

A person with curly hair is seen from behind, looking at a large digital display in a park at night. The display shows a scene with a street lamp and trees. The background is a misty, wooded area with a street lamp illuminating the scene.

Expressions

A SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATIONS PUBLICATION 2014

Telling Stories Using Transmedia



ReACT! Theatre
Tackles Social Issue

A Nose for News
in **Modern Media**

Inspiring thought. Perfecting Practice

Welcome to the second issue of *Expressions*, the annual report and magazine of the GVSU School of Communications.

When we launched this publication last year, we made an effort to specifically highlight various aspects of each of the eight undergraduate majors and the graduate program that make up the School of Communications. It was a way

about what students, faculty, and alumni are doing, there are several articles **by** us.

These features, written by faculty and students, are a direct form of **expression** that we hope to continue in future editions. In this way, you as a reader will not only learn about what we are doing in the GVSU School of Communications, you will also hear our knowledge and perspective about communications in its various forms in the world around us.

In this issue:

- **Vandana Pednekar-Magal**, *Professor of Journalism*, explains why journalism education and professional journalism are important, even in a news environment where anyone can broadcast and share information;
- **Kim Roberts**, *Associate Professor of Film and Video Production*, explains the concept of “transmedia” based on her ongoing research, including work on a recent sabbatical project;
- **Allison Metz**, *Assistant Professor of Theatre*, and M.S. in Communications student Dmitri Westbrook write from their own experience with ReACT, an anti-violence theatre troupe, about the role of theatre in communicating about social issues.

DIRECTORS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Anthony Thompson, M.F.A. *School of Communications Director*, Professor of Photography; Toni Perrine, PH.D. *School of Communications Associate Director*, Professor of Film and Video; Tim Penning, PH.D. *APR School of Communications Associate Director* Associate Professor of Advertising and Public Relations.

to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the school, and to show how in all of our areas of study the faculty and staff engage in various forms of expression.

Moving forward, we are giving “Expressions” a slightly different look and focus. In addition to a variety of articles

In addition to these featured **expressions** about communication, we hope you will enjoy 10 other articles about the work of our faculty, students, and alumni. Please don’t hesitate to express to us any ideas you have for future issues. (penningt@gvsu.edu)

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An image created by students illustrates a “portal” used as part of a project in Professor Kim Roberts’ transmedia storytelling class.
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Associate Professor, Advertising and Public Relations

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DESIGN
Kim Bode, 834 Design and Marketing
(Communication Studies alumna, 2003)

@GVSchoolofCOM www.facebook.com/GVSchoolCom dotCOM blog: <http://gvschoolofcom.wordpress.com>

School of Communications Launches New Program for Communications Students in London

In the summer of 2013, the School of Communications (SoC) offered students the opportunity to complete required courses in a study abroad program. This was the first time the SoC held a communications program in London. The trip included 24 students who stayed in the Imperial College dorms, located in central London. Students resided near the Victoria and Albert Museum, Hyde Park, and number of other historic sites.

Dr. Danielle Leek, Associate Professor in the School of Communications, traveled with the students and oversaw the course work and excursions.

“It is the single most inspiring experience I’ve had as a professor, and I’ve been teaching for over ten years,” Leek said. “I think the students felt like it was an incredible learning opportunity. London is such an international city, six different languages can be spoken at the same time on the same street corner. The students were able to change and broaden their perspectives on the world.”

Undergraduate students were able to complete COM 295, Theories of Communication, and COM 375, Communication Research, in one of the world’s most famous cities. For students who had completed COM 295 or 375, independent

study options were available. This six-week program included five weeks of living in the heart of London. Prior to travel, students completed a week of online course work and turned in assignments via Blackboard when they returned.

The students’ course work was integrated with being in London. They attended classes in the morning and in the afternoon they explored the day’s topic in the city. Each person designed their own individual research project where they were able to focus on a particular communication practice related to their degree. Students observed communication practices in public places, restaurants, and tourist locations.

One of the participating students, broadcasting major Jordan Boze, spoke of his classroom work and how it related to the knowledge he gained by traveling abroad.

“It is the single most inspiring experience I’ve had as a professor, and I’ve been teaching for over ten years,” Leek said. “I think the students felt like it was an incredible learning opportunity.”

“While it is great to enjoy your trip abroad, it is also important to remember that you are indeed abroad to study,” Boze said. “Learning in a foreign environment is different in multiple ways, but the best feature about it is getting knowledge first hand. When you go on tours or to museums you learn from guides or physical exhibits instead of just seeing them in a book or a video.”

Students also had the opportunity to select optional excursions related to their major program. Theatre majors were able to visit Shakespeare’s Globe, Advertising and Public Relations majors toured London public relations agencies, and Broadcasting majors interested in sports visited the Manchester United stadium.

The SoC will offer this opportunity again for the 2014 summer semester. This includes the whole month of July and into the beginning of August.

LEFT: Students record a radio drama at the BBC studios in London. RIGHT: Students pose in front of the British National Library before a tour of a special exhibit on global propaganda.



Summer Film Project Celebrates 20th Anniversary

An important hallmark of the Grand Valley School of Communications is to foreground a liberal arts context with an emphasis placed on learning-by-doing. The Summer Film Project, run through the Film and Video Production major, demonstrates this mission and provides students with a unique way of learning.

“The Summer Film Project was the original high-impact learning experience for students,” said John Harper Philbin, Associate Professor of Film and Video Production in the School of Communications. “Grand Valley was one of the first universities to create such a program and many other film schools have followed in the past 20 years.”

For its 20th project in Summer 2014, the Film and Video Production students will shoot season one of a web series with eight short episodes. The new series, titled *Lucky Jay*, is a comedy-drama about one semester in the life of a 35-year-old college professor.

Associate Professor of Film and Video Barbara Roos founded the Summer Film Project in 1995. In 2014 the program will celebrate its 20th anniversary. The productions have ranged from short films, 20- to 40-minutes in length, to a feature film that was 85 minutes. The films have won various awards over the years at film festivals across the country. For its 20th project in Summer 2014, the Film and Video Production students will shoot season one of a web series with eight short episodes. The new series, titled *Lucky Jay*, is a comedy-drama about one semester in the life of a 35-year-old college professor.



Actor Scott Lowell performs a scene in *To Live and Die in Dixie* with director and Film and Video professor Harper Philbin (headphones), cinematographer Jack Anderson, and GVSU Film and Video student Nate Russell operating the camera.

Philbin began directing the Summer Film Project in 1998. Thus far he has directed 9 projects. Summer 2014 will be the first time he will be directing a script that he wrote during a recent sabbatical. He calls his experience with the students and staff of the Summer Film Project “wonderful.”

“Every summer is a little different because the scripts, casts, and crews are always different,” Philbin said. “My favorite part is watching students transform from being green and nervous on day one to being professional and confident by the time we wrap.”

The program is open to intermediate and advanced Film and Video majors who enroll in the Summer Film Practicum. Students have the option to work on the picture edit in the fall Post Production Practicum and/or sound mix in the winter Sound Design course. The summer course runs late June through early August with the shoot beginning late July.

The premier of *Lucky Jay* is planned for April 2015.

Much Ado About Shakespeare for 20 Years

The Grand Valley Shakespeare Festival takes over the campus for an entire month every fall, including performances, fairs, and competitions featuring students, alumni, and guests. As the oldest Shakespeare Festival in Michigan, the event marked its 20th season in 2013.

A total of seven alumni were brought back for this special anniversary. Five of the seven alumni worked on *Much Ado About Nothing*, including Katherine Mayberry as director. Years ago Katherine’s mother, Rosalind Mayberry, was an instructor in the English Department at Grand Valley and spearheaded the planning of the Shakespeare garden outside of Lake Superior Hall. She was also involved in the

The festival is comprised mainly of students from all disciplines, working together to promote, perform, and produce each show. Student-actors and production staff had the privilege of working along side alumni, professional guest actor Christopher Seiler, and local actor Gary E. Mitchell. Seiler is a member of the Actor’s Equity Association.

“The festival is a great opportunity for student-actors to be involved in a high-level production and to see what a professional theatre is like,” said Jim Bell, associate professor of Theatre in the School of Communications. Bell is in his eighth season as Managing Director of the Shakespeare Festival. “The guests and non-students serve as mentors, allowing for

more training and learning than a typical student production.”

Theatre faculty hope that in the future the Shakespeare Festival will have an even greater impact in the community by developing its audience. Professor of Theatre Karen Libman helped organize a new honorary board to accomplish this goal. The board is made up of people who are passionate about theatre and the arts, and who will help reach a wider audience in West Michigan. The 2013 Honorary

Advisory Board members are: Betty Burton, Tim Cusack, Gilbert and Patricia Davis, Shelley Irwin, Don and Nancy Lubbers, Laura Salazar, Ruth Stegeman, Bruce Tinker, and Wendy Wenner.



LEFT: Beatrice and Benedick agree to marry while Claudio, Hero, and the Friar look on in Grand Valley Shakespeare Festival's 2013 *Much Ado About Nothing*. Left to right, Sarah Tryon and Hero, Justin Mackey as Claudio, Caitlin Cusack as Friar Francis, Sean Kelley as Benedick, and Macey Madias as Beatrice. Directed by Katherine Mayberry. Photo: Jan Lewis.

RIGHT: Benedick “overhears” Leonato, Don Pedro, and Claudio in Grand Valley Shakespeare Festival's 2013 *Much Ado About Nothing*. Left to right Gary Wright as Leonato, Sean Kelly as Benedick, Jason Flannery as Don Pedro, and Justin Mackey as Claudio. Directed by Katherine Mayberry. Photo: Jan Lewis.

development of the Shakespeare Festival. Her father, Robert Mayberry, is a retired School of Communications professor. The festival also welcomed guest scholar-in-residence, Jeff Watkins. Watkins is the president and artistic director of the Atlanta Shakespeare Company at the Shakespeare Tavern. He kicked off the festival with the public presentation of “The Five Keys to Understanding Shakespeare.”

School of Communications Has Presence in New Library with Speech Lab

Almost everyone in his or her lifetime will experience the fear or anxiety induced by public speaking. The Grand Valley State Speech Lab was designed around this idea. Through education the Speech Lab aims to empower speakers with tools for confident and effective public presentations.

The Speech Lab got its start in the Winter of 2011. Dr. Danielle Leek, director of the Speech Lab and Associate Professor in the School of Communications, developed the Speech Lab in its original location on the second floor of Lake Superior Hall. The Speech Lab was started in response to a growing recognition on campus that students needed more support for oral communication skills.

“In 2010 I conducted a campus-wide needs assessment which showed that undergraduate students wanted and needed more opportunities to practice and improve their public speaking techniques outside of the classroom,” Leek said.

Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) Fred Antczak worked with Leek to take the Speech Lab from a concept to the campus-wide service it is today. Antczak knew about the importance of speaking labs because of his previous job teaching in the Rhetoric Department at the University of Iowa.

“I’ve been a supporter of the idea of creating this resource for students since I got here,” Antczak said. “Once I saw the opportunity on the horizons, I asked Danielle to start it up in Lake Superior Hall.”

The Knowledge Market of the Mary Idema Pew Library is now home to the Speech Lab. This open and modern workspace is located on the first floor in the Learning and Information Commons. The Speech Lab offers undergraduate students one-on-one tutoring with an experienced consultant for every step in the speech or presentation process. Consultants can assist with developing an idea, organizing thoughts, and performance skills.



Senior Spencer Richardson meets with Speech Lab consultant Lena Williams after practicing the presentation of his final capstone project.

Speech Lab consultants are undergraduate students who have successfully completed COM 201 (Speech) at GVSU and have received a recommendation from their Speech professor. These students undergo an extensive training workshop where they are taught how to complement their speaking skills with information about successfully tutoring their peers. Consultants are trained in helping clients overcome speech anxiety, how to protect student privacy, and how to understand the speaking styles used in sciences, the humanities, and the arts. Students from all majors are eligible to be a consultant.

“The consultants who work in the Speech Lab really get a lot out of it,” Antczak said. “I think if you’re going to pay a student to do something, pay them for something that is going to build their resume and grow their skills.”

The Speech Lab has worked with not only COM 201 Speech students but also partnered with courses in photography, exercise science, the Honors College, and history.

Lanthorn Advisor Wins College Media Association Award

Lawrence Beery, associate professor Journalism, received the Noel Ross Strader Memorial Award from the College Media Association. He received the award at the organization’s annual meeting in New Orleans in October, 2013.

The award is one of the top four awards given by the CMA, and has only been given 13 times in the past 35 years. The most recent granting of the award was in 2006. According to the CMA, recipients of the award must have exercised the principle of freedom of the press or have made a major contribution to the graphic or other physical progress of a campus publication.

Beery, who worked in both advertising and editorial for newspapers in Michigan for 14 years, has taught Journalism in the GVSU School of Communications since 1990 and has advised the GVSU



“It’s a student-run news and business operation, and I try to keep it that way,” Beery said. “My overarching advising philosophy is to foster a collaborative environment where students can succeed, often beyond their individual expectations. I give direction, but I do not direct.”

With Beery as advisor, the Lanthorn has made steady improvements and achievements. In 1995 the Lanthorn put out the first online edition of a college newspaper in Michigan. In 1997 it grew from a tabloid size to a broadsheet. In 2005, the paper increased its publication schedule from weekly to twice weekly. In 2009, the Lanthorn was the only Michigan collegiate newspaper to win General Excellence in two divisions in a Michigan Press Association contest. Beery gives credit to the students who have pushed the Lanthorn to grow in recent years.

“The Lanthorn is a crucible: Lots of responsibility, pressure and chances to fail,” Beery said. “It also provides lots of opportunity for student leadership.”

Beery has been active in college journalism beyond the GVSU campus as well. In 2002 he helped establish the Michigan Collegiate Press Association, contributing the first draft of its constitution and mission statement. He has since served as the organization’s treasurer, vice president, and president.

Associate Professor of Journalism Larry Beery teaches journalism courses and advises the student staff of The Lanthorn.



student newspaper, the Grand Valley Lanthorn, since 1991. While the Lanthorn is not officially a part of the School of Communications (it is an independent student publication), many of the Journalism students are involved with the paper.

Student-run Firm Prepares Future Public Relations Leaders

In 2013, a public relations firm located in West Michigan took on the challenge of planning and executing an event to promote Awesome Mitten. Ultimately, 7 charities, 7 restaurants, 24 sponsors, and 9 bakeries participated in the event. As a result of the campaign, Awesome Mitten was mentioned 7 times in both local and statewide media and their Facebook “likes” were increased by 800.

associates, account executives, and an executive board. They work with various clients to improve and maintain reputations and build brand awareness.

GrandPR is one of 34 “nationally affiliated” student-run PR firms in the country. To become nationally affiliated the firms must have a solid connection with PRSSA and PRSA



GrandPR is a student-run public relations firm based on the Allendale campus. They were established in 2007 as an extension of Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), a pre-professional organization on campus.

What is unique about this firm? Every staff member is enrolled at Grand Valley State University. GrandPR is a student-run public relations firm based on the Allendale campus. They were established in 2007 as an extension of Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), a pre-professional organization on campus. GrandPR is made up of 16 account

(PRSSA’s professional chapter) and demonstrate a high level of professionalism and an effective structure. This prestigious recognition is renewed every three years for each chapter.

ABOVE: GrandPR CEO Moran Yingst discusses a contract with James Taylor from Camp Blodgett in West Olive. GrandPR works with various organizations around West Michigan.

“Becoming nationally affiliated is a huge honor,” said Morgan Yingst, CEO of GrandPR and a senior majoring in Advertising and Public Relations. “It gives us credibility when working with clients and sets us apart from the rest. We are proud to hold ourselves accountable for standards we set as a firm, as an organization within our university, and standards set by PRSSA National.”



ABOVE: Each Wednesday, the GrandPR staff is required to log at least one hour of office work. Office hours are used to complete work, contact clients, or work with an associate’s account.

To demonstrate their professionalism, GrandPR has successfully worked with various clients, including Grand Valley Institutional Marketing, City Lights Music Festival, the Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan, and Art Prize. This past fall, GrandPR worked with Art Prize by live tweeting during events such as the “Cat Video Festival,” the Top Ten ceremony, and the Art Prize Awards. In addition, the team assisted with media tracking.

Participating in GrandPR is not a requirement of the Advertising and Public Relations major in the School of Communications. GrandPR is an extracurricular activity that requires student employees to dedicate more than three hours a week in addition to their already busy schedules.

“Our staff members are some of the busiest people I have ever met but they are still extremely dedicated,” Yingst said. “Our clients pay GrandPR for our work, but the money goes towards supporting our PRSSA chapter as a whole. The experience we’re getting is invaluable.”

Senior Jessica Hines is a double major in Heath Communications and Advertising and Public Relations. She has worked with GrandPR for four semesters and has worked on accounts such as Awesome Mitten and Grand Valley Institutional Marketing. She says that working for GrandPR has been a great experience and has offered various learning opportunities.

To demonstrate their professionalism, GrandPR has successfully worked with various clients, including Grand Valley Institutional Marketing, City Lights Music Festival, the Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan, and Art Prize.

“I don’t think you can really grasp what PR is, unless you’ve worked in it,” Hines said. “Not only have I learned about the profession, but time management, working in a team, and most importantly handling challenging situations.”

GrandPR accepts applications for fall and winter semesters. Interested students are encouraged to visit the GrandPR website (<http://www.grandpr.org>) to review requirements and fill out an application.



Businesses and nonprofit organizations can be clients of GrandPR by contacting the firm directly at gv.grandpr@gmail.com.

GrandPR
YOUR GOALS. YOUR IMAGE. YOUR CONNECTION.



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Giving Students an Old-Fashioned “NOSE FOR NEWS” in a Modern Media Environment

By Vandana Pednekar-Magal



In one of my Journalism classes I was relating a long-time-ago newsroom experience. In the midst of telling the story I wondered if any of my undergraduate students would know the phrase, “having a nose for news?”

I was mildly surprised that “Not really” was the general response.

‘A nose for news’ was a key catchphrase of journalism that in a way defined journalists – at least until a few years ago.

Catchphrases meaningfully convey a culture in a particular time and place. Having a ‘nose for news’ meant having an instinct, an innate sense for what news was. It is an important expression in journalism that prompted Washington Post editor Ben Bradlee to explain why he decided to publish Seymour Hersh’s expose of My Lai Massacre, the 1968 massacre of unarmed civilians by US troops during the Vietnam War (often cited as historic, exemplary investigative journalism). “This smells right,” Bradley was reported to have said. A pointer institute directive titled “Writing With Your Nose,” suggests: “Good reporters smell a scandal. Give them a whiff of corruption

and they’ll root it out like a pig diving for truffles.”

What does this phrase mean today in the context of the new “crowdsourced” journalism where trained reporters are only a fraction of an increasingly complex ecosystem of news and information and readers or citizens are, in growing numbers, participating as sources and distributors of news?

Having a ‘nose for news’ meant having an instinct, an innate sense for what news was.

In this milieu the definition of journalism itself can seem nebulous. As media scholar Barbie Zelizer points out, we need to recognize that Christiana Amanpour, Tom Friedman, Jon Stewart, Matt Drudge, a professional broadcast journalist, a top New York Times columnist, a satirist and a news aggregator and columnist all contribute to reliable news and information, as well as those who do daily blogging, despite questions about whether they all do journalism.

Convergence of media over the Internet has enabled a new participatory information ecosystem allowing audiences to become content providers and producers. We are witnessing the end of the ‘mass media’ where news is gathered and disseminated by specialists to a local or national ‘mass

audience,’ and the move towards ‘interactive networks’ of converged media and active local and global audience.

A significant reality has emerged from this: journalism is no longer the preserve of journalists. People from all walks are playing an active role in the news system.

There is a fundamental shift in how we define journalism. A paradigm shift if you will. Conventional ways and models of journalism were forced to adapt to this technology- driven transformation as advertising revenue for print and television flew to emerging information sources or content providers such as Google and Yahoo. This caused some initial hardship to the newspaper business as well as to journalists. Many newspapers in America downsized, laid off reporters and staff or simply closed business.

Yet, amidst what looked like a breakdown, new possibilities have emerged. New technologies have hurt newspapers financially, but they have stimulated innovation in journalism. Newspapers reinvented themselves for commercial viability and adapted to emerging convergent media. One sees the evidence of this in the proliferation of on-line multimedia news as traditional news organizations such as The New York Times, CNN or BBC or Al Jazeera are on now predominantly on-line in a bid to engage an increasingly interactive as well as global audience. Here they compete for readership with non-profits such as ProPublica.com and user-generated news sites such as NowPublic, Wikinews. And of course in the mix are the Social Media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube that allow a wide range of people to take part in the gathering, filtering and distributing news. A significant reality has emerged from this: journalism is no longer the preserve of journalists. People from all walks are playing an active role in the news system.

So what about that the ‘nose for news?’ Is that instinct still central to journalistic endeavor? How relevant is it in the new context?

Arguing from a journalism educator point of view, I want to say that now it is all the more crucial to keep that instinct alive and hone it, sharpen it. Journalism is a special case in the vastly expanding diversified, global information market. News is business but it has a role in democracy. It is a service in the public interest. Its focus is on citizens as actors - they make political choices and cast their votes - rather than as consumers or simply as audience.

The School of Communications has and will continue to offer opportunities for journalism students to acquire new digital tools to tell compelling stories. Yet the key skill they should aspire to learn is to find that story that “smells right,” to develop “news judgment” and then tell the story with style, accuracy and fairness.



Lanthorn editors Audra Gamble (Laker Life) and Mary Mattingly (Arts and Entertainment) edit pages prior to print.



Editors (from left) Mary Mattingly (Arts and Entertainment), Jay Bushen (Sports), and Carly Simpson (News) approve pages for print at The Lanthorn office. The Lanthorn is GVSU's student-run newspaper.

Telling Stories More Complex, Interesting Through Transmedia

By Kim Roberts

We all love stories. Imagine engaging with some of the classic tales of our lifetime in a way that would extend and deepen the experience. Perhaps the first thing *Gone With the Wind* fans might do is send a text to Scarlett to tell her to “get a grip” and appreciate what she has, instead of longing for something else. What if online fans could attend a webinar with an interpreter when E.T. phones home? Or ask Yoda, the Grand Jedi Master, to provide personal training tips. If he likes you, he may reveal what species he is, which he’s not yet done for the Star Wars Databank.

Such is the world of transmedia storytelling – a technique of presenting a single story across multiple platforms and formats with opportunities for interactivity and participation from the audience. Students in my New Media II (CFV 426) class have been exploring the complexities of transmedia storytelling in the winter 2014 semester.

The students first had to create a story arc and framework that would lend itself to this form of storytelling—often called worldbuilding. They created content designed to engage their audience through various means in order to permeate their daily lives.

The audience followed the characters on Facebook, MySpace, and Tumblr, while other characters communicated through Twitter posts. Weekly audio episodes of the unfolding drama

within the portal were aired online and on GVSU’s Whale radio. Breaking news was broadcast on GVTV (student-run television station), and news of mysterious portals and trapped travelers was reported in the Lanthorn.

In transmedia storytelling, each piece of media content is unique but more importantly; are synchronized with each other to create a multi-level story experience. The challenges

in the creation, logistics, and execution of a transmedia project are numerous, but greater is the payoff in opportunities for audience interaction and participation.

A transmedia project that presupposes interaction by inviting the audience to engage in several ways, but *not interfere* with the actual story itself is considered a closed system. While those projects that engage in ways that encourage the audience to contribute their creativity, often through unexpected methods, and allow them to influence the final result are considered open systems.

The New Media II students chose to design an open system, where the fate of one of the characters was in the hands of the fans and would serve as the grand finale of the story. The synopsis of the story was this:

Four portal-curious adventurers who, through no fault of their own, stumble into the portal of Aegis (e-jes.) They find themselves

in a forest with nothing but an ominous vending machine in the middle of nowhere. It’s not clear what this machine actually is, or what mysteries it possesses. The Ki’li (ke le), a group

of mischievous native inhabitants, have discovered something they shouldn’t have, and are in too deep. They need their four newly arrived friends to help them stop the mastermind behind the malicious activities in the portal. The four guests understand that they will need assistance from the outside world and utilize various means to reach out to anyone who will help them. But the Portal Authority attempts to block their efforts by warning of the dangers of portals and encourages the reporting of anything deemed suspicious.



The “Portal Authority” released information on the latest portal sightings and exposed the actual reason the Grand Valley wrecking ball was taken down and why the Little

Mac Bridge was mysteriously taped off for so many weeks in the fall of 2013. Warning posters and video announcements were released that provided means for reporting fog sightings, a clear indication that a portal entrance was nearby. They could either call the Portal Authority’s phone number and leave a message, or go to their website and post details of their sighting. Assistance from the community was imperative if they were to stop people from entering the portals.

But the four travelers and the Ki’li were unrelenting. They commandeered a vending machine on the Allendale campus and posted messages and QR codes to the beverages to get strangers to locate and help them.

Not to be outdone, the Portal Authority commandeered yet another vending machine and duplicated the design to draw people to their machine so they could gain the trust of the people and warn them of the portal dangers.

The challenges of GVSU’s first-ever dive into transmedia storytelling included registering students from across an array of disciplines such as Advertising and Public Relations, Computer Science, Film & Video Production, and Writing. In coming years the courses will continue to draw from even more disciplines, such as Marketing, Theatre, Photography, Behavioral Psychology, Art & Design, and others. We recognize

the need for expertise from various majors as we struggle to effectively measure our results with site analytics, provide a more immersive experience, or understand what motivates people to act. It’s an exciting time for creative people to come together to design in ways that consider human behavior and how to utilize various forms of visual, audio, and social media in a way that allows each to do what it does most effectively.

This emerging field of storytelling is not for the faint of heart. It requires letting go of presuppositions of linear storytelling, the willingness to



LEFT: Students created a logo for the Portal Authority, a key part of the story. ABOVE: Recent real events, such as the removal of the ‘wrecking ball’ on campus, were woven into the fictitious story.

At the launch of their project, Roberts (at table, left) and her students toast to “ambiguity and the benefit of failure.”

embrace ambiguity and acknowledge the benefit of failure.

For over a year, I have been scheming about taking my 2012-13 sabbatical research on transmedia into the classroom. I plan to present findings from the project at the annual University Film & Video Association (UFVA) conference in August. I look forward to sharing our many failures and successes with those interested in teaching transmedia. The students understand that this experience is larger than their class project. Their experience will contribute to the development of best (and worst) practice methods for teaching transmedia at the university level.

Kim Roberts is Associate Professor of Film and Video Production.

Alumna of Master's Program Shows Documentary at Local Theatres

“Our Beautiful Secret” tells the story of Jonathan Peavey and his remarkable strength. His journey and the stories of his family are documented in this film. Angela Peavey, Jonathan’s sister, developed “Our Beautiful Secret” as her master’s project as a student in the M.S. in Communications.

“People told me to separate myself from being Jonathan’s sister while directing and producing this film. I didn’t agree,” said Angela Peavey. “Who else could be the best advocate for people living with disabilities than someone who lived right alongside a family member struggling with it?”

In the fall of 2013, Peavey hosted a one-week release screening of her film at Celebration! Cinema Woodland. During this week, its numbers were higher than all of the other major Hollywood films. The U.S. premier for “Our Beautiful Secret” was held April 10, 2013 to a sold-out crowd of 550 people. The film has won numerous awards including the Davey Award for Film and Video and a Special Honor for Most Motivational Film, Best Film by the Eclipse Awards, and winner of the 33rd Annual Telly Awards.



“Almost thirty years ago the doctors told Jonathan’s parents not to expect him to live long. Born with cerebral palsy, practically mute and perpetually challenged, what’s a man to do? Everything.”
— Our Beautiful Secret

Angela says the classes she completed with the SoC were fun, challenging, and the material was ready to apply to real-life right away. During her graduate studies, she made meaningful connections with various professors including Alexander Nesterenko.

“Dr. Nesterenko believed in my ability to complete this film and allowed me to do it in the first place,” Peavey said. “Throughout the process I had to write several reports and papers on the progress of the film and report to him. He was my main contact and biggest supporter in the process.”

Peavey’s project won an award as Outstanding Master’s Final Project for 2013

in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

ABOVE: Angela Peavey, second from right, with her family at the premier of her film.

Journalism and Broadcasting Graduate Reports for Saginaw’s WNEM

“...in Grand Rapids, I’m Alana Holland.”
Sound familiar?

Alana Holland graduated in December of 2013 with degrees in Journalism and Broadcasting. She quickly began transitioning into her full time position with WNEM TV5 news based in Saginaw, Michigan. The station is considered a mid-market, reaching Saginaw, Flint, and Midland.

“Since I’ve started, there hasn’t been a ‘typical’ day,” Holland said. “Depending on the day and the assignment, sometimes I will be one-man-banding it out in the field with my big ol’ camera and tripod hunting down a story. Other times I will go out with a photographer in a live truck to get live shots for the newscasts.”

Holland said the studio Broadcasting classes held in the Kirkhof Center studio and downtown at WGVU proved to be very valuable. In addition to talented professors, she said the opportunity to receive feedback and build up her resume while in class was extremely beneficial.

“Grand Valley has such an excellent and underrated broadcasting program,” Holland said. “The opportunities to learn about the industry and develop new skills were often more like on-the-job training than class work. I learned the

quality and values of good news-reporting early on, which helped me with Broadcasting in school and now.”

While in school, Holland participated in various extra-curricular activities and internships. She got her start as the layout and design editor at the Lanthorn and production assistant at WGVU. Holland held internship positions at her local newspaper, a morning radio station in Grand Rapids, WOODYTV8, and Michigan Radio. During her senior year, Holland began anchoring and reporting for the student-run station, GV Today.



Audiences can expect to see Holland on the WNEM TV5 morning news.

TOP: Holland, pictured with her co-host Mollie Smith, covered Grand Valley news for GVTV before becoming a reporter with WNEM TV5.



BOTTOM: Alana Holland reports live from the scene of a fire in Genesee County. Holland began covering events for WNEM TV5 soon after being hired in December, 2013

ALUMNI—WE WANT TO HEAR WHAT YOU ARE UP TO!

If you have a new job, achievement, award or other accomplishment, please let us know. We hope to run a list of brief alumni updates in our next issue, and some of them may turn into larger stories. *Email your news to Dr. Tim Penning, penningt@gvsu.edu*

“The Big Bang Theory” Writer Passes on Advice to Undergrads

After graduating with a degree in Film and Video, Jeremy Howe moved to California to begin his career in the film and television industry. He lived in L.A. for 11 years, was married, and had two children before he landed his current job with “The Big Bang Theory.”

Although working for a sitcom was not what Howe had in mind, he says writing on a sitcom is one of the most fun jobs a writer can have. He works with as many as 11 writers at a time and each scene is created through improv comedy. Howe says that working in television gives the writer



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It was during a year of unemployment that Howe received an e-mail about a job opening with the Emmy Award winning sitcom. After applying, interviewing, and accepting the job offer, he was quickly promoted to Staff Writer.

“One of the main reasons I got promoted to Staff Writer here is because I worked very, very hard as a Writer’s Assistant,” Howe said. “If I wasn’t able to do that job, I wouldn’t have been able to prove I’d be a good as a writer.”

Prior to his position with “The Big Bang Theory,” he worked as a Writer’s Assistant, a job he got through an unpaid internship with “The Young and the Restless.” He landed this first internship through the SoC. He advises students to work hard at any job they have, regardless of it’s perceived importance.

a lot more power than in film. In a TV show, the writers can tell the director how to shoot a scene or how to change a performance.



ABOVE AND LEFT: Scenes from the CBS show ‘The Big Bang Theory.’ (Photos from CBS.com).

Alumna Lands “Dream Job” in Health Public Relations

For many college graduates, finding a dream job can take years. Graduates can spend years changing careers, moving around the country, and applying for positions before they find their passion.

For Health Communications graduate Rachel Wion, this was not the case. Wion graduated in 2012 and less than a year after graduation she received an offer for her “dream job.” Prior to her current position, she worked in the health insurance industry and as a recruiter for a small agency in Detroit. These experiences helped to determine where she wanted to focus her career.

Near the end of 2012 Wion was contacted to interview with Lambert, Edwards & Associates.

Lambert, Edwards & Associates is one of the largest public relations firms in Michigan with offices in Grand Rapids, Lansing, and Detroit.

About a month after the interview, Wion was hired for the position of associate on the health care team.

“I knew this was my dream job, it was just the position I was looking for,” Wion said. “I have been working there for almost eight months now and love it. I have a passion for health care and general public relations. This passion makes me love my job and have fun at it.”

While in school, Wion interned at St. Mary’s Health and Spectrum Health. She said she felt prepared before graduating because each of her classes related to the real world.

“Once out in the real world you realize that things you learned in class do all relate and interconnect in everyday life,” Wion said. “Internships really do help you succeed and land that dream job.”



TOP: Rachel Wion, center, at work with colleagues on a project at Lambert, Edwards & Associates.

Consider Supporting the School of Communications

There are many ways to support Grand Valley State University. You can designate your gift specifically to the School of Communications by giving to any of the following funds. Learn more about giving to GVSU and the School of Communications at www.gvsu.edu/give



School of Communications Scholarship

The School of Communications Scholarship is designed to honor upper level School of Communications students who have demonstrated promise in their chosen field of study. Scholarship funds will be awarded on a competitive basis. The student must have declared a major in the School of Communications, be in good academic standing, and have completed a minimum of 30 credits at GVSU.

Dr. Margaret Proctor School of Communications Scholarship

The scholarship is intended to benefit School of Communications students who write in a vivid, direct and unique voice. It is designed especially with fiction-writing in mind, which includes writing for film and theater.

The Warren Reynolds Scholarship

The Warren Reynolds Scholarship is named in honor of the longtime sports director at WOOD- TV in Grand Rapids. Warren Reynolds, who died of cancer in 2000 and was a champion of charitable causes throughout the region, left a legacy of integrity in broadcast journalism. This scholarship is intended for students who exemplify these ideals and show a passion for electronic media. Preference will be given to students pursuing a career in sports broadcasting.

John J. and Marjorie E. Shepard Communications Scholarship

Established in memory of John J. and Marjorie E. Shepard, to support students in the Grand Valley State University School of Communications. It was their wish that a portion of their estate be designated for a scholarship to benefit students pursuing careers in broadcasting.

Calder Scholarship

Full Tuition for a Senior student working in the Arts (Photography, Film&Video, Theatre. Applicants are nominated by academic units. Each unit may nominate up to three candidates. Applicants should be completing their third year of study. The Scholarship provides full tuition for their senior year. The committee awards one scholarship per year.

Dirk Koning Film/Video Scholarship

Dirk Koning was the founding Director of the Community Media Center in Grand Rapids and an adjunct faculty member at GVSU. Dirk was a media visionary, a passionate ambassador for public access, who believed that the airwaves belong to the people. He was an internationally recognized media activist and champion for free speech. Dirk died unexpectedly in 2005 at the age of 48. We have named this scholarship in his honor.

Scholarship moneys from this fund are awarded on a competitive basis to upper level Film and Video Production majors who have made or intend to make media that contributes to the improvement of society.

Frederick A. Chapman Endowed Memorial Public Relations Scholarship

This fund assists students in Public Relations who are committed to community service.

Friends of West Michigan Public Broadcasting Student Employee Scholarship

Two annual full tuition scholarships. Available to one TV and one Audio student, each of whom have worked at TV or radio stations WGVU/WGVK-TV or WGVU-Radio.

MCA-A Bill Rigstand Communication Scholarship

Annual \$2,000-plus Detroit-area internship.

Eastman Scholarship Program

Annual tuition and fees to Film and Video majors. (Requires going through Film/Video faculty.)

William J & Margaret G. Branstrom Fund Award for partial tuition.

For Photography and Film/Video students.

Joseph Ehrenreich Scholarship: Press Photography

5 \$1000.00 grants per year from the National Press Photographers Foundation. Students must submit a portfolio of their work demonstrating skill, versatility and potential. Financial need is also a criterion.



School of Communications by the Numbers 2013

- Full-time faculty 2013: 45
- Part-time faculty 2013: 48
- Student Majors: 1641

IN 2013, SOC REGULAR FACULTY CONTRIBUTED:

- Books: 3
- Book Chapters: ≥ 8
- Peer reviewed Journal articles: ≥ 18
- Book Reviews: ≥ 4
- Artistic reviews ≥ 2
- New artistic productions, performances, exhibitions, or screenings: ≥ 32
- College Committee and Task Force members: ≥ 12
- University Committee members: ≥ 17
- International Conferences planned and hosted: 1
- Guest speakers and artists arranged: ≥ 16
- Members of Journal Editorial Review Boards: ≥ 8
- Officers or Board Members of Professional Organizations: ≥ 7
- Scholarly/creative presentations in ≥14 cities in U.S.
- Scholarly/creative presentations in ≥ 12 countries.

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