



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Willie R. Tubbs
Phone: (225) 936-8565
Email: wtubbs@uwf.edu
Written by Willie R. Tubbs

Augusta University's VanTuyll wins 2019 Kobre Award

The American Journalism Historians Association has announced Dr. Debra VanTuyll, professor in the Pamplin College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences Department of Communication at Augusta University, as the recipient of the 2019 Sidney Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement in Journalism History.

VanTuyll has been an important contributor to AJHA, having served as a member of the Board of Directors from 2005-2008 and 2016-present, the Convention and Sites Committee from 2005-2008, and a judge for AJHA's Book Award competition from 2003-2004.

She has worked as editor or member of the editorial board for publications that include the Southeastern Review of Journalism History, Journalism History, and Historiography in Mass Communication; and as program chair, vice-head, secretary, and newsletter editor for AEJMC's History Division.

VanTuyll, who has presented research papers at 13 AJHA National Conventions, began her association with AJHA through the Southeast Symposium, a conference for graduate and undergraduates to present their original research to an audience of peers and faculty.

"I'll never forget it because there was a gathering Friday night," VanTuyll said, "and as I looked around the room, I saw a woman who looked familiar but who I couldn't place. I think she was looking at me, too, and we finally figured out that she and I had been reporters together at the Decatur (Ala.) Daily and very good friends there -- but that had been nearly 16 years previously, and we'd lost touch.

"That was Susan Thompson, who was then a Ph.D. student at Alabama studying with David Sloan. She introduced me to him that night, and we realized that I had just missed studying with him by about two years -- I'd done my master's work at Alabama and studied history with Dr. Charles Arendale, but Dr. Arendale left Alabama and went to UT-Arlington the same year I finished my master's."

VanTuyll, who now serves as an organizer for the Southeast Symposium, attended her first AJHA National Convention in 2002 and has remained a fixture on the national scene ever since.

In her distinguished career, VanTuyll has made major contributions to the field of media history, particularly the area of transnational journalism.

"Well, as you can imagine, the Southeastern Symposium was my first touch-point, and that was back when David Sloan, Wally Eberhardt, and Leonard Teel were almost always there," VanTuyll recalls. "They were all amazing mentors -- in different ways, but important ways. But they all encouraged me to get involved at the national level.

"I really didn't think at that time my work had a chance of getting accepted. When I'd gone back to do my Ph.D., I'd been teaching for a decade, and the thing that really scared me was having to do research. I didn't know whether I could or not. I'd watched my husband do his dissertation and then continue his research agenda as a young assistant and then associate professor. I just didn't know if I could dig in like I saw him doing. Well, actually, I didn't know if I could even come up with ideas for research projects. Luckily, that proved easier than I thought it would be. In fact, I have a whole file of ideas, many of which I suspect I'll never get to. Too many other opportunities come up in the course of making other plans -- to sort of bastardize John Lennon's famous saying."

VanTuyll will be formally recognized during the 38th Annual AJHA Convention, which will take place Oct. 3-5 in Dallas.

“I’m beyond honored to be included in such a distinguished list of people who have done so much to further our field,” VanTuyll said. “I mean, I came up in awe of Peggy Blanchard, who directed my master's-level media law professor's dissertation; Barbara Cloud, who was editor of American Journalism when I first got active; David Nord, whose work on communities of journalism gave me the frame to make sense of the role of the Confederate press during the Civil War -- these, and the other people on the list are, in large measure, the people I was reading when I was a master's student, or later, a Ph.D. student.

“They were the ones, like Dr. Sloan, David Abrahamson, Ed Emery, Maurine Beasley -- I could include the entire list of previous winners -- who were held out as scholarly role models. More recently, as I've moved into the realm of transnational journalism history, Eugenia Palmegiano's work has been inspirational and a guide. I really can't believe my name is going on that list, too.”

Dr. Thomas A. Mascaro, a professor Bowling Green State University and chair of the AJHA Awards Committee, said VanTuyll's selection came on the heels of numerous strong recommendations.

“The range of voices celebrating and honoring the lifetime of service by Dr. VanTuyll was truly astonishing,” Mascaro said. “She was praised by very senior faculty and members of the AJHA as well as rising scholars. In addition to her long list of service accomplishments to the field of journalism history, Debbie has amassed an impressive record of research publications, including as author or editor of six books, 15 additional book chapters, 16 peer-reviewed journal articles, 39 refereed conference papers, and numerous invited publications.

“Dr. VanTuyll exemplifies a lifetime of service to our field and is a fitting member of those we have honored with the prestigious Sidney Kobre Award.”

The Sidney Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement in Journalism History is the American Journalism Historians Association's highest honor. The late Dr. Sidney Kobre was a renowned media historian who served as a professor at Florida State from the 1940s through the 1970s and penned 16 books in his career.

Founded in 1981, the American Journalism Historians Association seeks to advance education and research in mass communication history. Members work to raise historical standards and ensure that all scholars and students recognize the vast importance of media history and apply this knowledge to the advancement of society.

For more information on AJHA, visit <http://www.ajhaonline.org>.

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