

Perceptions of AEJMC AEJMC Survey • May - June 2007

More than 500 members of AEJMC responded to an online survey that ascertained views about the organization, its strengths and weaknesses, definitions of the field, relationships with other communication organizations, importance of divisions, activities and journals, and

Profile of Respondents:

Of the 501 respondents, 98.56% are members of AEJMC, and 79% have attended a national AEJMC conference in the past two years. Furthermore, 54% have presented papers at a national AEJMC conference in the past two years. The respondents are broken down as follows by role or profession: 10.2% graduate students, 4.48% instructors, 24.52% assistant professors, 23.67% associate professors, 21.11% full professors, 8.74 chairs/directors, 4.69% deans or associate deans, and 2.56 professionals (not faculty or student).

Some 52% of respondents described their JMC unit as a department or school of journalism/mass communication, while 29% chose department or school of communication as the primary unit and 19% selected college of communication or journalism and mass communication. More than 92% of respondents said they had professional experience or background working in journalism and mass communication, e.g., as a journalist, broadcaster, in advertising, public relations, and so forth.

The largest group of participants in the survey come from comprehensive research universities (43.07%), while 31.98% come from larger universities (10,000 or more students), 10.87% from smaller universities (less than 10,000 students), 3.84% from larger liberal arts colleges (5,000 or more students), 7.46% from small liberal arts colleges (less than 5,000 students), 1.07% from community colleges, and 1.71% from business schools (not colleges or universities). Almost 79% of respondents come from public institutions, and 21% from private institutions.

AEJMC members can join multiple organizations, interest groups and commissions. The top five for members of our survey were: the Newspaper Division, Mass Communication and Society, Communication Theory and Methodology, History and Media Ethics. The percentages of the 440 respondents answering this set of items claimed the following memberships:

AEJMC Divisions, Interest Groups and Commissions	% Claiming Membership
Newspaper	36.7%
Mass Communication and Society	25.4%
Communication Theory and Methodology	22.7%
History	19.3%
Media Ethics	18.0%
Law and Policy	15.4%
Communication Technology	15.0%
Public Relations	13.6%
International Communication	13.0%
Minorities and Communication	12.3%
Cultural and Critical Studies	11.6%
Visual Communication	11.6%
Magazine	11.4%
Advertising	10.2%
Commission on the Status of Women	10.0%
Radio-Television Journalism	8.4%
Scholastic Journalism	8.4%
Religion and Media	8.0%
Science Communication	5.9%

Small Programs	5.7%
Civic and Citizen Journalism	5.0%
Community Journalism	4.1%
Entertainment Studies	3.9%
Graduate Education	3.9%
Commission on the Status of Minorities	3.4%
Internships and Careers	3.2%
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender	2.7%
Media and Disability	1.6%

Importance of AEJMC:

At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked to rate the importance of AEJMC “to you” on a 0-10 scale, where 0 is totally unimportant, 5 is neutral and 10 is extremely important. The mean score was 7.71, with 27.6% giving the highest rating of 10, 14.6% giving a rating of 9, and only 7.6% assigning negative numbers between 0 and 4. Some 6.4% were neutral. At the end of the survey, after a barrage of items provoking respondents to think about the organization, the item was repeated, and the mean response declined slightly to 7.42.

Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a set of statements about what AEJMC should do in the future, using a 0-10 scale where 0 means they completely disagree, 5 is neutral and 10 means they completely agree. Following are the means for each item.

Statements about AEJMC's Future	Means on 0-10 scale
AEJMC should strive to be the “go to” organization for journalism and mass communication in the United States.	9.2
AEJMC should provide spokespersons on pertinent topics by identifying our best scholars for media, government and policy makers, business, industry and non-profit organizations.	8.6
AEJMC should harness resources for collaborative research efforts by JMC scholars at institutions across the country.	8.8
AEJMC should spend less time focusing on “social goals” such as diversity and emphasize scholarship more.	6.2
AEJMC as an organization should adopt a higher national profile.	8.9
AEJMC should focus more on research and scholarship in the area of journalism and mass communication.	7.9
AEJMC should focus more on education and teaching in the area of journalism and mass communication.	8.1

An open-ended item that accommodated three responses solicited respondents' views about AEJMC and what it should be doing in the future. Some 119 gave “positive” comments about a “bright” future for AEJMC, while 58 painted a bleak or troubled future. Other frequent comments and the number citing each were: 72 collaborate; 18 better review process; 45 new activities, services; 56 do current things differently; 42 more meetings; 56 stronger journals, research; 40 flexible convention sessions; 68 help students, faculty more; 26 reward work, provide money; 12 more outreach, advocacy; 53 reach out to other academic groups and professions; 56 find the willingness to change; 33 don't know; 22 reorganize the structure of AEJMC; 20 become leaders in the field; 13 enable more networking; 8 get members more involved.

Another open-ended item asked respondents to identify AEJMC's weaknesses. The most frequent responses and the number citing each were: 60 fragmentation; 39 too slow to adopt technology; 42 cost of convention to members; 18 location of conventions; 93 content or schedule of conventions; 9 need more, better regional conventions; 47 quality of research, journals; 27 review processes of all research; 33 need broader JMC research; 71 professional disconnect; 8 too close to professions; 68 AEJMC too large, unfocused; 10 too focused on journalism; 10 AEJMC policies unclear; 24 closed leadership; 7 officers not representative; 15 need to serve students better; 8 AEJMC too bureaucratic; 44 AEJMC elitist, cliques; 23 need bigger role in the discipline; 19 need stronger teaching focus; 22 weak international focus; 18 too much political correctness; 11 too political; 21 lack of diversity; 26 division problems; 11 need to develop new ideas.

Following are a dozen representative summary statements from respondents:

1. More events/items for \$ spent on high membership fees
2. AEJMC seems to lumber along without feedback from common members on things like where to hold conventions. Why not on campuses? It isn't even discussed.

3. Get Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly to accept APA Style!!!!!! What an archaic journal!!!!
4. Be matchmaker of our research centers across the country in obtaining \$\$ and mounting major national/international projects addressing communication issues/questions.
5. Convention programming more flexible, allowing for more timely topics and sessions. We cannot be on the forefront of journalism with the complex programming structure we currently have.
6. Better use of online interactive programs for idea exchange and continuing education
7. This would be very difficult...But I do think the division structure works against looking at the big picture of research or teaching in the field.
8. AEJMC MUST improve the quality of reviewing for competitive research papers. My colleagues and I are discouraged with the useless and unreliable feedback. This survey should explore this problem.
9. Make the structure more flexible. It's amazing how complex AEJMC has become, how many layers of bureaucracy there are.
10. More effective communication between conventions
11. Provide support to under-resourced programs; the organization seems designed to serve well established, well resourced programs
12. Providing space for scholars of similar research to meet and discuss relevant issues.

The Strategic Planning committee reviewed multiple studies and surveys focusing on journalism and mass communication education, AEJMC itself and specific activities or features of members over the past decade. Results from these studies formed the basis of a second set of items presented to respondents for assessment using the same 0-10 scale, where 0 means they completely disagree, 0 is neutral and 10 means they completely agree.

Statements about JMC education, AEJMC, and activities	Means on 0-10 scale
AEJMC should address instability in constituency industries that could affect demand for JMC graduates.	7.2
Most AEJMC members I know are active, involved participants.	6.8
Conference attendance is the most important link to AEJMC for me.	7.7
From what I see, the best and brightest faculty and students no longer submit their best work to AEJMC conferences.	5.5
Other communication organizations are better positioned than AEJMC to claim leadership for the field.	5.4
Lack of institutional support for travel is likely to reduce my attendance at AEJMC conferences.	6.9
I belong to other professional groups that have a higher claim on my loyalty than AEJMC.	5.7
AEJMC publications are relevant for the areas where I conduct research.	7.6
AEJMC is becoming too fragmented, as niches of faculty and students with like interests become isolated rather than relating to larger issues facing the entire field.	7.0
AEJMC conferences are an opportunity to see old friends and make new ones who share my interests.	9.1
AEJMC needs to “offer value” (between conferences) other than journal publications.	7.6
Local communication industries pay little attention to the knowledgeable scholars in the field at my institution.	8.0
JMC and communication academy in general “get little respect” for their work that is pertinent to issues discussed in the media, in public forums, and in legislative halls.	8.0
AEJMC needs to find a way to address contradictory pressures and expectations of professional environments that employ our graduates.	7.7
In general, AEJMC functions like an organization of teachers than of scholars.	5.5
Commercial and workplace pressures may negate our efforts to teach ethical standards to our students.	6.1
JMC doctoral programs need greater specialization if we are to become voices of authority in society.	5.7
AEJMC needs to work with the other professional associations-ICA, NCA, AAPOR, IAMCR-to become relevant to leaders in industry, government, and society in general.	7.1
AEJMC needs to give higher priority to current trends in the media that threaten the role that journalism and mass media have played in making democracy work in America.	8.6
Most citizens aren’t able to differentiate where journalism begins and ends today, and what’s news and what’s entertainment.	9.2
Our “mass communication” vocabulary no longer accurately describes what our students and future audiences face.	7.8
The quality of the basic education that our students bring to professional JMC training is poor.	6.5
AEJMC conferences are too big.	5.6
AEJMC should become proactive in obtaining support for major	7.7

research efforts by teams of JMC scholars and institutions.	
Despite the problems and uncertainties, the future of journalism and mass media is bright and the potential exciting.	8.6
The best days for organizations like AEJMC, ICA, NCA, AAPOR are past, and we should shift our attention to making connections through the Internet.	3.7
AEJMC needs to re-examine accreditation of our programs because of the changing environment our students face.	7.7
AEJMC should work to reduce a growing gap between industry and the academy on technology adoption.	8.6
AEJMC should make diversity in its membership its highest priority.	5.8

Rating the Areas of Interest, Research, Activity:

First, respondents were asked to rate the importance of 34 areas of interest, research and activity “to you,” using a 0-10 scale, where 0 is totally unimportant, 5 is “not familiar with,” and 10 is extremely important. Following are the means in descending order.

Areas of Interest, Research, Activity	Mean Importance “to you”
Teaching mass communication and journalism	9.42
Doing research/scholarship	9.40
Technology	9.35
Media ethics	9.23
Mass media and society	8.89
Social science	8.58
Quantitative methods	8.54
Communication theory	8.51
Studying media effects	8.36
Qualitative methods	8.27
International communication	8.11
Newspaper journalism	8.11
Media/communication history	8.10
Communication law	8.10
Visual communication	7.92
Political communication	7.80
Communication policy	7.75
Media criticism	7.74
Globalism	7.55
Broadcast journalism	7.48
Economics	7.37
Media management	7.26
Cultural and critical studies	7.24
Science communication	6.94
Public relations	6.81
Philosophy	6.74
Advertising	6.67
Scholastic journalism	6.62
Entertainment media	6.61
Magazine journalism	6.58
Art/Literature	6.42
Development communication	6.41
Religion	6.21
Film	5.65

Rating the Divisions, Interest Groups, and Commissions:

First, respondents were asked to rate the importance of divisions, interest groups and commissions to AEJMC, using a 0-10 scale, where 0 is totally unimportant, 5 is “not familiar with,” and 10 is extremely important. Following are the means in descending order.

Division, Interest Group, Commission	Mean Importance to AEJMC
Media Ethics	8.98
Mass Communication and Society	8.75
Communication Technology	8.64
Communication Theory & Methodology	8.63
Law and Policy	8.60
Newspaper	8.39
Graduate Education	8.31
International Communication	8.23
History	8.21
Visual Communication	8.15
Minorities and Communication	8.11
Radio-Television Journalism	8.02
Media Management and Economics	7.93
Internships and Careers	7.64
Community Journalism	7.52
Civic and Citizen Journalism	7.51
Cultural Studies	7.41
Public Relations	7.39
Advertising	7.38
Magazine	7.26
Scholastic Journalism	7.21
Science Communication	7.19
Commission on the Status of Women	7.12
Commission on the Status of Minorities	7.06
Religion and Media	6.63
Media and Disability	6.44
Small Programs	6.42
Entertainment Studies	6.33
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender	5.97

Importance of Other Communication Organizations:

Respondents were asked for their involvement in other professional associations in communication, including ICA, NCA, AAPOR and BEA, including membership, recent attendance at conferences, and recent presentation of papers at national conferences. They also were asked to rate their importance on a 0-10 scale, where 0 is totally unimportant, 5 is neutral and 10 is extremely important. The following table summarizes the respondents' involvement.

Organization	% Indicating membership	% Attending conference in past 2 years	% Presenting paper at conference in past 2 years	% Indicating a negative assessment (0-4) on the 0-10 scale
ICA	32%	24%	19%	27%
NCA	15%	13%	10%	49%
AAPOR	4%	2%	2%	48%
BEA	16%	12%	9%	40%

An open-ended item solicited views about how AEJMC should manage its relationship with other associations. Responses and the number citing each included: 36 collaboration on all levels; collaboration among national staffs; 15 work to strengthen the discipline; 105 joint memberships; 49 joint panels; 7 connect officers; 11 joint projects; 4 wider networking, 23 keep the smaller focus; 11 coordinate conference sites; 19 work with professional associations; 6 share news and information; 1 send journals to other associations; 1 merge with other associations; 31 no opinion/unsure.

The following comments are a representative summary of how survey respondents thought AEJMC should manage its relationship with other professional associations.

1. I'm not familiar with most of the others but it seems with this dire straits we are in it seems like there should be more cooperation going on. It sounds to me like extra money out of pocket to be a member of organizations that seem to overlap. It seems to me the same people might be members of several organizations when one might better with the proper organization.
2. Work with them on obtaining recognition for JMC education and research from government agencies, corporations, foreign governments, foundations, think tanks, etc. Do NOT let NCA take the lead in acting as if it speaks for all communication scholars in the United States, or as if it speaks for all of the best communication scholars in the United States. It doesn't. Its journals are no better than AEJMC's, and many of its convention papers are relatively worse than AEJMC's.
3. Distinguish ourselves, figure out what we do best, and then consider collaborations when they will be mutually beneficial. Avoid head-to-head competition, since it simply saps resources. A "branding" thing, as they say.
4. Why is this an issue? We are different. That is fine. Pluralism rules. I am opposed to the tendency toward centralization into mega associations.
5. As all these organizations have different goals and missions, there is little that can be that isn't already being done--which is many members are associated with several of the organizations. While they see the differences, they also see the value of belonging to more than one.
6. I like the idea of joint memberships at reduced prices. I don't think AEJMC should change too much. As a mass media scholar, I think NCA and ICA have too few divisions interested in mass communication and journalism issues, which is why AEJMC is important to me. I do think, however, that the organization privileges quantitative research, which is unfortunate.
7. More cooperation among all these associations is necessary to expand the scope of each to encompass all of social science. Scholars in communication must collaborate with economists,

political scientists, sociologists, and others to develop more meaningful studies based on complexity science.

8. We must not forget the "E" in AEJMC, education. Other organizations rally around a topical focal point, whereas AEJMC has always seemed a bit out of focus, because we try to cover so much. We should establish ourselves as the "go-to" for education within our fields, and with those organizations.

9. Yes - I like all those suggestions. I think each organization has strengths in terms of memberships, and we should be utilizing those relationships to get the research that matters - and its implications for policy and practice - before the pertinent publics

10. AEJMC has the benefit and unique position of being focused on content as opposed to some organizations (NCA and/or ICA) with much less focus. Any joint programs should recognize the old adage that if you stand for everything, you stand for nothing. I value AEJMC above most other national organizations in the field of communication because, again, it is more clearly focused.

11. I think they will eat us up if we extend a hand. Although, the joint membership idea is probably OK. More speech is better than less. But in doing so, we lose what makes AEJMC distinct and dilute the emphasis on journalism as an integral part of society.

12. I think co-sponsored mini-conferences and reduced rates for joining both NCA and AEJMC would help. NCA has the scholarship strength and national profile that AEJMC lacks, but AEJMC has the mass comm. focus that NCA lacks.

Scholarship, Journals, & Web Site:

Respondents were asked to assess the importance of scholarship vs. teaching with the following item: “While institutions often claim to support both teaching and research equally, the results often vary from that goal. Where would you place your institution’s support on a scale of 0-10, where 0 means completely teaching and 10 means completely scholarship, and 5 is equally balanced.” Some 16.5% gave scores from 0 to 4, indicating a greater emphasis on teaching, while 20.3% gave a 5, meaning equal importance, and 42.3% gave scores indicating a heavier emphasis on research (6-10).

Respondents also were asked to assess the quality of communication scholarship in 14 different journals on a 0-10 scale, where 0 means “strongly disagree the journal publishes high-quality scholarship” and 10 means one “strongly agrees the journal publishes high quality scholarship.” Following are the mean assessments for each journal in order of descending values.

Journal	Mean Assessment of Quality of Scholarship Published (N respondents)
Journal of Communication	8.5 (385)
Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly	8.4 (443)
Communication Research	8.1 (346)
Public Opinion Quarterly	8.1 (335)
Mass Communication & Society	7.7 (367)
Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media	7.6 (333)
Political Communication	7.6 (296)
Journalism & Communication Monographs	7.4 (397)
Communication Theory	7.2 (310)
Media, Culture & Society	7.1 (304)
Critical Studies in Mass Communication	7.1 (323)
Media Psychology	6.9 (265)
Human Communication Research	6.8 (294)
Communication Monographs	6.8 (293)

Despite the acclaimed importance of technology in earlier assessments, visits to the AEJMC website are relatively infrequent. Respondents were told that AEJMC recently launched its new web site, including a blog for members and other resources, and then asked, “On average, how often do you go to the AEJMC web site? Only 16% said they did so several times each month or more often, while 17% said they did so once a month, 48% a few times each year, 8% once a year and 10% never.