

## **Senior Scholar Projects for 2021**

**"Ira B. Harkey, Jr., and the *Pascagoula Chronicle*: A Forgotten Crusader for Racial Justice in Mississippi"**

Abstract:

*Ira B. Harkey, Jr., is probably one of the most courageous Pulitzer-Prize winners that you have never heard of. While at the helm of the *Pascagoula Chronicle* in 1962, he was the sole Mississippi editor to defend integration and support James Meredith's right to desegregate the University of Mississippi. His courage won him a Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing in 1963, but the backlash from readers and advertisers to his support for Meredith crippled his business, prompting him to sell the newspaper and leave Mississippi.*

*Harkey went on to write his autobiography and to teach at the college level. But in the years since his Pulitzer Prize, he has been largely forgotten, overshadowed by better-known moderate editors such as Hodding Carter, Jr., of the *Greenville Delta Democrat-Times*. Harkey's courage in the face of Mississippi's Closed Society was significant. He stood alone in defending Meredith, and his editorial stand stood in stark contrast to the silence of his peers in the Mississippi press. Still, his stand foreshadowed the crumbling of Mississippi's segregationist status quo in the years that followed.*

*The grant will enable two research trips to Madison, Wisconsin, to study papers related to Harkey. The University of Wisconsin at Madison holds all of Harkey's papers. In addition, the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison holds a vast range of papers related to the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi. The grant will also fund a research trip to Starkville, Mississippi, where the Mississippi State University archives has holdings of a number of Harkey's contemporaries, including Carter. The resulting research article will be completed in late 2021 and will be the foundation for a book project on Harkey to be undertaken in 2022.*

**By David R. Davies, University of Southern Mississippi**



**"Algorithmic Audience in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Tailored Communication, Information Cocoons, and News Literacy"**

Abstract:

*The "age of artificial intelligence" has seen a global proliferation of AI-powered news applications that cater to individual preferences. The popularity of these algorithmic news apps underpins a strong case for studying how artificial intelligence is transforming information distribution and news consumption, and therein the relationship between media and their audiences, and the implications for new types of media effects.*

*Algorithmic media's success has been achieved by attending to its users' interests and preferences, and tailoring its offerings accordingly. The increasing popularity of algorithmic news certainly speaks for the positive effects of tailored communication. Meanwhile, while technologies allow us to filter news and information in a convenient way, the process also creates the risk of an "information cocoon" that may threaten the integrity of a wholesome society. As some scholars have warned, the algorithm is a new type of actor that intervenes in communication processes and shapes individual lives.*

*This study attempts to examine via a survey (funded by the Senior Scholar grant) of national scope the algorithmic news consumption phenomenon from several inter-related perspectives, including tailored communication and news literacy. Potential implications for an empowered or rather (information-) cocooned public are explored from an audience perspective. The study aims to illuminate the renewed relationship between media and audience and the profound impacts of algorithmic processes, be they positive or negative, on news consumers.*

**By Roselyn Du, Cal State University, Fullerton**



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Grants were awarded to two Senior Scholar projects and two Emerging Scholar projects for 2021. Senior Scholar projects were each awarded \$5,000, while one Emerging Scholar project was awarded \$3,500 and the other was awarded \$3,375

The Senior Scholar Grants Program supports AEJMC researchers in a wide area of study and seeks to support senior (typically tenured) scholars engaged in extended research projects. The Emerging Scholar Grants Program is designed to develop and nurture AEJMC's most promising emerging scholars (most likely at the assistant professor level) by providing funding for research or teaching projects. Determining factors in the selection process for both programs are (1) innovative approach and contribution of the topic to theory development; (2) quality of the background research and methodology proposed; (3) value of the program to the applicant[s] and school[s]; and (4) proposed budget and use of funds.