



THE Source

Society of Professional Journalists
Oklahoma Pro Chapter

December 2002

Oklahoma chapter ready to host Region 8 conference

By Scott Cooper
SPJ Vice President

It's been a while since journalists from across the region converged in Oklahoma to talk shop, but an opportunity arises this coming spring for talk and hopefully, learning a few tips.

Oklahoma has been chosen to host the 2003 Society of Professional Journalists Region 8 annual conference. It's been nearly five years since the state last hosted such an event.

The University of Oklahoma campus in Norman will be the host site for the conference which is set for April 4 and 5.

The SPJ Oklahoma Pro chapter is nearly finished with plans for

"Much of the conference will focus on learning new skills and perfecting old ones in the field of reporting."

—Scott Cooper
SPJ Vice President

session topics, speakers and accommodations. More detailed information will be made available in January.

The theme of the conference is "Access and Issues" with sessions concentrating on various aspects of reporting — cops, courts, sports, business and military. Other sessions will deal with the growing concern in the journalism community about the curtailing of openness in government in the wake of 9-11, as well as concerns within Oklahoma and Texas state

governments.

Much of the conference will focus on learning new skills and perfecting old ones in the field of reporting. Along with the above mentioned topics, conference attendees also will learn about war reporting, interview techniques and better writing skills.

Issues concerning journalism itself also will be addressed. Topics are planned on convergence, diversity and the effect on news cov-

See "Region 8," p. 6

NEXT Board Meeting, Jan. 10

Make plans to attend the monthly board meetings of the Oklahoma Pro chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, held the second Friday of each month.

The meetings are a great place to be heard and share ideas with other SPJ members or to become a member.

The next meeting is noon, Jan. 10 at the OPA board meeting room located at 3601 N. Lincoln in Oklahoma City.

Bring a brown-bag lunch including a drink and join fellow journalists.

SPJ needs you and your ideas so make plans to attend. We look forward to seeing you there!



Banquet plans are under way

By Melissa Guice
SPJ Contest Coordinator

Forget the flowers and conversation hearts on Valentine's Day.

Instead, bring your sweetheart to the 2003 SPJ Oklahoma Pro Chapter's annual banquet scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 15, 2003, the day after Valentine's.

The dinner and awards ceremony will be held at the Embassy Suites, 1815 S. Meridian in Oklahoma City.

Planned events include the recognition of the Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, recognition of the First Amendment Award recipient and recognition of the winners from this year's contest.

The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes a particular individual for outstanding contributions to the

See "Banquet," p. 6

Journalists should follow core values

By *Scott Cooper*
SPJ Vice President

What are the core values of journalism and how should they be applied?

That was the goal for Tom Rosenstiel and Bill Kovach when they embarked on their book "The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect."

Speaking earlier this year at the National Convention of the Society of Professional Journalists in Fort Worth, Texas, Rosenstiel said, "The most important thing to know about ethics is that it's embedded in all kinds of choices we don't normally think of as ethical."

Those choices include the stories journalists chose, the treating of sources, evaluating information, and how journalists write and edit.

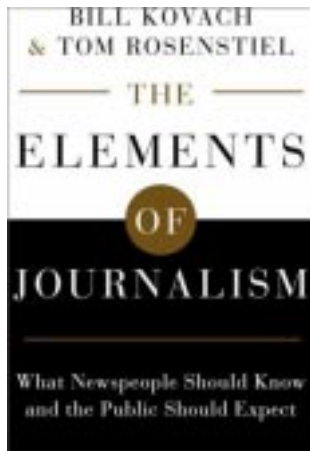
A journalists trademark is to be objective when dealing with stories, information and sources, but many in the public don't believe journalists are objective. Rosenstiel, director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, found that to be the case, but said it may not be the more important issue.

"Journalists are not objective, but their methods are," he said.

Rosenstiel made several suggestions reporters should kind in mind when verifying information and relaying that information to the public.

- Never deceive the audience such as using the term analysts.

- Don't say analysts when you've only inter-



viewed two people."

- Be open minded.

- Do your own reporting. Information provided should not be taken as fact right away.

When it comes to not deceiving the readers, Rosenstiel said, reporters should not be afraid to acknowledge when questions can't be answered.

Writer covers difficult beat

By *Clay Randolph*
OKCCC Professor

When Jack Kresnak asked the little girl how the rat tasted, she replied, "Nasty."

Kresnak, a reporter for the Detroit Free Press, was interviewing the child as part of an investigative article on juvenile neglect and abuse.

The girl and her siblings had become so hungry that they had killed, cooked and eaten the rat.

Kresnak recounted his grisly experiences recently at the Society of Professional Journalists National Convention in Fort Worth.

Kresnak spoke at a session entitled "Home Is

"It would help us level with the reader," he said.

Also, Rosenstiel suggested, name sources as much as possible and expose biases.

When it comes to open-mindedness, Rosenstiel advised reporters to never assume and to avoid taking a source's response to a question as fact.

"Don't just write what someone says and not worry about what he meant," Rosenstiel said.

He also suggested to be wary of second and third hand reports.

Advice also was given for reporters when self editing.

Rosenstiel made three suggestions for questions to consider when reviewing copy.

- How do you know this.

- Why should the reader believe this.

- What is the assumption behind this sentence.

Rosenstiel also made an accuracy checklist for reporters to go over before submitting a story.

- Is the lead of the story supported.

- Have the phone numbers, addresses, etc. been doubled checked.

- Is the background material required to understand the story.

- Are the stakeholders in the story identified.

- Have both sides been given a chance to talk.

- Does the story pick sides. Will someone like the story more than others.

- Is something missing.

- Are the quotes accurate.



Where the Hate Is."

Kresnak's most infamous case involved the killing of 2-year-old Ariana Swinson by her parents in 2000.

Both mother and father were convicted of the beating death of the child. Each was sentenced to 60 years in prison.

Kresnak wrote an extensive series of articles chronicling the life and death of Ariana. He de-

tailed the weaknesses in the system that made it difficult to save Ariana from her persistently abusive parents.

Despite the horrors of his news beat, Kresnak believes such reporting is invaluable and encouraged reporters to enter the field.

Kresnak pointed out that significant changes in the child protection services program in Michigan have occurred following the trial and press coverage of the events.

To read Kresnak's award-winning series about Ariana Swinson, "Children First; Murder by Neglect," visit www.freep.com/index/ariana.htm

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From the President

SPJ needs membership

By Tom Lindley
SPJ president

Since we're in the truth-telling business, I suppose I can't quibble with a quote passed along to me last week by Mark Thomas of the Oklahoma Press Association.

It went something like this: "They (SPJ) don't need more money. They need more members."

The remark was made by an OPA board member who was among those evaluating whether to give our SPJ chapter \$2,500 to help subsidize next April's SPJ/IRE Region 8 conference.

We got the money, and I got the message. I'm grateful on both counts.

First, with a little more luck and some help from other organizations that support journalism and First Amendment causes, we should have enough money to put on a first-rate conference at greatly reduced costs to participants.

OPA's generous financial commitment will allow us to reduce — and in some cases actually waive — the registration fee for selected staff members of Oklahoma daily and weekly papers. It's important for us to make our workshops both viable and affordable.

Second, the "quote of the week" also was a pointed reminder that our chapter has to work harder to build our membership ranks and increase involvement on the part of members.

"...our chapter has to work harder to build our membership ranks and increase involvement on the part of members. The 'hard core' get the job done time after time, but they are too few in number."

—Tom Lindley
SPJ President

Oklahoma Pro chapter

The "hard core" get the job done time after time, but they are too few in number.

In addition to a membership drive, we need to explore ways to make SPJ more relevant to potential members.

For starters, I'd like to see us be more aggressive in challenging the growing trend among elected officials to call an executive session every time they want to avoid giving tough explanations for their actions.

Although it's much easier to disseminate information today, it's becoming harder for us to get information. And in the end, the public's right to know suffers along with our ability to produce a complete story.

But that's just one of many causes we could pursue. That's why it's important for me to know what you think should be done to make our chapter stronger and larger.

As soon as we finalize plans for the awards dinner and the regional conference, we'll put everybody's ideas on the table and develop a long-range plan for the chapter. (At least, I'm not calling it a visioning session).

In conclusion, allow me to put in a plug for the Feb. 15 awards banquet and the April 4 through 5 SPJ conference. It's important for us to recognize excellence in journalism and honor those who have distinguished themselves throughout the years. Therefore, I encourage your participation.

The regional conference, which our chapter gets to host every four or five years, will have broad appeal.

Our goal is to attract 100 professional journalists from Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas and Kansas, and another 100 university students from Oklahoma.

Our partnership with the Investigative Reporters and Editors will enable us to offer a unique array of computer-assisted reporting workshops tailored to beat reporters.

Workshop sessions will touch on a wide range of issues important to both professionals and students in print, broadcast and public relations.

Starting in January with the awards dinner, 2003 is going to be a great year for SPJ.

Hope you will be a big part of it.

Reporters face daily difficult decisions

By *Sue Hinton*
SPJ Member

What's a reporter to write when a woman greets presidential candidate George W. Bush at a whistle stop in Illinois by pulling down her pants to reveal the message on her backside: "Raise min(imum) wage."

Or when the reporter's mother-in-law shows up at an invitation-only event in her hometown and asks the reporter to get her in to see Hillary Clinton, who is the featured speaker.

Or when Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura wants journalists to wear oversized press passes with the words: "Media Jackal."

This is the easy part of covering high profile political candidates on the campaign trail, according to Wayne Slater, Austin bureau chief of the Dallas Morning News; Beth Harpaz, Associated Press writer; and Tom Hauser, chief political reporter for KSTP-TV in Minneapolis. The three journalists were featured panelists at a session entitled "On the Van with Jackals: Covering Dubya, Hillary and Ventura." They presented their views at the National SPJ Convention in Fort Worth in September.

The hard part of covering campaigns is staying in touch with reality while breathing the rarefied air in the "bubble" of adoring staff that surrounds the candidates, Harpaz said.

"In the bubble, everyone loves the candidate." When Harpaz felt she was getting too attached to the candidate and her message, Harpaz said, she would switch roles with the reporter covering Hillary Clinton's opponent. That way Harpaz would remind herself that not everyone loved Hillary.

Harpaz said it was difficult to find unscripted moments to report about on the campaign circuit. But when they happened, it was sometimes difficult to decide whether to lead with the important, but carefully rehearsed, message — or an under-

standable, but spontaneous, mistake made by the candidate. Harpaz said she had only minutes to decide, because she was required to file a brief item with the Associated Press almost immediately after every event.

On the plane with candidate George "Dubya" Bush, Slater said he found national reporters to be deferential to the candidate. They were not as assertive or as independent as Slater had expected them to be.

"I learned that some reporters were so smart — better than me — but by and large, I found I was as good as anyone else on the plane," Slater said. He said Bush's staff and the political reporters needed each other, but were suspicious of one another, and that remained con-

stant through the campaign.

The monotony of carefully scripted messages wasn't a problem for Hauser in Minneapolis. He said a woman pulling her pants down would be a slow news day for former Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura.

"Ventura could do and say anything, and the people still loved him," Hauser said.

Hauser said Ventura hated the local press but loved the national media.

The Jackal press passes were Ventura's idea of a joke, Hauser said. The governor was surprised when some people took offense.

Immediately after the session ended, an SPJ staff member asked Hauser if he could get a Jackal press pass to auction for an SPJ fundraiser.

Catholic coverage questioned

By *Sue Hinton*
SPJ Member

Sister Mary Ann Walsh took advantage of a room full of journalists to scold them for what she perceived as their obsession with priest scandals to the exclusion of all other coverage of the Catholic Church. Walsh is director of communications for the U.S. Catholic Conference.

On the other hand, Brooks Egerton of the Dallas Morning News complained that getting factual information from the Catholic Church was nearly impossible.

Walsh and Egerton served on a panel entitled "Covering the Cover-ups: Hiding the Sins of the Father" at the SPJ National Convention in Fort Worth in September.

They were joined by Sandi Dolbee, religion and ethics editor of the San Diego Union Tribune, and Jeffrey Sheler, senior writer for U.S. News and World Report.

Egerton, an investigative reporter, said covering the sexual misconduct of priests was complicated by the church's refusal to cooperate with

journalists' efforts to learn the facts. Egerton said he believes two thirds of American Catholic bishops have kept priests on the payroll who have been accused of misconduct

Animosity tainted the atmosphere as Walsh talked about being the Church's first director of communications.

"The deck is stacked against the church," she said. Walsh recited a litany of technical errors she said appeared in news reports. One of her examples was the confusion of a priest and a bishop, both of whom had the same name.

Egerton countered that the Church was quick to criticize errors, while refusing to provide even the most basic information to contribute to the accuracy of news reports.

On a conciliatory note, Dolbee said it is difficult to write about an entrenched, heavily bureaucratic institution the operates outside the public arena. Writing about the Catholic Church is complicated by the fact that you are writing about a person's faith.

See "Church," p. 8



SPJ National TIDBITS

•“Open Doors: Accessing Government Records,” is a valuable service offered through the national SPJ website.

Located at www.spj.org/foia_opendoors.asp, the site provides journalists with the resources needed to ascertain what an open record is, the importance of open records, a “covering prisons” section, website addresses of other FOI resources, and much more. It’s an invaluable tool for any journalist, provided free from the national chapter.

•Have a question you need answered or a concern you’d like to express? SPJ Contacts is the place

to find the SPJ resource that can help. It’s located at www.spj.org/spj_contacts.asp.

•Ethics in Journalism — Sigma Delta Chi’s first Code of Ethics was borrowed from the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1926. In 1973, Sigma Delta Chi wrote its own code, which was revised in 1984 and 1987.

Visit www.spj.org/ethics.asp to learn more.

•On both chapter and national levels, SPJ provides an open forum for the discussion of diversity issues in journalism.

To share your views or get those of others, point your browser to www.spj.org/diversity.asp.

www.spj.org/diversity.asp.

•SPJ also provides a forum in which to discuss any aspect of the journalism business. If you’ve got an idea you’d like to share, or if you’d just prefer to lurk about and hear what others are saying, the Bulletin Boards are the forum you’re seeking. All visitors can read the postings, but only registered online SPJ members can join the discussion. Interested? Visit www.spj.org/messageboard.

•Broaden your horizons. Links to other journalism sites can be found at www.spj.org/resources_links.asp.

[resources_links.asp](http://www.spj.org/resources_links.asp).

•Through the volunteer efforts of some of SPJ’s members, there are two automated e-mail lists to which you can subscribe.

Keep up with the latest developments in journalism ethics and professional journalism by subscribing to one or both of SPJ’s automated e-mail lists. Sign up at www.spj.org/spj_programs_email.asp.

The national website, located at www.spj.org, is full of helpful articles, links and resources for journalists. Visit the site to learn more!

New federal medical privacy rules will make journalists’ job more difficult

Journalists who cover accidents and other incidents in which people require medical care will have a harder time determining the number and nature of injuries, or even if someone has been admitted to a hospital, because of new federal rules on the privacy of health-care information.

Specific information on patient injuries, illnesses and conditions may no longer be available. In fact, the new rules will make it harder merely to confirm that a person is in the hospital.

The Bush administration recently released the latest version of medical privacy rules, which are intended to give people more control over their health and medical infor-

mation. In most cases, the rules will take effect April 14, 2003.

Medical privacy rules were required by the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). The Clinton administration issued an initial version in 2000. The Bush administration chose to re-visit the rules in 2001 following complaints >from various lobbying interests. During both rounds of rulemakings, the Society of Professional Journalists, other journalism organizations and other groups interested in freedom of information submitted comments.

In most situations, the new rules prohibit hospitals and other health pro-

viders from releasing information on patients without prior permission. The rules also have severe penalties for unauthorized releases.

The rules allow some information called limited data sets (patients’ birth dates, admission and discharge dates, and geographic addresses larger than street addresses) to be given to research and public health entities, but specifically not to journalists.

So, journalists now may have a hard time merely confirming that someone is in a hospital. The new rules allow a health facility to confirm that an individual is in the hospital, and get information on the person’s general condition, by checking its pa-

tient directory, but the journalist must have the name -- something that may be difficult in a breaking public health emergency or other crisis.

Even that may not be enough, however, since the rules also allow patients to keep their names off the publicly available directory.

Says Amy Henson of SPJ’s First Amendment law firm, Baker & Hostetler, “We wish we could report otherwise, but it appears that the new rules will make the job of journalists in reporting important public-health information much more difficult.”

SPJ President Al Cross, who began his journalism

See “FOI,” p. 6

Region 8 conference slated April 4 and 5

"Region 8," cont. from p. 1

erage as budgets decreased during the past year.

Participants should be entertained with a wide range of speakers from both print and broadcast with local and national journalists.

The conference includes a Mark of Excellence awards luncheon where the best in college journalism from Oklahoma and Texas will be honored.

An evening dinner reception for colleagues to relax and enjoy great food and conversation also is planned.

Unique to the 2003 conference is the joint partnership SPJ has established with the local representatives of the Inves-



IRE and SPJ to Partner on 'Better Watchdog Workshops'

tigative Reporters and Editors organization to provide a more enhanced training atmosphere.

Throughout the first day of the conference, IRE will conduct intensive workshops to help reporters in the areas of requesting and obtaining records, forming databases and spreadsheets, and fine tuning basic reporting skills.

Arrangements have been made to provide affordable housing for participants to stay overnight during the conference. OU

has several hotel rooms available at the Sooner Hotel, located on campus.

Room rates start at \$41 a night. Transportation will be provided between the hotel and the conference site which is the Oklahoma Memorial Union.

This is an exciting opportunity, not just for Oklahoma SPJ, but for all Oklahoma journalists to host such an important conference.

We hope as many state journalists can attend the conference as possible.

Annual awards banquet plans being finalized

"Banquet," cont. from p. 1

area of Oklahoma journalism.

The 2002 recipient was David Dary, professor emeritus and emeritus Gaylord Chair in the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Oklahoma.

The First Amendment Award is an honor bestowed upon the Oklahoma journalist or journalists who prove to go beyond the call of duty through their efforts in pursuing freedom of information issues.

Last year's recipients included staffers from four different Oklahoma newspapers and one local radio station.

The planned menu includes a garden salad, a double entree of filet mignon and chicken dijonaise with side dishes including a twice baked potato and fresh vegetables.

Vegetarian meals also will be served. Dessert will be New York cheesecake with fruit topping.

All participants will be notified by mail in January 2003. Along with their

"winner/non-winner" notification letters will be an invitation and banquet registration letter.

Banquet registration fees and specific times will be determined prior to the mail-out and will be included with the banquet information.

Please make plans to attend the biggest and best journalism dinner of the year!

Journalists encouraged to subscribe to FOI news

"FOI," cont. from p. 6

career reporting hospital admissions and other news for his hometown radio station in Southern Kentucky, called the new rules outrageous. This will have a broad impact on

day-to-day journalism in this country, and I hope journalists will point out to their elected representatives the problems that this will cause for news outlets large and small, said Cross, political writer and columnist for The (Louisville) Courier-Jour-

Catholic scandal told of in the '80s

"Church," cont. from p. 4

"This is a story of words, told by the people who would talk to us," Dolbee said.

"We wouldn't be here if we (journalists) had done our jobs right the first time.

"These stories first broke years ago, and then were dropped."

Sheler also noted the importance of trying to establish context for the scandals.

"It's not a new story, but a story that first broke in the 1980s," he said.

"The abuse seems to have peaked around 1992-'93."

The story took on new life when the Boston Globe succeeded in unsealing documents that indicated the extent to which American bishops have been overlooking the problem, Sheler said.

"The documents confirmed what the victims had been saying for years, that the church was not dealing with problem priests.

"Most of what we know, we have learned from victims."

nal.

To subscribe to the SPJ FOI Alert, visit spj@spj.org or call 317/927-8000. In your message, provide your name, organization, mailing address, e-mail address, phone number and fax number. There is no fee.



Writers encouraged to mine sources

Yanick Rice Lamb, who teaches journalism at Howard University, has worked at newspapers and magazines ranging from The New York Times to Child. The following is an excerpt from an article he wrote for Quill.

"You have to circulate to percolate."

I thought the line was corny when I'd overhear a professor say it over and over again at Ohio State University, but it's so true. The best journalists are all over their beats.

Sure, you know the history, you know how things work, you can sniff out a trend, and you often (or always) beat the competition. But do you really

know all the issues and all the players?

This is not at all about being politically correct; it's about doing good journalism. Fair, accurate, balanced, solid and thorough journalism. Good experts are everywhere, and they're easy to find. Here's how to find them:

- Be honest. Don't be afraid to tell colleagues and sources that you want to cast a wider net to truly reflect the community and the country.

- Hit the streets. Visit neighborhood churches, restaurants, community centers and schools. Attend meetings, games and events. You never know who you'll meet or what you'll hear.

- Pick some brains. Ask existing and new sources for other contacts. Solicit their opinions on coverage as well as story ideas.

- Go to groups. There's a professional organization for every field, and often an ethnic counterpart.

- Contact colleges and universities. Most institutions of higher learning have programs focusing on specific topics or various groups, whether by ethnicity or gender. Also contact historically black universities to obtain directories listing the specialty areas of their faculty and staff.

- Raid Rolodexes. Reporters have been doing it to me for years and I don't

mind. They know that if I don't have the perfect name, I know somebody who knows somebody who knows somebody who does.

- Move beyond so-called leaders. Ask everyday folks what they think. And don't assume that "leaders" speak for everyone or that a group is monolithic.

- Check out the rest of the competition. Go beyond what you normally read and watch. Turn to community papers, radio stations and web sites.

- Look at your newsroom's history. If coverage has been virtually nonexistent or imbalanced, your newsroom's rocky record could affect a source's inclination to confide in you.

WEBSITE DIRECTORY

The Oklahoma Pro chapter of SPJ does not endorse or guarantee the validity of the below-listed websites. Contributed by SPJ members, they are meant only as helpful sources and should be checked out just as any other source would be.

FREELANCE

Beginner's Guide to Freelancing: www.poewar.com/articles/beginner.htm

JOB LISTINGS

National Diversity Newspaper Job Bank <http://www.newsjobs.com/>

JOURNALISM

FAIR: Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting: <http://www.fair.org/>

Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc.: <http://www.ire.org/>

NewsLink: newslink.org/

Freedom Forum: <http://www.freedomforum.org>

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press: <http://www.rcfp.org/>

Reporter.org: <http://www.reporter.org/>

PUBLICATIONS

Editor & Publisher: <http://www.editorandpublisher.com>

Columbia Journalism Review: <http://www.cjr.org/>

American Journalism Review: <http://www.ajr.org/>

Links: www.okpress.com/LINKS/otherok/OthOkLinx.html

News 9 & the Oklahoman: <http://www.newsok.com/>

Tulsa World: <http://www.tulsaworld.com/>

STATE GOV'T.

Oklahoma State Courts Network: www.oscn.net/applications/oscn/casesearch.asp

Dept. of Corrections Offender Information: http://www.doc.state.ok.us/DOCS/offender_info.htm

Oklahoma County Jail Inmate records search: <http://www.oklahomacounty.org/cosheriff/>

Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board: <http://www.ppb.state.ok.us/>

Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office: <http://www.oklahomacounty.org/sheriff/>

**Got the 411 on a great website?
If you know of a site that others in the field would benefit from, please pass it along to: raustin@okccc.edu**

**For all the latest Oklahoma SPJ news:
www.geocities.com/oklahomaspj**



Newsletter to be quarterly

Beginning with the first issue of next year, The Source, the SPJ Oklahoma Pro chapter newsletter, will be published quarterly.

Subscribers can expect to find a news-filled copy in their mailboxes four times each year.

Plans are to publish an 8-page newsletter each January, April, July and October.

There are many reasons for the change.

As noted in the President's column on page three, membership is down and expenses are on the rise.

"Financially and resource-wise, it makes more sense to publish every three months," said newsletter publisher

Ronna Austin.

Austin said, while the number of issues will fall, the quality of the newsletter will remain high.

"Articles of real interest to state journalists, written by some of the best writers in Oklahoma will still be the focus."

Readers also can expect to continue to learn about National SPJ happenings.

Another constant is the website newsletter.

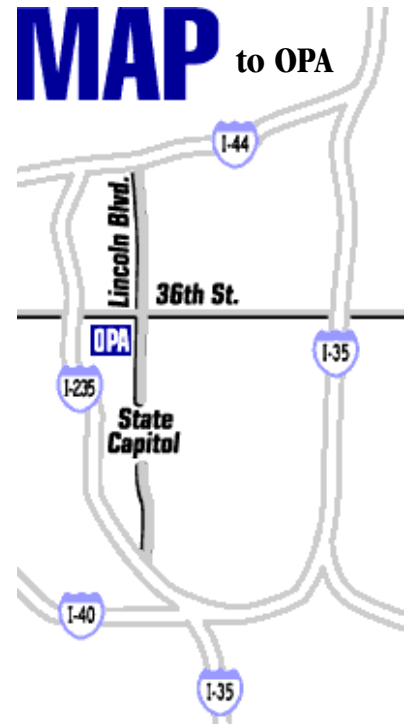
"The newsletter will continue to be posted in PDF format at the local SPJ website for those who prefer to get their news electronically," Austin said.

"Readers are still encouraged to contribute."

Contact Austin at raustin@okccc.edu for more information.

This way to the next SPJ board meeting!

Follow these directions to the next SPJ meeting held in the OPA board room. Bring your lunch, your great ideas and invite your fellow journalists! See you there!



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NEXT SPJ MEETING: NOON, JANUARY 10, AT OPA, 3601 N. LINCOLN BLVD.