



# K A P P A T A U A L P H A NEWSLETTER

*National Society Honoring Scholarship in Journalism and Mass Communication*

Volume 41, No. 1, Summer 2024  
AEJMC Convention Issue

## Harlow's research on Latin America wins award

After a decade of research including interviews, surveys, focus groups and content analyses, Summer Harlow has documented how online-native news sites in Latin America are redefining what mainstream news can be.

Harlow will be honored Aug. 10 with the Frank Luther Mott/Kappa Tau Alpha Research Award for her book, *Digital-Native News and the Remaking of Latin American Mainstream and Alternative Journalism*.

This year's Mott award is for the best book on journalism and mass communication based on original research published in 2023. While in Philadelphia for the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference,



HARLOW

She also explored their relationships with their audiences and their evolving work cultures.

KTA President Bill Cassidy, a contest judge, praised Harlow for her insightful examination of digital-native "alternative" media in Latin America.

"What is perhaps most innovative about this

Harlow also will receive the AEJMC-Knudson Latin America Prize.

Harlow painstakingly examined how journalists are defining and exerting their independence while reporting on causes they feel other news organizations may neglect.

important work is how Dr. Harlow seamlessly connects the findings of her research analyzing newer forms of journalism in a specific region as a springboard for thoughtful discussions of shifts, changes, and possibilities for journalistic practice across the world," said Cassidy, professor and chair of journalism at The University of Mississippi.

Kansas State University Professor Raluca Cozma, also a contest judge, said the study has valuable practical implications as it illustrates "how, even in countries with political systems hostile to media freedom, journalists can innovate, amplify underrepresented voices, and pursue justice."

Harlow is the associate director of The Knight

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## Texas at Arlington professor named adviser of year

Erika Pribanic-Smith, an associate professor at the University of Texas at Arlington, still remembers when she was inducted into journalism's national honor society in 1999.

She was invited to join Kappa Tau Alpha while a master's student at the University of Alabama.

"It was a lovely ceremony," said Pribanic-Smith, who has been the KTA adviser at UTA since 2012.

On Aug. 10, KTA will honor Pribanic-Smith as the 40th winner of the William H. Taft Outstanding Adviser Award at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference in Philadelphia.

"I wear a lot of hats at UTA, but being KTA adviser is one of my favorites because it just is so fulfilling and rewarding to be able to honor those students," Pribanic-Smith said.

She said her favorite task is presenting pins and cords to the "best of the best" journalism and mass communication students in UTA's program.

"I think that they do feel honored, and they have pride in what they have done as a student and what they will do as a mass communication professional," she said.

Beverly Horvit, associate professor at the Missouri School of Journalism and executive director of KTA, said the Taft award is well deserved.

"I always appreciate Erika's willingness to help screen books for our annual contest," Horvit said. "She is integral to helping advance KTA's goals of promoting scholarship."

Reading academic books is a love of Pribanic-



BRAD LOPER/UTA

University of Texas at Arlington students celebrate their initiation into Kappa Tau Alpha with UTA's KTA adviser, Erika Pribanic-Smith, in April. Pribanic-Smith has served as UTA's adviser since 2012.

Smith's, so she said screening books for the contest is something she looks forward to each year.

"I really love reading that scholarship. I love the opportunity to learn new things," Pribanic-

Smith said. "They are things that I can draw on as examples in my classes. So, it's a really valuable and enjoyable experience."

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# Kansas State's Cozma elected to lead KTA

Raluca Cozma, professor of journalism at Kansas State University, will become the 48th president of Kappa Tau Alpha on Sept. 1.

Cozma succeeds journalism Professor Bill Cassidy, who was recently named chair of the journalism department at the University of Mississippi. Cassidy served as KTA president from 2022-2024 while Cozma served as vice president.

At Kansas State University, Cozma is wrapping up a term as associate director for undergraduate programs and engagement in the A.Q. Miller School of Media and Communication. On sabbatical this fall, she plans to work on several collaborative research projects on foreign correspondence, science communication, and journalism education.

The newly elected vice president is Patrick File, an associate professor of media law and director of graduate studies at the Reynolds School of Journalism at the University of Nevada, Reno, where he has been Kappa Tau Alpha adviser since 2015. In 2023, he was named KTA's outstanding adviser of the year.



COZMA



FILE

Beverly Horvit, associate professor of journalism practice at the University of Missouri, was re-elected executive director/treasurer. She has served in that role since spring 2017.

Cozma was inducted into KTA as a doctoral student at Louisiana State University. She was treasurer and then adviser of the Iowa State University chapter of KTA from 2013-2017. In 2021, she started the Louise Benjamin Chapter of KTA at Kansas State.

"Being initiated into Kappa Tau Alpha was a momentous occasion in my academic life," Cozma said. "Since then, I've felt incredibly proud and gratified to be able to pay it forward and initiate several cohorts of extraordinary students into the honor society."

She said she has learned a great deal from Horvit and Cassidy about the ways KTA supports research and academic excellence.

"Bill has led KTA with gusto and steadfastness," Cozma said. "Stepping into his shoes is a great honor."

Both Cozma and File said they enjoy reviewing

entries for the Frank Luther Mott book award.

"My hope is to increase the number of entries to our competition, as I am familiar with the caliber of research being published by my AEJMC colleagues," Cozma said.

She said she also wants to encourage more colleagues who serve as KTA chapter advisers to take advantage of KTA's grant competition.

"That could be the seed funding that underpins future Mott-award-winning work," Cozma said.

File said he is eager to hear from other advisers about how they can work together to keep exceeding KTA's mission and values.

Cassidy served as the KTA adviser at Northern Illinois University for 17 years before moving to the University of Mississippi and was honored as William H. Taft Outstanding Adviser in 2020.

"It's been tremendously rewarding to see the immense excitement and pride students—not to mention their parents and loved ones—feel when receiving such a tremendous honor as being inducted into KTA," Cassidy said. "I hope I've played a small role in maintaining the integrity and standards of the honor society."



PATRICIA LIM/KNIGHT CENTER

Summer Harlow serves as emcee during the 25th anniversary of the International Symposium on Online Journalism in April. Harlow is the associate director of The Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas.

## Harlow focuses on digital news

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Center for Journalism in the Americas at the University of Texas at Austin Moody College of Communication. Before earning her Ph.D., she worked for about 10 years as a reporter covering immigration and city government.

Named in honor of Frank Luther Mott, Pulitzer Prize winner, educator and longtime leader of Kappa Tau Alpha, the Mott award honors the best research-based book about journalism or mass communication published during the year. Kappa Tau Alpha, the national college honor society founded in 1910 for scholarship in journalism and mass communication, has recognized research contributions to the field since the inauguration of

the award in 1944. The winning author receives a \$1,000 prize.

Other finalists for 2023 were Jordana Cox for *Staged News: The Federal Theatre Project's Living Newspapers in New York* (University of Massachusetts Press); Penelope Ingram for *Imperiled Whiteness: How Hollywood and Media Make Race in "Postracial" America* (University Press of Mississippi); Martin Marinos for *Free to Hate: How Media Liberalization Enabled Right-Wing Populism in Post-1989 Bulgaria* (University of Illinois Press); and Mora Matassi and Pablo J. Boczkowski for *To Know Is to Compare: Studying Social Media across Nations, Media, and Platforms* (MIT Press).

## Adviser helps screen books

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Pribanic-Smith conducts research on political communication in 19th and early 20th century print media. She also serves as the coordinator of the Journalism Sequence in UTA's Department of Communication while teaching digital storytelling, public affairs reporting, and communication theory.

"Dr. Pribanic-Smith is dedicated to student excellence in journalism and honoring students for their achievements," said Charla Markham Shaw, chair of the UTA Department of Communication. "She is a valued colleague."

Before earning her doctoral degree from the University of Alabama, Pribanic-Smith worked in journalism, public relations and nonprofit administration.

In August 2023, the History Division of AEJMC presented her with an award for exceptional service to the division. That same year, two books on which she served as a co-editor were published: *Social Justice, Activism, and Diversity in U.S. Media History* and *The Media in America*, 12th edition.

The Taft Award is named for William H. Taft, a University of Missouri journalism professor who served as KTA's executive director from 1962 to 1991. The award has been awarded annually since 1945 and comes with a \$500 check.

Kappa Tau Alpha, the national honor society for journalism and mass communication, was founded at the University of Missouri and has 99 chapters at colleges and universities nationwide.



# Celebrating Excellence



ELEAZAR “EL” YISRAEL/UNC-CHAPEL HILL

Kappa Tau Alpha advisers and AEJMC award winners are all smiles after the KTA/AEJMC awards luncheon in Washington, D.C., in 2023. At the luncheon, the winners of the top student papers in each division receive a certificate and a check equal to Kappa Tau Alpha's age, \$113 last year.

## Researchers explore impact of digital trends

As technology continually reshapes journalism, Kappa Tau Alpha helped scholars Margaret Ng and T. Franklin Waddell pursue their research by awarding each a \$1,000 grant this past year.

Ng, an assistant professor at the University of Illinois, is investigating journalists' migration from Twitter to Mastodon, and Waddell, an associate professor at the University of Florida, is examining audience expectations for AI-generated news. Their research seeks to illuminate how journalists and readers navigate and adapt to the digital changes in the media landscape.

Ng's project, titled "Journalists' Transition from Twitter to Mastodon," explores the significant changes within the journalistic community following Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter in October 2022. Musk's takeover, coupled with the suspension of journalists critical of him in December 2022, triggered a substantial migration of journalists to Mastodon, an alternative social networking platform. This shift has raised important questions about the evolving dynamics



NG



WADDELL

between Twitter and Mastodon and the challenges journalists face during such transitions.

Ng, who has served as the KTA chapter adviser at the University of Illinois for six years, is conducting a comprehensive study to understand the implications of this platform exodus. She is utilizing computational analyses to examine the social media activities of 900 journalists on both Twitter and Mastodon. Additionally, Ng has conducted

qualitative interviews with 11 journalists from various national and local newsrooms across the country.

Preliminary findings indicate a spectrum of engagement strategies, ranging from complete disengagement from Twitter to strategic adaptations within professional practices. The study aims to elucidate how journalists manage their online presence across multiple platforms and the factors influencing their decisions to stay or leave Twitter.

This August, Ng will present the work as part of the Emerging Scholars 2024 program at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass

Communication convention in Philadelphia.

Frank Waddell, who has been the KTA chapter adviser at the University of Florida since 2017, is investigating audience expectations for news generated by artificial intelligence.

In his review of the literature, he found some studies suggest audiences prefer automated news, while others indicate a preference for human-authored content, and some find no significant difference. Waddell's project aims to resolve this ambiguity.

He hypothesizes that as AI technologies advance, readers may expect more sophisticated and high-quality news from automated sources. To conduct his study, Waddell plans to recruit participants through the online crowdsourcing platform Prolific. He has developed stimuli and measurement instruments for the project and plans to start data collection in the fall.

Since 2003, Kappa Tau Alpha has awarded more than \$38,000 in grants to KTA chapter advisers to promote scholarship. The organization, founded in 1910 at the University of Missouri, continues to support academic excellence in journalism and mass communication through its chapters at nearly 100 universities across the United States.



# Society awards inaugural scholarship to first-gen student at Nevada, Reno

A University of Nevada, Reno sophomore majoring in journalism and Spanish has won the first Kappa Tau Alpha student scholarship.

Genevy Machuca received a \$1,000 scholarship for the 2024-2025 school year.

"As a first-generation college student at the University of Nevada, Reno, this scholarship is much more than financial assistance; it's a recognition of my dedication to the field of journalism and my future career," Machuca said.

"With this opportunity, I aim to focus on my education, bridge cultures, and break down language barriers."

This summer, Machuca has an internship with the nonprofit Nevada Humanities, where she is putting her social media skills to use. When she returns to campus, she will be the director of media for her sorority.

The Kappa Tau Alpha scholarship aims to support students who have at least one year of academic coursework remaining at an institution with a KTA chapter and are majoring or planning to major in journalism or another mass communication field.

As part of the application process, students



MACHUCA

must submit an essay that introduces themselves and explains how their goals align with Kappa Tau Alpha's core principles: dedication to the highest ideals of journalism,

commitment to freedom of expression, upholding honesty, practicing fairness, demonstrating skill and artistry in presentation, and prioritizing accuracy and truth.

A panel of KTA advisers helped select finalists, and the society's officers made the final decision.

Beverly Horvit, executive director of KTA, said she was touched by the students' essays.

"We were impressed with the first year of applications and wished the society could do more," Horvit said.

## IN BRIEF



WWU

Kappa Tau Alpha's newest chapter, Western Washington University, commemorated its founding with a June picnic. Aria Nguyen, left, was one of two WWU students honored as a top scholar. Department Chair Brian J. Bowe, right, presided over the event.

### KTA expands to state of Washington

Western Washington University successfully petitioned for a Kappa Tau Alpha chapter and initiated its first students and recent alumni in June 2024.

Brian J. Bowe, chair of the Department of Journalism at Western Washington University, oversaw the initiation ceremony, which also included the awarding of two top scholar awards for the students with the highest GPAs.

Western Washington University was founded in 1893, and its journalism program has a history of producing award-winning alumni and providing hands-on experience through student publications such as The Front newspaper and Klipsun magazine.

### David Sachsman memorialized

In spring 2024, the faculty of the Department of Communication at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga voted unanimously to rename its Kappa Tau Alpha chapter as the David B. Sachsman Chapter.

The longtime KTA adviser served as the George R. West Jr. Chair of Excellence in Communication and Public Affairs at UTC for over 30 years. Sachsman regularly taught the department's Senior Seminar and a course in Public Communication and Environmental Issues, influencing thousands of students. He died on Oct. 4, 2022, at age 77.

A prolific scholar, Sachsman was the author of 23 books and for several decades organized an annual symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression.

UTC's chapter was originally founded on May 14, 1999. Sachsman was inducted into the chapter as a faculty member in 2002.

# Retiring adviser might hold record

University of Massachusetts Professor and longtime KTA adviser Karen List has already failed at retirement.

Though she retired in spring 2023 after 35 years teaching history, law and ethics at UMass, she filled in for the new KTA adviser while he spent the 2023-24 academic year in Portugal. She also taught her Journalism & Law course and advised students.

She began teaching at the Amherst campus in 1988 and submitted a successful petition to start a KTA chapter at the University of Massachusetts the next year. The UMass chapter was approved in 1990, and she served as the chapter's official adviser through her retirement.

What's the record for Kappa Tau Alpha chapter advisers' longevity? It depends on how you count. Former KTA Executive Director Keith Sanders



LIST

said List, a journalism historian, has set a record for the longest a KTA adviser has served one chapter – 33 years.

The other notable record belongs to David Sloan, who served as a KTA adviser for 35 years. The journalism historian split his time between two

universities, though: the universities of Arkansas and Alabama.

Both List and Sloan served as national presidents of Kappa Tau Alpha – List served from 1996-1998, and Sloan succeeded her from 1998-2000. They also were recipients of the William H. Taft Outstanding Chapter Adviser Award – Sloan in 1990 and List in 2003.



### The Kappa Tau Alpha Newsletter is published by:

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