RELIGION AND MEDIA INTEREST GROUP – RENEWAL PETITION
Submitted by Anthony Hatcher, RMIG Head, 2010-11

RMIG Chair Anthony Hatcher and RMIG Vice-Chair Cecile Holmes attended the Council of Divisions meeting in Albuquerque, NM in December 2010. RMIG has met deadlines for filing information for convention programs. RMIG sends an electronic newsletter to all members at least twice a year, and also maintains a members blog.

The five components of interest-group status renewal:

I. MISSION AND GOALS
The Religion and Media Interest Group (RMIG) is dedicated to the study of how religion as a social and cultural phenomenon broadens understanding of mass communication. It is an organization of scholars and media professionals that promotes discussion of media and religion from social- science, historical, cultural, effects, and other scholarly perspectives. RMIG encourages research of a full range of religious traditions (e.g., Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Eastern religious philosophies, and new/alternative religious movements).

RMIG’s goals are to create forums, publications, discussions, and other activities that:

1. Enhance theoretical development in the study of the media-religion relationship and mass communication generally,

2. Encourage high methodological and ethical standards in the study of media and religion,

3. Build bridges of understanding between scholars and professionals whose involvement in media touches on religion, and

4. Promote the study of media and religion within the context of the overall mission of AEJMC, which emphasizes scholarship, teaching, and professional freedom and responsibility.

Perhaps the most important goal is to help scholars from various institutions and disciplines achieve their research and teaching goals involving media and religion. To do so, RMIG encourages its members to address the following research issues, which have been understudied thus far in the field of mass communication:

- **Content Issues.** Learn more about how religion is depicted in mass media genres. These genres include journalism, film, broadcast, and new media/online forums.
- **Audience Issues.** Study the behavior and media use of religious audiences.
- **Cultural Issues.** Examine the media-religion relationship in larger cultural contexts and emerging trends.
- **Technological Perspectives.** Investigate how media encourage or alter types of religious worship and formation of religious identity.
- **Political Issues.** Learn more about how religious organizations participate in policy-related discourse about the media.
- **Institutional Issues.** Research what religious and denominational structures teach their members about media use.
II. LIST OF CURRENT AND INCOMING OFFICERS

**Head**
Anthony Hatcher
Elon University

**Vice Head/Program Chair**
Cecile Holmes
University of South Carolina

**Research Committee Co-chair**
James Trammell
High Point University

**Research Committee Co-chair**
Kyle Huckins
Indiana Welseyan University

**Teaching Chair**
Rick Moore
Boise State University

**Newsletter Editor**
Christopher Birks
Benedictine University

**PF&R Co-Chair**
Michael Smith
Campbell University

**PF&R Co-Chair**
Michael Longinow
Biola University

**Membership Chair/Evangelist**
Amanda Sturgill
Elon University

Incoming officers will be determined at the RMIG Business Meeting during the AEJMC Convention in St. Louis in August 2011.

III. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Below are our goals for 2010-11 and the degree of success we had in achieving them:

- **Create subcommittee for communications that not only handles the newsletter and website, but deepens the interconnection among members throughout the academic year.**
  
  We had a modest success with this year’s newsletter. Chris Birks did an excellent job with writing and organization. Our website was utilized more often to convey information. No subcommittee was created, but the online presence was increased, and the look of the newsletter was improved.

- **Increase submissions by 10 percent for the annual conference and 5 percent for the midwinter conference.**
  
  The 2010 annual conference had 27 submissions, and this number increased to 36 for the 2011 conference, an improvement of some 13 percent. Our midwinter submissions held fairly steady, and 11 papers were presented. Our four-year trend has been 5 papers, 12 papers, 4 papers, 11 papers.

- **Strengthen our relationship as well as cooperate with the Religion Newswriters Association (RNA) to create PF&R opportunities in which our members can participate.**
  
  Debra Mason of RNA remains active in RMIG, and these ties are becoming stronger. RMIG Chair Anthony Hatcher is also member of RNA and will attend the annual RNA convention in Fall 2011. Incoming RMIG Chair Cecile Holmes is liaison to the RMIG for RNA, and serves on the RNA Council of Presidents. RNA and the Religion News Service are now part of one entity. This merger presents PF&R opportunities for RMIG. At the 2010 conference, we hosted an off-site visit to Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs, which was cited as a highlight by participants. RNA: [http://www.rna.org/](http://www.rna.org/)
Internationalize RMIG's annual conference offerings so that global perspectives and topics emerge in teaching, PF&R and research sessions. Research sessions have expanded to cover the Egyptian press and the overall coverage of Islam. These papers and topics reflect international news trends.

Other activities:

➢ We continue to foster useful member communications via http://www.religionandmedia.org/past-rmig-newsletters-2011-present/winter-2011/
➢ We also offer http://aeirmig.blogspot.com, a religion-and-media blog written by RMIG members.
➢ Furthermore, we continue to maintain our formal relationship with the premier journal in our field, The Journal of Media and Religion.
➢ We endeavor to take a leadership role in providing pedagogical advice and resources for instructors who teach courses that involve the intersection of media and religion. Our goal in teaching is to provide tools for our members and others to use in understanding the relationship of religion and media.

RMIG members have been involved in scholarship and with professional journalism and communication during the past year. The professional activities of our members represent a public service, and we will continue to seek opportunities to fulfill this service. We aspire to increase awareness about coverage of religion as an influential force in American life, and as an integral part of many free-speech issues. Below are some examples of our group’s activities:

• In August, Peter Bobkowski (Ph.D., UNC Chapel Hill, 2010) is joining the faculty of the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas. He spent his postdoctoral year completing a research project, funded by The John Templeton Foundation, in which he assessed emerging adults’ religious self-disclosure in social media.
• Judie Buddenbaum, one of the pioneers of our field, has a contract with Oxford University Press for the religion and media entry for their Oxford Bibliographies Online. She is also writing the second of two chapters for a 3-volume work, Evangelicals and Popular Culture edited by Robert Woods for ABC-Clio.
• On Jan. 10, 2011, Dane Claussen became Executive Director of the ACLU of Nevada, fighting for – among many other goals – free exercise of religion, and separation of church and state, under the First Amendment.
• John Ferre of Louisville joined nine other scholars from the United States as a participant in the second Faculty Development Seminar in Jerusalem and the West Bank sponsored by the Palestinian American Research Center.
• Michael Longinow of Biola University completed two chapters for the Praeger/ABC Clio anthology, "Evangelicals and Popular Culture" edited by Robert Woods of Spring Arbor University. Longinow also presented a paper in March 2011 based on the Warren chapter as part of the Campbell University conference on Faith and Communication.
• John Omachonu of Middle Tennessee State wrote an article, "Media Concentration and Minority Ownership: The Intersection of Ellul and Habermas" with Kevin Healey, ICR, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which won the 2010 Clifford G. Christians Ethics Research Award.
• Melissa Smith Of Mississippi State published a book, and article, and a book chapter.
• Stephen D. Perry has published two articles and a book chapter, and also presented at Campbell.

This is only a small sampling of the ongoing work of RMIG members.
IV. UNIQUE NICHE IN AEJMC

- No other Division or Interest Group in AEJMC focuses on the intersection of religion and the media – two of the most influential forces that shape beliefs, actions and communication in our culture.
- RMIG is a resource and an intellectual home to many graduate students, as most master’s and doctoral programs don’t have faculty in this discipline.
- RMIG promotes scholarship in such important areas as the current war on terror, social issues such as school prayer and gay marriage, religion and popular culture, influence of religious affiliation and perceptions on voting behavior, religious freedom and restraints in other cultures, and the national debate over stem cell research, genetics and abortion.
- The diversity of our members fosters a diversity of research methods utilized in relevant research. A close examination of papers presented during recent years reveals that qualitative research and critical-cultural scholarship are the leading methodological approaches in our field. The discipline of Religion and Media offers opportunities for every scholarly approach – legal, historical, quantitative, etc.
- RMIG is the largest Interest Group in AEJMC.

V. ANNUAL REPORTS FOR PAST TWO YEARS

Appended.