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Inside Journalism

Columbia College Chicago

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Inside Journalism

Published by the Journalism Department of Columbia College

November 1996

Columbia welcomes Ed Planer

By Jesse Lebus

The room was jammed with coffee, croissants and people. Students snacked on doughnuts, sipped coffee and gossiped cheerfully. Heads of other departments at Columbia hovered close to the wall, talking among themselves, and a photographer drifted past, snacking on a bagel and casually taking pictures of the guest of honor.

The guest was the new journalism department chairman, and he was not going to let anyone slip through his fingers. "Hello, I'm Ed Planer," he said time and again. The greeting was followed by a sincere smile and a firm handshake. Shortly thereafter, Planer would be involved in a pleasant conversation, joking about the 13th floor men's bathroom or recounting stories of royal weddings.

If Ed Planer works as hard to improve the journalism department as he did to meet all the guests at his reception, the future looks hopeful. The former vice president of news coverage at NBC is working with the faculty to reassess the curriculum for the journalism department, install a news



Photo by Carolyn Otto

Ed Planer talks with senior Aliage Taqi.

wire from the Associated Press, and begin instruction in computer-assisted reporting.

"Students need to be familiarized with real-time reporting," Planer said. "A satellite hook-up and a wire feed from the Associated Press are two things journalism students deserve."

Though he admits he is computer illiterate, Planer knows that to survive in a world of growing technology, students must have as much computer training and knowledge as they can absorb. Planer also understands the importance of his relationships with Columbia students: "I would like to meet all the students at Columbia to see

what makes them tick."

Ed Planer started his career as a reporter at WDSU-TV in New Orleans in 1955, after graduating from Hobart College in Geneva, New York. Eleven years later, he moved up the ranks at WDSU to become vice president and director of news.

He stayed in New Orleans until 1972, when he was hired as a news director in Chicago at the NBC News affiliate, WMAQ-TV. Planer was in charge of hiring news reporters and producers and was responsible for starting the careers of such famous news personalities as Jane Pauley, Greg Gumbel and Pat O'Brien. It was also from Chicago that Planer was sent to cover his first royal wedding in London.

In 1976, he moved to New York to work for NBC News and stayed there for nine years, first working as the producer for the Today Show, then working as general manager and finally as vice president of news coverage. In 1986, Planer shift-

ed to London where he covered his second royal wedding and worked as the vice president for NBC in Europe and the Middle East. In London, Planer was the senior manager responsible for news coverage in the European and Middle Eastern bureaus and the liaison with broadcasters and governments in these regions.

In 1990, he moved back to Chicago to preside over Suburban News Source, a pilot project that would insert regionalized suburban news via cable into the newscasts of WMAQ-TV. From 1992 until 1995, Planer was an instructor at Northwestern University in the broadcast program. It was in 1996 that the former chairman of Columbia's journalism department, Nat Lehrman, retired, and after a national search, Columbia offered Planer the job.

Planer is also the author of a novel about television news called "Shattered Images." "Inside every journalist is a novelist waiting to get out," he said. Planer has had articles published in periodicals like the Journalism Review, The New York Times and Chicago magazine. He has lectured about television news at Ivy League schools as well as at Tulane and Loyola in New Orleans, and was a commentator on U.S. affairs for the BBC in London.

Planer met his wife, Marilyn, in New Orleans. They have been married 41 years and have three

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J-Students intern at DNC

By Bob Chiarito

While several students went out of town to intern this summer, many stayed home to cover an event that hasn't been here in Chicago for 28 years. The Democratic National Convention.

Most Columbia students who worked at the convention were pages, helpers who set up operations and ran errands for several media outlets, among them CBS, NBC and MSNBC, ABC, and Knight-Ridder Publications. The Columbia Chronicle also covered events in and around the convention, which took place Aug. 24-26.

Junior Robert Stevenson worked as a page for CBS, helping set up operations for national broadcast, a job he described as a paid internship.

"It is one step above an internship because you get

paid," Stevenson said. "Most of my duties consisted of working with the director of outside set-ups at the Sheraton in Chicago, where President Clinton stayed, and at the Park Ridge Hyatt."

For those who covered the convention from the inside, especially members of the Chronicle, getting close to the action was often a job in itself.

Chronicle editor John Biederman and advisor Jim Sulski said they had problems getting into the arena.

"We had yellow passes that let us inside the perimeter but not into

the actual arena. To get in, we wandered into private booths or turned our passes around so no one would notice."

"When Security asked me to leave, they usually told me the easiest way to get back in," Battaglia said. "As long as they knew you were only taking pictures, they were pretty understanding."

To enter many restricted areas, Chronicle photo editor Natalie Battaglia used her charm and good looks.

"When Security asked me to leave, they usually told me the easiest way to get back in," Battaglia said. "As long as they knew you were only taking pictures, they were pretty understanding."

While most students who worked for major news agencies got limited exposure to "real" journalism, sophomore Leon Tripplett started working as a runner for NBC and ended up as a field producer for MSNBC, the 24 hour cable news network owned by Microsoft and NBC.

"The best thing about field producing was getting a chance to sit in on MSNBC editorial meetings," Tripplett said. "I learned that nothing in broadcast journalism is planned; it's all about going out and doing it, making things happen."

At this year's Democratic National Convention, going out and "doing it" is exactly what many Columbia students did.

Planer

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children. One daughter is head of graphics and publishing at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas. Another daughter is a lawyer and a real estate agent, and his son works for CNN Headline News.

Sudden illness forced Planer to trim his hours early in his first semester here. Frustrating as this has

been, it has allowed him to spend some extra time on his main hobbies, reading and listening to records from his extensive jazz collection. One thing he does not enjoy, though, is waiting for the elevators in the South Michigan building.

"I'm still working on my strategy for getting up to the 13th with as little hassle as possible," Planer said.

Inside Journalism

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Inside Journalism is a student publication. The design was conceived by Carolyn Otto and Peter M. Verniere.

Chronicle editor goes Mad

By Roumiana Bankova

Shortly after John Biederman started his summer internship with *Mad* magazine in New York, an editor he had just met started tap-dancing on Biederman's desk. The managing editor, widow of the founder of *Mad*, walked around singing Smashing Pumpkins songs with an Ethel Merman voice. At *Mad*, there was no strict time schedule and no dress code. Biederman enjoyed sharing his wit, intelligence and ideas about jokes with *Mad*'s staff. In the process he discovered they are as professionally serious about what goes into print as any other publication.

"They will make fun of things in such a way that otherwise it might get you in trouble," said Biederman, "but when they get into politics, it amazes

me that they are always politically correct, even though the magazine is regarded as a very silly one. It is, in a way, but it also does have its own message.

People



might tend to think that the staff goes to work to screw around, joke around, and they do some of that, but they have a set, organized system for copy-editing, rating the funny material and scheduling, just as in any other magazine or newspaper."

He heard about the internship from a friend, who had a book with information on internships. Biederman called the magazine and inquired about applications. They required him to pick up a recent copy of *Mad*, choose three favorite pieces and three least favorite, explain why, and submit an idea for a funny piece. Biederman sent six ideas. On his behalf, Jim Sulski, the Columbia Chronicle advisor, sent a letter of recommendation saying that Biederman is a decent young man, but his skills will not be appreciated unless you are a contortionist, cheese factory worker, law enforcement worker, or poultry industry worker. The letter of recommendation ended with the following: "Again, an outstanding young man who will no doubt make his mark on society one

day, hopefully without breaking federal laws or annoying small animals." Apparently, about 50 applicants were fighting for two internship vacancies. John Biederman was one of the lucky.

He learned from this internship how to break-up the words in articles so they will fit over certain drawings. He also learned how to do parodies of movies or TV-shows. He came up with a "whistle while you lurk" series.



Mad drawing of Bob Dole.

Students share unforgettable intern experiences

By Roumiana Bankova

Diana Lopez had an internship with *Interview* magazine in New York. Lopez worked closely with the executive editor of *Interview* magazine, Graham Fuller. He took her to appointments and interviews, showed her how to do research and taught her how to watch movies with a critical eye.

Lopez had been a subscriber and a fan of *Interview* for a couple of years before she called last spring to inquire for internship information. In March, she was on her way to New York for an interview. Her intuition that the interview went well was soon confirmed, and she and four other students were introduced to the staff at *Interview*.

"That was more than a learning experience; that was the ideal training spot for me," said Diana, whose goal is to live and work in New York, the "magazine capital of the world."

Part of her job was to write "book blurbs" (2-4 lines, explaining the book's idea), to write movie captions and to talk on the phone. Who was on the line? Publicists of

major motion picture companies like TriStar, Sony and Universal.

Jeff Mores was not supposed to be with the Aurora Beacon News. Because of insufficient funds, the Daily Southtown canceled all summer internships in the last minute.

The spring '96 semester
see Interns page 6

Street rags:

Homeless papers band together in Chicago

By Carolyn Otto

When asked about the first ever street newspaper summit in North America, held here in Chicago Aug. 16-18, Dr. Norma Green said, "No one knew what to expect. Many street publications are run on a shoestring budget." She said that participants at the conference wanted to form an association.

"There is strength in numbers," Green, director of the journalism graduate program, said. And although common ground was hard to find because the representatives had many ideological differences, they formed the North American Street



Journalism graduate program director Norma Green. Newspaper Association.

Green spoke at the conference about the history of street papers and gave an overview of what people could expect starting their own publications. Her presentation was part of the first North American Street Newspaper Summit, which began with a reception at StreetWise, 60 E. 13th St.

Green said Chicago was chosen for its central location and for the fact that no other city volunteered to host the event. The National Coalition for the Homeless, Real Change newspaper of Seattle and StreetWise

newspaper of Chicago, edited by John W. Ellis IV, sponsored the event.

Invitations were sent to newspapers across the U.S., Canada and Europe. Representatives from across the globe came to learn more about the work and the voice that

street papers create for homeless people.

The last day, the conference met at the Community Emergency Shelter Organization, 1313 S. Wabash. Each publication brought 50-100 copies to share with

other representatives.

"Democracy in action is never boring," Green said. "I left exhilarated about the prospects of all the people having something in common they could work with."

Because so many of the publications are run by people who are still homeless themselves, some scholarships and airline tickets were awarded to people who couldn't otherwise have come to the conference.

A second conference is already being planned for the first week in

August 1997 in Charlotte, N.C.

Charlotte has its own street paper, Word on the Street, edited by a man who was formerly homeless, Michael

Manuel. Green is part of the steering committee again for next year's conference. She participates in monthly conference calls in which she says she tries to pay attention to the small details of planning something so large.

"Democracy in action is never boring," Green said. "I left exhilarated about the prospects of all the people having something in common they could work with."

Thank You!

Hey, thanks for your contributions to the newsletter. We appreciate your story ideas. Keep them coming. Put them in the Inside Journalism mailbox in the J-Dept.



Issues



Anonymous sources: To use or not to use?

By Bob Chiarito

Accusations, confessions and key pieces of evidence were uncovered today by "Larry," an anonymous Bugle source and a key player in the city corruption scandal.

This is not a sensational tabloid hook. More and more, mainstream publications are using unidentified sources like the above example to break stories. But as anonymous sources become more common, several questions remain. How reliable are sources who refuse to be named? What are their motives and why do they wish to be nameless?

There is no doubt that unnamed sources often help facilitate or even break important stories, providing publications with great quotes and information. There is also no doubt that using unnamed sources presents a sticky situation, especially in libel suits.

According to libel lawyer Dick O'Brien, "the existence of unnamed sources in libel cases presents all sorts of problems. Reporters tend to say 'I

relied upon this particular unnamed source because he or she had given me reliable information in the past.' How's the plaintiff to test whether or not the source is reliable if the reporter won't tell who it is?"

Despite the legal problems that may arise, O'Brien believes that most unnamed sources request anonymity for personal protection rather than to stir up controversy with exaggeration.

"Sources request anonymity not because they want to lie. Rather they want to tell the truth. They just don't want it attributed to them," O'Brien said.

While that may be true in many cases, it is also true that unnamed sources give the writer a great amount of power, power that can be abused. Case in point: Janet Cooke of The Washington Post.

Cooke's stunning September 28, 1980 story of a juvenile junkie in the nation's capital shocked millions and showed how out of control America's war on drugs seemed to be.

Her story, entitled "Jimmy's World," fooled millions and even won a 1981 Pulitzer Prize, until her stranger-than-fiction story proved to be just that, fiction. Not until a savvy Post editor spotted and questioned Cooke about the many inconsistencies in her story did she finally admit it was all fabricated, almost a year after the story was published. The main reason Cooke's story slipped past so many was that "Jimmy" was an anonymous source, as were the rest of the characters in her story.

While Cooke's story remains the example of the worst in journalism, Watergate, another story which relied heavily on anonymous sources, remains the example of the best in journalism.

Columbia faculty member and Newsweek staff writer Karen Springen agreed that using anonymous sources raises eyebrows, from both readers and other reporters.

"I'm always a little suspicious of unnamed sources, but obviously Watergate, the greatest

story of our generation, was done through an unnamed source," Springen said.

During most of 1994 and 1995, O.J. Simpson was the lead story for every American media outlet virtually every day. Ironically, many mainstream publications and television reporters followed story leads from the National Enquirer, a tabloid infamous not only for its use of unnamed sources, but also for paying unnamed sources for news tips. Among the stories the Enquirer broke in the Simpson case was the bloody glove angle.

As New York Times editor Carl Lavin wrote in his paper's house organ, "I knew this [Simpson] was a different sort of story when I found myself reading the National Enquirer and assigning reporters to chase leads from it."

While the Enquirer has long had a reputation for going to extreme measures in the name of "journalism," many mainstream reporters also are willing to take risks. Chicago Sun-
continued on page 6

Anonymous

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Times reporter and Columbia graduate Art Golab believes that in journalism, the end justifies the means.

"However you get the story, get it ... that's what I say. Everybody uses everybody in this business. It's a game," Golab said.

Insuring the accuracy of unnamed sources is vital for publications. At Newsweek, like many other publications, a lawyer reads over controversial stories to guard against printing libelous statements. Reliable or not, reporters must always be careful to appear credible.

Springen said that it's always better for credibility to use someone's real name and that "there is usually someone who can give you information that is just as good and who doesn't mind that their

name is used."

For reporters who cannot find sources willing to be named, O'Brien stressed that anonymous sources have no guarantee that they will not be named later and said reporters could feel safe from legal suits with anonymous sources.

"Generally you have to be named in order to claim libel," O'Brien said.

As long as reporters continue to write controversial stories, there will be instances where using anonymous sources is necessary. And as long as anonymous sources are used, reporters will continue to walk an ethical tightrope, springing from it to great heights after stories like Watergate and crashing to career lows when they slip like Janet Cooke.

Interns

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was almost over, too late to apply for most summer internships.

But Mores did not give up. He called each suburban newspaper owned by the Beacon News (around his native Joliet) hoping he had not missed his chance. Soon, the Aurora Beacon News returned his call.

Mores sent a resume, a cover letter and a few clips from the Columbia Chronicle, but a paper from the Senior Honors Seminar with Carolyn Hulse, "College Athletics and the issue of Money vs. Education," is what got his foot in the door, he said.

One of the challenges in the beginning of his internship was to learn how to work with the newspaper computer system.

"When I finished my last classes last year, I thought I knew everything that was going to take place," said Mores, "I was pretty confident, but, oh, man, I've learned double of what I knew before just in this little bit of time."

In his encounter with the real world of newspapers, Mores said that it is

nothing like the Chronicle.

"It is amazing to see it all happening," said Mores. "There are so many things going on. I would have never guessed half of these things went on."

"For example, there is a guy who sits in the sports department, accepts faxes and writes stories. That's all he does. There are hundreds of faxes. Some people stay until 1 a.m. Tons of people help. Everybody does a little bit of everything."

"Writing is a big part of it, but there is much more besides writing."

In the beginning, Mores started out by doing office work, little write-ups for big sports games that the department did not cover, calling high school coaches and getting quotes from people.

Slowly but surely, Mores made his way to bigger assignments, like feature stories on game coverage.

His first feature story made it on the first page of the sport section of the Aurora Beacon News on Oct. 15.

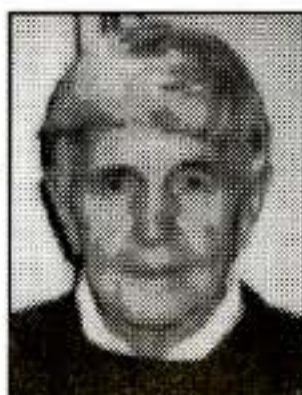
Aid awaits all J-Dept. students

If you want to do your personal best, you need a personal tutor.

Bill Ferguson, ext. 5372, a veteran newsman and teacher, is available on Tuesdays and Thursdays to help all students enrolled in journalism classes.

If you want to improve

your reporting, newswriting or copy editing skills, just sign up for tutoring in the journalism department office, suite 1300 in the Torco Building. A sign-up schedule is available on a first-come basis on the department's bulletin board.



Fischetti Scholarship Winners

Kandice Askew

Trista Balcita

Diane Bell

John Biederman

Robert Chiarito

Michelle DuFour

Anna Dzienisk

Ryan Healy

Christien Lock

Cristin Monti

Carmen Segura

Sally Stegeman

Robert Stevenson

Laura Stoecker

Aliage Taqi

Shelia Turner

Kim Watkins

The Inside Journalism staff would like to extend congratulations to each winner.

shorts...

By Peter Verniere

J-Dept. gets new Academic Advisor

There's a new academic advisor in the Journalism Department, and she's ready to take on the task of dealing with students. Laurie Ann Bender spent six years at Eastern Illinois University as an academic advisor, and most recently in private industry at the Council of Cook County. "I'm always available in my office, and in the next few weeks I plan to visit the journalism department to get to know the students," said Bender. This won't only help Bender know the students but should help the students know they actually have an academic advisor.

New computers invade J-dept.

Students may have noticed that Room 1302 has a new computer lab. A new line of Dell computers were put in for the fall. Also, teachers may be spending less time in the classroom and more time in their offices. That's because the faculty has received new IBM clone computers, and they are loaded with games. The classroom or solitaire? You make the call.

Teacher a master -- officially

Debbie Schwartz, who teaches Feature Writing on Monday nights, just received her Masters degree in Written Communication in Fiction from National-Louis University, Evanston. Schwartz did her thesis on Universal Design, and took three classes in the Columbia Fiction Writing Department. "I went for my Masters degree to improve my writing skills, and I hope one day to teach at a university," said Schwartz. She also hopes to get a PhD in the future. Schwartz has been teaching at Columbia for two years and has been published in more than 30 publications, including The New York Times, Chicago Parent and *Wildlife Conservation*.

Emerge surfaces in library

Students may have noticed a new magazine on the shelves of the Columbia College Library: *Emerge*, which calls itself Black America's News Magazine. There are several criteria that determine why a magazine is in the library. First, have there been several requests for the particular title? Also, have any faculty requested the magazine? In the case of *Emerge*, J-Dept. teacher Scott Fosdick requested the magazine along with students. Another criterion: How many neighboring libraries have the magazine available? If several libraries around Columbia have the magazine, then the lack of circulation in Columbia's library may not matter. If there's a magazine you would like to see in the library, make a request, and maybe it will pop up.

Community Media Workshop dishes Chicago to the world

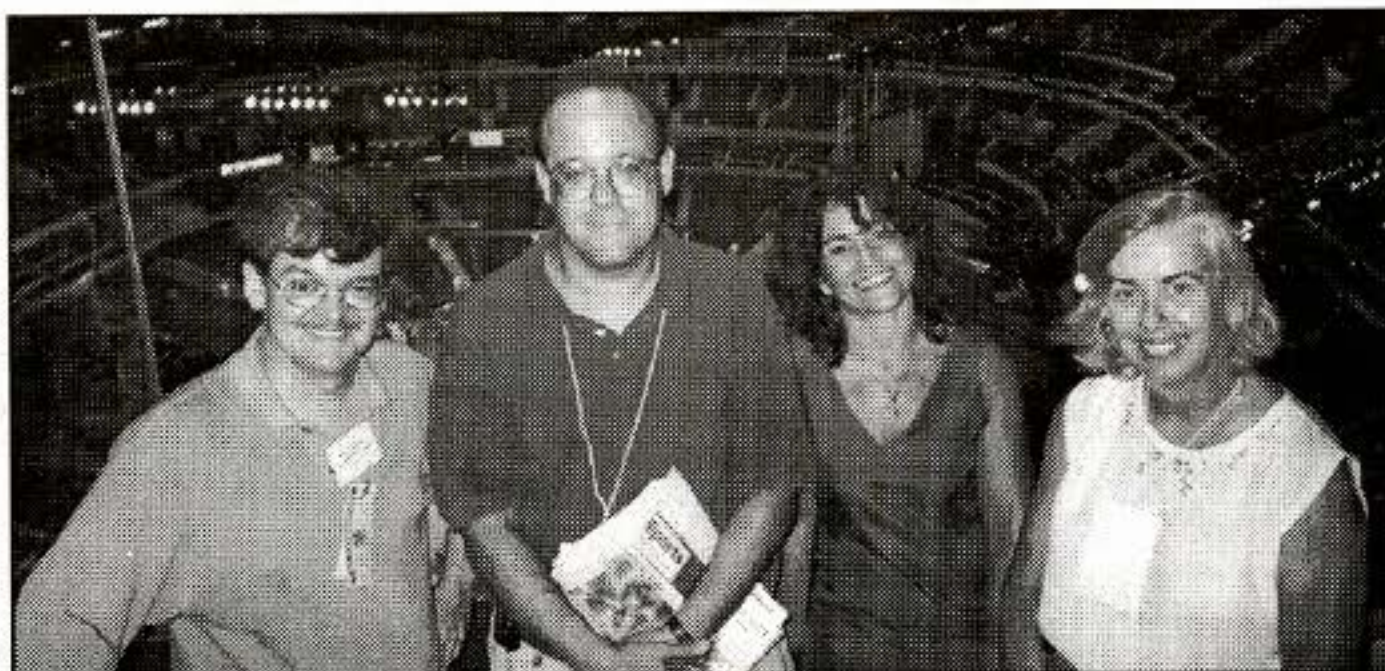
By Rachel Woods

Journalists covering the Democratic National Convention this summer used National Issues: The Chicago Experience, a source book published by the Community Media Workshop, to get ideas and background information for many of their stories.

"One story was published in every major media outlet throughout the country," said Thom Clark, president of the workshop. "Stories on west side development and public housing derived from the source book were published in the Houston Chronicle, Baltimore Sun, and the Toronto Star.

"Danish television reported three to four stories on job training, welfare reform and public housing. CNN received 600 copies of the source book and distributed it to their foreign correspondents. AP downloaded the source book on 200 computers on site at the convention and downtown."

Workshop staff distributed more than 6,500 copies of the source book, which contains 740 local sources in its 32 briefing papers. Clark came up with the idea for the source book when he learned that 1,300 reporters from 760 newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations would be coming to Chicago just for the Democratic Convention. Clark said this would be a "high opportunity for those journalists to report on



Thom Clark, Mark Miller, Laurie Glenn and Valerie Denney helped journalists covering the Democratic National Convention at Chicago's United Center expand the scope of their stories beyond the walls of the convention.

other stories occurring in Chicago's communities," as well as the convention.

The people and events in the neighborhoods are what make Chicago the place that it is and what the Media Workshop is all about.

"The Community Media Workshop is a tax-exempt organization that trains nonprofit groups how to use media more effectively and helps journalists learn of their stories," according to the workshop's business card. The workshop has been a part of Columbia's campus for almost three years. Located on the 8th floor at 623 S. Wabash, Suite 801, the workshop offers its services to students in any field who need information on urban affairs and events, or to those who would like some hard-to-find neighborhood story ideas and

contacts. In the coming year, Clark hopes to "form a closer set of ties with Columbia's students and to become more publicly known."

Brown bag lunch forums are conducted in the Hokin Center in the Wabash building on the third Thursday of each month. A panel of journalists are invited to discuss media issues. The forums are free and open to anyone interested. However, seating is limited and sometimes there is standing room only.

Newspaper sheets, another service offered by the workshop, are published twice a month to give journalists ideas for stories going on in Chicago's neighborhoods that may otherwise be hard for reporters to find. Newspaper sheets reach more than 250 reporters.

Getting On The Air And Into Print is a media guide available (for \$45) to students and journalists who would like all the information needed to contact any Chicago area editors or producers about landing that dream job. It is a huge book which contains names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of many well known journalists. The National Issues source book is free with the purchase of the media guide.

If you would like more information on brown bag lunch forums, Newspaper sheets and media guides, or if you would like to become involved with the Community Media Workshop, call Veronica Drake at (312) 663-3223, ext. 5498. Access CMW's website at <http://www.mcs.net/~comm-news/dchome.htm> or send e-mail to commnews@mcs.com.