

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

Understanding the history of mass communication is crucial to a well-rounded education. As the late *Washington Post* publisher Philip Graham said, "Journalism is the first draft of history." Many journalism and mass communication 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. All journalism and mass communication programs should commit to the teaching of history.

The American Journalism Historians Association is committed to promoting the creation and/or strengthening of courses and programs in mass communication history. These courses and programs should be rigorous and involve not only the teaching of historical facts but also research methods. 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 enter other careers that will likely require an understanding of media, it is important that they appreciate mass communication's role in society from a historical perspective.

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

1. All schools with a journalism or mass communication program should offer media history courses as part of the curriculum.
2. All schools should consider the study of history to be as essential as the study of practice, theory, or any other area.
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 achieve those objectives, the AJHA will track which programs offer courses in the history of journalism and mass communications, and it will encourage others to adopt the subject as part of their curricula. AJHA stands ready to assist schools interested in creating a course or a program in mass communication history.