Special thanks to the undergraduate and graduate students and their professors for attending this year’s Media Summit.


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A rule of the Supreme Court of Alabama requires the following:
No representation is made that the quality of legal services to be performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers.
Welcome!

Welcome to the 151st APA Media Summit. We are excited to have APA active and associate members as well as journalism students from around the state join us.

APA is also proud to recognize the 2022 Lifetime Achievement and Emerging Journalist recipients, Ray Stansell and Katie Bohannon. These two individuals represent the best of our industry from the veteran to the novice. These are APA’s most special awards, and we look forward to recognizing these individuals.

We are thankful that Covid cases are on the decline in Alabama, and we are hopefully seeing the light at the end of this very long tunnel. While Covid still exists in our state, we respectfully ask that you wear a mask and socially distance when possible.

We appreciate your support of the APA Media Summit. Please mark your calendars for the 2022 APA Summer Convention in Orange Beach June 23-25 at the Perdido Beach Resort.

Passing The Gavel:
Many thanks to our APA presidents for their passion and dedication in moving our association and industry forward.

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Cover Photo: Atmore, Alabama by Manuel “Ditto” Gorme, II
There is nothing like young blood to bring fresh ideas and lots of energy to a newsroom. On the other hand, for a small weekly newsroom, there is no greater asset than having a veteran that can and will do anything needed to get the paper out each week.

Ray Stansell started his newspaper career in 1974 at The Clay Times-Journal, then the Lineville Tribune & Ashland Progress. Like journalists who have spent their career at a community newspaper, Stansell covers meetings, builds ads, works racks, handles the mailing and helps with the layout of the paper, even if his official title is sports editor.

Stansell was born and raised in Clay County. He graduated as valedictorian of his class from Lineville High School, and is also a graduate of Jacksonville State University.

His co-worker, Tammy Andrews, wrote that he works hard to ensure that every little detail is ironed out before we put the paper to bed. He has a work ethic that is most admirable and hard to find these days. “I’m proud to not only call him my colleague, but also my friend.”

Stansell lives the phrase, “the paper always comes first,” and has had a career of providing the people of Clay County with the most reliable community news.

In 2020, Madelyn Wolfe was a student working at The Clay Times-Journal. She said she has a long list of things Stansell taught her. “Ray has taught me how to improve my writing, come up with creative headings, layout pages, and new editing techniques. While those are all handy to know for my future endeavors, I think the most important thing that Ray taught me is how to be a good employee.”

But, there is more to Ray than the newspaper. Clay Times-Journal Publisher David Proctor wrote this about Ray in his nominations letter, “Ray has always had a great love for music and even played in a band before marrying the love of his life, Jeannie. Even though his love for the band was great, his love for her was greater, and their wedding was the last time he played. Ray is also an avid train fan. He has traveled to several different states ‘train chasing.’ He has numerous

A lifetime of achievement

Ray Stansell
APA 2022 Lifetime Achievement

The Clay Times-Journal Staff
collections of photographs gathered over the years of unique and rare trains. Jeannie always said she ran a close second to a good train.”

From one end of the career spectrum to the other, Katie Bohannon is just beginning her career, although she has made quite an impression in a few short years. She is the news editor for The Messenger in Gadsden. She joined the newspaper in 2019.

She is a native of Gadsden and obtained her Associates Degree in English from Gadsden State Community College in 2017, before furthering her education at The University of Alabama, where she served as vice president of the International English honors Society Sigma Tau Delta, representing the university at the society’s annual convention with an original poetry collection. She also assisted with the revitalization of UA’s literary magazine Dewpoint, overseeing the edition’s outline as chief editor. During her time at UA, Katie participated in an internship with the Gadsden Museum of Art, where she curated the exhibit “The Art of the Sari: A 60 Year Collection.”

At the Messenger, Bohannon has taken the lead with their bi-annual magazine, the first of which was 140 pages and recognized the graduating seniors at 11 areas schools.

In his nomination letter, Publisher Chris McCarthy wrote, “I’m a believer in throwing a new employee into the water and seeing if he or she will sink or swim. Katie not only swam but did so with an energy and enthusiasm I have rarely seen in this business.”
ALABAMA POWER VALUES THE VOICE YOU GIVE OUR COMMUNITIES.

We proudly support the Alabama Press Association. Your efforts elevate our state through advancing the newspaper industry in Alabama. You create a brighter future by empowering the next generation of journalists and protecting the voice of our communities.

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2021 APA Recruitment Package can help you find and train employees

Led by APA President K. A. Turner, the APA staff, along with retired publisher and journalism professor Steve Stewart, put together a recruitment package to help members find and educate new team members.

Finding good employees or freelancers has become one of the greatest challenges for our newspapers, and this effort offers fresh, new ideas to help with recruitment.

The package includes:

1. Training Tip sheets
   There are seven tip sheets to provide ready-made training for new hires. The tip sheets are available on the APA website at www.alabamapress.org/apa-training-tips.
   - Getting the story
   - Writing a headline
   - Interviewing
   - Laws and liability
   - Covering a meeting
   - Ethical guidelines for journalists
   - Writing a news story
   These Tip Sheets are not only good for new team members, they can be used as a refresher for current staff members to help remind them of the basics of creating content for newspapers and magazines.

2. House ads for recruiting available on BamaNet
   The package also includes recruitment ads that can be used as house ads to attract candidates. These ads target the people in the community who are most likely interested in making a positive impact on the area in which they live. They might be retired teachers, retired military or anyone with a passion to see their community grow and prosper.

Print and digital recruiting house ads are posted on BamaNet inside the Newspaper Recruitment Package folder in the Ad Department that can be download at any time. There are multiple versions, sizes, color and b&w options, and they are not password protected. Call the APA office if you have questions or need help retrieving the ads or tip sheets.

These ads need be customized with your newspaper flag, contact information, or linked to a landing page where interested applicants can apply or get in touch with the publication.

Are you ready to win?

Editorial Deadline: March 7
Advertising Deadline: March 14
Magazine Deadline: March 21

Visit www.newspapercontest.com to enter the Alabama contest portal, review rules and upload entries.
I FOUND MY SOMETHING AT UWA. - MARK JOSEPH
UWA CLASS OF 2020

STUDENTS LIKE MARK JOSEPH JOHNSON could succeed anywhere. He earned a bachelor’s degree in cell and molecular biology from the University of West Alabama and has returned to his hometown of Demopolis to make a lasting positive impact at Demopolis City Schools.

They say, “There’s something about this place.” Maybe it’s the charm of the people here who become lifelong friends... maybe it’s a campus and classes that are just the right size... or maybe it’s because this place feels like home.

If we could put it into words, we would. When students take a tour of the University of West Alabama, they feel it.

From greek life to championship athletics, and a world-class education that lands them in the careers of their dreams, UWA is where every student can find their something.

FIND YOURS uwa.edu/visit
Alabama doesn’t work like other states on a lot of things, but especially when it comes to public records.

Last year, my colleague Amy Yurkanin had a question: How much was the University of Alabama at Birmingham paying a private company to recruit students from foreign countries?

Her question led to a public information request to the university. She would like to see the contract, she said. Only UAB didn’t want to show it to her. At least not all of it.

After Yurkanin pushed some more, she got back a redacted version with those big black boxes over the type, like something you’d get from the CIA. The most important information — how much a public institution was paying a private company — was still secret.

A lot of times, this would be the dead end. Alabama law says all the state’s citizens are entitled to inspect public records and take copies upon request, but the law is weak. It doesn’t set deadlines for when state and local governments must respond. It allows government agencies to charge ridiculously high and often prohibitively expensive fees for copies and “research” costs. And it doesn’t penalize public officials who flatly refuse to obey the law.

Often, the only recourse is to sue, which can cost tens of thousands of dollars, as it did one company in 2019. When Central Alabama Radiation Oncology fought a public board all the way to the Alabama Supreme Court to get, among other documents, minutes of its meetings, it won the fight and got the docs — after spending $70,000 in legal fees. Last year, a national ranking of states by open records compliance put Alabama where it often finds itself — dead last.

Not only are some public officials too lazy to look for records, but they’ll use that as an excuse.

When environmental activist Daniel Tait asked the City of Troy for records regarding a local gas utility, the city told him Alabama law didn’t require them to look for the records he requested. That’s right. A city attorney argued that state law doesn’t actually require public officials to look for records.

It’s easy for government officials here to say no. The law be damned.

But with Yurkanin’s request to UAB, she lucked into something different. She didn’t have Alabama law on her side, but she did have Florida law on her side.

As it turned out, the University of South Florida had contracted with the same company to do the same kind of work, so Yurkanin filed a public information request in the sunshine state. With it, she drew an interesting side-by-side comparison of Florida’s law and Alabama’s.

The Florida request gave her the documents she asked for in six days.

Six days.

This is how an open records law works in a state where the open records law works. No fussing by bureaucrats. No broad redactions that make the whole task pointless. Just a request and a prompt reply.

This is how the law should work in Alabama.

continued on next page
Public records are not a media privilege any more than they are the private property of public officials.

Public records belong to you. And you, your neighbor, your nosy uncle — anybody — should be able to see them. Because public records are the best — sometimes, the only — tool the public has to hold government accountable.

“No one has complained that it’s too expensive or to hard,” he said. He says he took on this cause because it’s the right thing to do.

The bill would do the simple things that work in other states. It sets deadlines and caps fees. But most importantly it would create an affordable appeals process through a state public records ombudsman.

“I fear that some organizations don’t want the bill to pass at all,” Orr said when I spoke with him this week. “They like the way things work today. They don’t want to meet in the middle.”

Orr said that won’t deter him, and he intends to bring the bill back up in committee on Wednesday.

Public records are not a media privilege any more than they are the private property of public officials. Public records belong to you. And you, your neighbor, your nosy uncle — anybody — should be able to see them. Because public records are the best — sometimes, the only — tool the public has to hold government accountable.

And a public officials’ attitude on this subject is telling.

So good for Orr.

But it’s time for the rest of the Alabama Legislature to get with the program and return to the public what’s rightfully ours.
Our communities rely on an affordable and reliable energy supply. At PowerSouth, we take seriously our commitment to safely deliver the energy necessary to promote growth within the areas we serve. We’re always here for you.
2022 APA Media Summit
Friday, February 25 | Montgomery, AL

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  Registration Desk Open

9:30 to 10:30 a.m.  Program 1: Covering State Government Panel  Capital Ballroom
  Mike Cason, al.com
  Todd Stacy, AL Daily News
  Kim Chandler, Associated Press
  Bryan Lyman, Montgomery Advertiser

10 to 11:30  Past Presidents Brunch (Nominating Committee)  Salon C

10:45 to 11:45  Impress the Interviewer and Meet the Publisher  Atrium/Lobby
  Student Event

noon to 1:15 p.m.  Lifetime Achievement/Emerging Journalist  Salon AB
  Awards Luncheon and Membership Meeting/Installation of Officers

1:30 to 2:30 p.m.  Program 2: The Pros and Cons of Gaming in Alabama  Capital Ballroom
  The discussion continues on whether or not to expand gaming and institute a lottery in Alabama. You will hear from both sides of this issue.

2:30 to 3:30 p.m.  ‘Your Best Ideas’ Share  Capital Ballroom
  Share your best ideas for cash prizes!
  (revenue producing, editorial ideas, special sections, use of social media, etc.)