"

Director: Alan Brinkley, Columbia University

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#### ABSTRACTS

Michael Stamm: "Mixed Media: Newspaper Ownership of Radio in American Politics and Culture, 1920-1952"

This dissertation traces the history of newspaper ownership of radio stations in the United States from 1920 to 1952. It attempts to demonstrate that radio was less a harbinger of modernity than it was a way for publishers to protect their businesses and expand their roles as the dominant purveyors of news and information. Radio's development was structured to a great degree by American newspapers, a significant fact largely overlooked by historians. Newspapers owned some of the most powerful and important stations in the 1920s and 1930s. By 1940, they owned almost a third of American radio stations, and they owned almost half of the first group of television stations in the early 1950s. This dissertation examines the broadcast ownership of large enterprises such as the Tribune Company, Hearst Newspapers, Scripps-Howard, and Gannett, and it balances this national story by looking at the numerous smaller communities around the United States where the sole newspaper became the sole radio station owner. Moving beyond this business history narrative, this dissertation also discusses how the newspaper-radio combination was understood in American politics and culture. The issue stimulated serious concern at all levels of the federal government, and regulatory proposals engendered heated debate.

Leading social scientists, intellectuals, broadcasters, and journalists were instrumental in shaping these policy debates. Ordinary Americans responded by writing thousands of letters to the Federal Communications Commission to voice their opinion and, more importantly, by forming groups to challenge the broadcast licenses of local newspapers. By combining these various perspectives—elite and popular, local and national—this dissertation provides a robust history of the American media in the first half of the twentieth century.

John McMillian: "Smoking Typewriters: The New Left's Print Culture, 1962-1969"

This dissertation addresses the cultural work that was accomplished by the New Left's printed materials—especially its underground newspapers. I argue that New Leftists created an ethos surrounding their publications that socialized people in to the Movement, fostered a spirit of mutuality among them, and raised their democratic expectations. Considering the obstacles confronting those who have attempted to build mass democratic movements in the United States, these were important tactical achievements. Additionally, this approach underscores the degree to which the political energy that fueled the Movement arose from the grassroots, as opposed to the national office of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) or the pageantry and intellectual ferment that accompanied the New Left rebellion in large cities. In this way, this dissertation is part of a larger revisionist effort to reassess the New Left from the techniques and methodologies of social history. Rather than chronicling the rise and fall of the New Left's print culture, this study uses illustrative examples and case studies to reveal the various ways that printed materials help to build and sustain the Movement.

Butler Cain: "Contempt by Publication in Nineteenth Century America"

The American legal system and the American press had a complex relationship during the Nineteenth Century. Perhaps nothing complicated that relationship more than the concept of contempt by publication. Judges could fine and jail publishers and editors whose publications questioned a court's authority or integrity. The concept placed two of America's most valued ideals—a free press and an independent judiciary—squarely at odds. Contempt by publication received considerable review in state (and a few federal) courts throughout the Nineteenth Century. Even though dozens of decisions established competing standards regarding a journalist's ability to report and comment on judicial proceedings, the number of cases suggests that this friction between the judiciary's perceived inherent power and the concept of press freedom was important enough to journalists and judges to warrant significant examination. The conflict between the courts, which reserved the right to punish for contempt any publication deemed disrespectful or prejudicial and the concept of freedom of the press, which promised anyone the right to publish without fear of government reprisals, represented an important struggle in America's development of a legal tradition for journalism.

Juanita Darling: "When the Pen Becomes the Sword: The Mode of Information in Revolutionary Media"

This study compares media use in three Mesoamerican rebellions—the Nicaragua revolution, the Salvadoran civil war, and the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico—waged under similar conditions over a twenty-year period. In all three cases the rebels used a variety of media, but one of those became the official or dominant medium. Each rebel group chose a notably different medium as the primary focus of its communication strategy. The purpose of this study is to understand how each rebel group used its respective primary communication medium and the possibilities and limitations that the choice offered as well as the demands it made. This study responds to separate calls for further work in two areas of research that this dissertation brings together: revolutionary media and Mark Poster's concept of the mode of information. In doing so, it considers the content of the media message, the technology that each group chose, and the way both producers and audience used the technology and the content. It places technology within the social and cultural situation in which it was used to understand the mode of information as a connection between producers and audience.