Welcome to the Spring 2013 CMS Newsletter! In this issue you’ll find our usual blend of features about CMS classes, profiles of alumni, and news about CMS events. We have also continued the trend of asking our students to write more of the articles, which gives them additional journalism experience and often helps them to make some interesting and useful contacts.

We want to hear from you! Please let us know if you have ideas for features, and make sure you send us updates on your professional endeavors, as well as your whereabouts.

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Christiane Amanpour was the featured guest for this year’s Edward R. Murrow Forum on Issues in Journalism.

Send us your news!

Changed jobs? Gone back to school? Moved? We want to hear from you. Email us at cms@tufts.edu.

Do you know someone who might be interested in receiving this newsletter? Feel free to pass it along.
Notes from the CMS Director

Julie Dobrow
CMS Director

Welcome to the spring edition of the CMS Newsletter! As you’ll see in this issue, we’ve had an incredibly busy and productive spring semester. In this issue, we want to give you some highlights of our academic program and events, and profile some of the amazing work our alums are doing across many media platforms.

Among other features, I want to call your attention to the short summaries I’ve asked a number of our graduating seniors to write about their CMS Senior Projects. We had an incredible crop of projects this year and you will get just a little taste of the scope and range of them in this issue. I’d also like to note that among many other achievements, a large number of our seniors have already found jobs or gained entrance to some of the top graduate programs, and this year’s CMS senior class won a variety of academic and other senior awards, and four of our seniors were elected Phi Beta Kappa. Congratulations to all of them!

Commencement is always a bittersweet time around Tufts, and this year perhaps more so than ever since our beloved longtime associate director, Susan Eisenhauer, has retired. Generations of Tufts students will long remember Susan’s open door, her open ears, and open heart, and how she offered them advice on academics, internships, and life. We will miss Susan greatly but are grateful that she remains just an email, phone call, Facebook or LinkedIn query away!

P.T. Barnum Awards for Excellence in Entertainment

On June 27, the 9th Annual PT Barnum Awards for Excellence in Entertainment was held in Los Angeles. This year’s Hill to Hollywood event featured television producer Coral Hawthorne (J71), screenwriter/producer Brian Koppelman (A88) and art director/set designer Christopher Brown (A91).

Hawthorne is best known for her work on many sitcoms, including The Hughleys, and on the sketch comedy show In Living Color. Koppelman’s many credits include Rounders, The Illusionist, Ocean’s Thirteen, and more. Brown has worked on many shows, from Parks and Recreation to Twilight, and has been nominated for multiple Emmys for his work on the set of Mad Men.

Singer/arranger/composer Deke Sharon (A91) served as emcee at the event, which also featured a special 50th anniversary performance by members of the Tufts Beelzebubs. The event took place at the Creative Artists Agency. Be on the lookout for photos from the event on our website and in our Fall 2013 newsletter.
The creative tableaux: Jeff Strauss

By John Ciampa

A perfect day for Jeff Strauss (A84) would likely include sitting around a dinner table with friends and family, enjoying a good meal and waxing a story or two, all the while relishing in the pleasurable and simple truths of shared conversation, companionship, and good cheer.

These are things most of us would enjoy, of course, but Strauss cherishes these moments. They seem to imbue his spirit, and by turns fuel his passion, his career and work, even his outlook on life. And this makes sense, coming from someone who finds commonalities between the wine and entertainment industries. (More on that later.)

An accomplished television producer and screenwriter, Strauss’ credits include the landmark comedy shows Dream On and Friends, one of the most successful sitcoms in television history. But while these praise-filled victories have been great, he’d probably be the first to tell you that the accompanying commercial and critical adulation he enjoyed remains just a bi-product of what truly drives him.

“You’re forced to measure your success in Hollywood either by fame and money or acclaim,” he said. “But it’s important to reflect on the kind of success that comes from creative growth; it’s much, much more than just financial gain.”

Strauss didn’t always have his heart set on a Hollywood career. Arriving at Tufts at the dawn of the 1980s, his initial aspiration to become a veterinarian sounds almost practical in hindsight given his Hollywood vocation. Accordingly, he majored in biology, but also slipped in a Plan of Study that included literature and film as a kind of creative counterpoint to his focus on a hard science.

Somewhere during his progression from underclassman to upperclassman Strauss discovered the Experimental College, which buoyed his imaginative interests and prompted him to think more broadly about what an education could provide. It was a good thing, too, because it would be the literature and film classes he took there that connected him with fellow student Jeff Greenstein (A84), with whom he would build a long and fruitful collaborative relationship after graduation. The pair hit it off from the beginning, and together founded the Tufts Arts Haus on Sawyer Avenue, a residence for students looking to live in an artistically rich environment that continues to this day. They also ran the Tufts Arts Commission during their undergraduate years on campus, and debuted the still-active Tufts Film Series in 1982, showcasing many of the era’s films on 16 millimeter reels.

With their creative hats now in the same ring, Jeff and Jeff found out quickly that they had the right chemistry to collaborate on a professional level. Though they didn’t know it at the time, their experience working together as student-teachers in the Experimental College would be a marker for things to come.

“I have to give a lot of credit to Howard Woolf, Robyn Gittleman (associate director and director of the Experimental College), and Jeanne Dillon (senior lecturer in American Studies and associate dean of undergraduate education),” said Strauss. “The Ex College’s openness toward film and media presented a huge shift in thinking for me.”

A longtime member of the Communications and Media Studies alumni advisory board, Strauss continues to teach classes and advise seniors with their year-long projects on an intermittent basis, giving back to his creative roots at Tufts. “I’ve always been excited about seeing the CMS program develop and I think its interdisciplinary approach is very unique at Tufts,” he said. “I love getting to see what Tufts kids are bringing to the table, and to observe how they’re preparing for today’s media based upon their unique perspectives.”
On to Hollywood

Strauss grew up a movie buff, and developed a deep affinity for film long before he arrived on campus. But it was through the Experimental College that he finally found an outlet for those interests. He spent a year working at the Somerville Theater in Davis Square after graduation, all the while keeping his eye on an eventual journey to the West Coast with Greenstein.

Like most fledgling Hollywood careers, it took considerable time and effort before finding Strauss and Greenstein found their footing. They wrote and pitched scripts, honed their craft drafting screenplays, and tethered some semblance of stability together through various temp jobs, one of which included a stint working on the ground floor of a comedy network, where Strauss found himself sifting through scripts on a daily basis.

“I came home one day and asked Jeff ‘why don’t we do this?’” said Strauss. “So we started writing and giving scripts to some of the people I was working with.”

Their intrepidness paid off in the form of a writing credit for an episode of The Charmings, a short-lived ‘80s television show created by Tufts alums Robert Sternin (A75) and Prudence Fraser Sternin (J75). More credits with the oh-so-eighties comedies Mr. Belvedere and Charles in Charge followed in 1988. But just as the duo was gaining momentum, the Writers Guild of America went on a five-month strike later that same year, effectively putting their careers on hold. Discouraged about his prospects, Strauss recalls contemplating a return to graduate school as a way out of the entrapment of “selling Hondas and slowly watching my dreams die.”

As bad as the timing of the strike was to their careers, it did allow them to regroup and buy time until the next opportunity presented itself. As the eighties drew to a close, cable television networks continued to push for more daring, original programming, gunning for what Strauss called a “cable-edge” that was allowed to flourish because content restrictions were less stringent than those on network television.

Amid this new environment, the adult-oriented comedy Dream On, created by David Crane and Marta Kauffman, debuted on HBO in 1990, incorporating pseudo-taboo topics ranging from sex to marijuana use, to the First Lady, into a new and provocative telegenic mix.

Strauss and Greenstein would eventually pen or produce nearly 50 of Dream On’s 89 episodes during the first-half of the show’s six-year run. “To be able to have so much writing freedom, coupled with the joy of working with such talented people, was a real gift,” said Strauss. “That show was a turbo boost for us, a multiplier.”

In terms of sheer commercial success, the Strauss/Greenstein express would soon enter warp drive when they joined the production cast of Friends as supervising producers for the show’s first two seasons, again teaming up with Crane and Kaufmann for one of the most successful television runs ever. After hitting a creative plateau with growing roles as supervising producers, they abruptly chose to leave Friends and strike out on their own to create the show Partners in 1996. Though the series had a good cast and generated excellent reviews, it wasn’t the immediate hit – according to Strauss – that the network was hoping for. “I think they thought it would be another Friends,” he said. “But the show simply never had the opportunity to develop traction.”

A new direction

Strauss and Greenstein elected to end their collaborative partnership shortly after the show was cancelled, bringing an end to one of the more fruitful Hollywood partnerships ever to come out of Tufts.

“Afterward, it felt completely different – we had been best friends and writing partners – hanging out together since 1980,” said Strauss. “We were almost inseparable for 17 years.”
Strauss said that after the split, he went through the inevitable period of having to rediscover his own identity. Greenstein went on to work on *Will and Grace*, and then *Desperate Housewives*, while Strauss produced the series *Then Came You, Reba*, and *All of Us*, along with the television film *Life With David J*. He currently serves as executive producer of *Shake It Up!* a lighthearted family comedy series on the Disney Channel. Strauss is also working on a range of development projects, including piecing together ideas for television and at least one film.

“I’m intrigued about possibly branching out into drama, and I have a series in the works that looks at the pressures and realities of the contemporary American family,” he said.

More than 25 years into his career, Strauss is at a comfortable plateau, where he enjoys increased freedom to choose his own work. About 10 years ago he and his wife purchased a small home in Napa Valley, and the idea for Long Table Wines was born. Strauss said the name is a nod to his lifelong affinity for celebrating around the dinner table with friends.

“It’s kind of strange,” said Strauss. “The worlds of wineries and Hollywood are oddly similar.”

Strauss said that the creative process for making wine is, in many ways, slower than writing. He planted his first grapes in 2003 and a decade later he’s finally poised to release several varieties, including a red Rhone, which Strauss said sits in the tradition of a Châteauneuf-du-Pape. There’s also a white and a Volnay in the works.

“It’s just something that sends a little joy to others,” he said of the venture. “It gives added meaning to capturing a moment in time to share with others.”

A capital couple

*By Julie Dobrow and Claudia Schwartz (F14)*

You might call Rebecca Frank (A08) and Aaron Mehta (A08) the digital D.C. power couple. Frank, an associate in global strategy and analytics at Burson-Marsteller in Washington and Mehta, a reporter for *Defense News*, spend a significant amount of their professional lives utilizing the tools of digital marketing, research, and outreach.

Frank’s career path has been one in which a knowledge of digitally-focused work has grown. “When I started my first job, I focused on customer insights for advertising, and the agency I was working in had a separate digital department. So I spent a lot of time answering questions about how people take in information and what is important to them, but I had to stop and let someone else take over when it came time to talk about their online habits” she said.

Two years later, wanting to work more on the digital side of advertising, she “found a position that was only digital, working in digital strategy with foundations and non-profits. That was interesting as well, because all of a sudden, I had moved into the role of ignoring the side where I had come from. I learned a great amount of technical skills in that job, from web development to email strategy to content management, and I realized that I was most interested in data and analytics. Digital communications tools give you a great ability to track and measure and figure out what’s actually happening, as opposed to more traditional measurement tactics, which have to approximate some of these things.”

From there, Frank decided that her next career step would be to find a role in which she could focus on both digital and analytics. “It turns out, I was coming in at the right time,” she noted, “because lots of companies are looking for people who are interested enough in this fairly new topic to help define what it is and how to use it.”
Mehta went from a journalistic job that was “entirely digital” to one that was “more old-school newspaper, but evolving” when he moved over to his current position at Defense News. This publication has a wide readership throughout the defense industry, the Pentagon, and internationally. His work as a reporter focusing on the Air Force includes churning out several articles a week for both the weekly print edition of the paper and also the newer online version. “We’re starting to move more toward the digital world by having an online edition that gets constantly updated, by blogging and by using Twitter,” he noted. “We are constantly trying to find ways to drive traffic and to distribute our content.”

Frank finds that while digital communications are useful in marketing work, it’s also important to realize that they have their limitations. Therefore, her advice to those trying to get a job in digital media is to “try to figure out the way that people use them to communicate. If you are talking to an employer and explain that you, for example, really like the way that the community on Tumblr supports individual members, or that you’ve been tracking your health by reading over your FourSquare check-ins and figuring out which months you went to the gym most, that will show you have a sense for digital.”

Frank and Mehta each credit their Tufts education with providing them with a background they use every day in their work. Frank, an economics major, and Mehta, a history major and CMS minor, both also did some work and study abroad in Asia that provided them with “knowledge about the history and cultures of that part of the world,” as Mehta suggested. Added Frank, this has also been helpful because “…so many U.S. businesses are still trying to understand that part of the world.”

Frank and Mehta’s familiarity with the digital tools of their respective trades has undoubtedly also had another benefit—it’s helped them plan their upcoming wedding. “I have said out loud a number of times that I don’t know how people planned weddings before Google Docs,” admitted Frank. “I’m not much of a Pinterest user as some, but it’s also a huge piece of online wedding planning. And I can honestly say I Yelpped every single vendor before signing a contract!”

**Going up the country**

*Editor’s note: Todd Ellis Kessler (A80), a veteran Hollywood television writer, is now writing for the hit ABC drama Nashville. Not since Robert Altman’s classic 1970s film of the same name has a visual narrative so closely captured the zeitgeist of Music City. And like its cinematic predecessor, it also features original music.*

CMS Director Julie Dobrow recently interviewed Kessler about this new and exciting endeavor.

**JD:** You’ve been involved with a lot of other television projects. What makes Nashville special?

**TK:** Unlike most series, the personality of the location is almost as important as our main characters. Being a Yankee, I had little experience in the South, so capturing the spirit of the city and the music industry which informs so much about the area was a new challenge. It’s gratifying that most people in Nashville love the series and feel that it is authentic. Considering that we write the show from Los Angeles, this is a supreme compliment.

**JD:** What are some of the challenges/opportunities of writing for a show where songs play such a central role?

**TK:** *Nashville* is a special opportunity because each episode incorporates original music as an added device for storytelling. We try to find the right song with the right tone to match both the story and emotions of our main characters. I certainly never had a chance to try that with lawyers and doctors.

**JD:** You co-wrote the episode in which Juliette blows her Good Morning America interview. How did this idea come about and how did you get Robin Roberts aboard for it?
TK: Our main characters are famous country singers so we needed to put them in the same media circus as any real celebrity. Everything that celebrities do today is tracked and commented on by Twitter, Facebook, and the 24/7 news cycle, and we wanted to dramatize that aspect and how it affected their personal lives. Having the support of our network, ABC, helped us reach out to Good Morning America and the Katie Couric Show. It also helped that Katie Couric personally loves Nashville.

JD: You also co-wrote the episode in which we see many different sides of Rayna - her hurt about Teddy and Peggy, her need to "take a vacation from her life" with Liam, her love for Deacon which she's still trying to keep under wraps. What do you have to do to keep writing your lead characters, Rayna and Juliette, as nuanced, complex women who are so much more than their on-stage presences?

TK: Each episode is the product of lengthy conversations among the entire writing staff. Collectively, we play psychologist as we analyze their motivation in each scene, just as all writers do. We also bring our own personal horror stories and those of everyone we know to the discussion. Nothing is sacred in the writers' room and every biographical detail is fuel for material. We just change the names to protect the innocent.

JD: Connie Britton's influence into Rayna's character has received a fair amount of media play. To what extent do the writers work with the actors on issues of character development?

TK: We get feedback from all the actors - particularly Connie Britton and Hayden Panettiere - who bring their own point of view on how the characters would handle each situation. Sometimes the conversations are confrontational, but inevitably they're constructive. Connie has strong opinions but then, so does her character Rayna Jaymes. Sometimes they even feel like one and the same. But constant collaboration between writers and actors makes for good, complicated situations and complex results.

JD: Are you a country music fan? Were you before this show?

TK: I never ever listened to country music before joining the series, but now it's one of the presets on my car radio. I always write with music because it's like a soundtrack that keeps me in the right zone for the scenes, so I can proudly claim that I know the difference between songs by Jason Aldean and Kenny Chesney or Hunter Hayes...I just can't sing 'em!

The elephants in the newsroom

By John Ciampa

It’s roughly five miles from the Tufts campus to the studios of WBUR in Boston, which makes for a relatively swift and easy journey – especially, it appears, for Tufts alumni.

Currently there are six Jumbos at WBUR— the region’s foremost National Public Radio affiliate— who have taken this not-to-distant elephant walk, including John Davidow (A77), Mary Ann Hubbard (AG75), Benjamin Swasey (A08), Lisa Tobin (A08), Laura Grosack (A13), and Communications and Media Studies intern Brionna Jimerson (A13), allowing for a tight camaraderie that’s currently permeating the station’s newsroom.

But while newsrooms are typically breeding grounds for close relationships – with ample bonding time over odd hours, tight deadlines, and ill-timed meals – there’s admittedly something unique going at 890 Commonwealth Avenue.
“I had nothing to do with any of it,” joked Davidow, the station’s executive editor for new media and reluctant ring leader of the Tufts herd. And while Davidow’s brought several David Burke interns on board in conjunction with CMS during his tenure (with Jimerson being the latest), and hired Tobin after she graduated, he noted that sharing such close work quarters with other fellow alumni is largely pure happenstance.

“I think you would find that there are more alumni from Emerson and B.U. here, which makes sense,” he said. “We just happen to take up more room because we’re Jumbos.”

Though each alum offers something wholly different to the newsroom in terms of duties and skill sets, perhaps no one enjoys more ubiquity than Hubbard, who goes by the on-air name of Mary Ann Nichols throughout her workday. Hubbard is the voice you hear regularly on WBUR during programming breaks as she periodically announces the names of the station’s underwriters. Her background as a drama major at Tufts and working at campus radio station WMFO contributes to her smooth, lilting delivery. Hubbard started as a development officer 12 years ago, but moved to the editorial department soon after to copyedit and subsequently to announce her ear-pleasing radio snippets. Prior to coming to WBUR, she worked at the classical music station WCRB.

Before joining WBUR, Davidow enjoyed a highly successful career in television, beginning with a brief internship at Boston’s WBZ Channel 4 in the late-1970s prior to moving into a production role at neighboring WCVB Channel 5. He remained at WCVB until 1998, returning to WBZ as the station’s assistant news director. During his tenure at WBZ, the station’s newsroom garnered the Radio and Television News Directors Association’s Edward R. Murrow Award for Outstanding News Station of the Year for coverage of the John F. Kennedy, Jr. plane crash and the Worcester Cold Storage warehouse fire.

WBUR recruited Davidow to expand its local news coverage in the early-2000s. As technology has progressed, so too has the demand for digital media in radio, hence the creation of the station’s new media division that Davidow now oversees. Among other honors, Davidow and the digital news team earned the Edward R. Murrow Award in 2011 for having the best large market radio website in the country, which stands as a dynamic, multiplatform news hub.

“We’ve placed ourselves on the cutting edge of innovation,” he said. “What we do in digital is really becoming the basis of what we do at WBUR and what we will be doing in the future.”

Tobin and Swasey, who were both CMS minors during their time at Tufts, have also contributed greatly to the development of new media at WBUR. As the station’s senior innovation producer and digital editor, respectively, they hold key roles in the station’s digital news coverage, combining radio, web, and social media into compelling content. Tobin’s role is a new one that mixes program development and experimentation on different platforms. One of the first projects she spearheaded was an enterprise series called “Generation Stuck,” where the digital news team profiled the experiences of young adults in the Boston area attempting to find jobs and build careers, including alum Katherine Round (A08). The series took a multifaceted approach toward its subjects, and included an interactive blog.
Another notable recent examples was the station’s digital coverage of the Boston Marathon bombings. Throughout that event and its ensuing aftermath, Tobin and Swasey kept on top of the latest news reports in real time by vetting and then conveying the coverage of on the scene reportage through a comprehensive blog that lasted more than two weeks. Throughout the coverage, Swasey served as the point person, operating in a variety of capacities.

“I think our coverage of the Marathon bombings amounted to the best of the work we’ve done so far,” said Swasey, who came to WBUR from outside the world of radio and provided a fresh perspective on what a news website could do, according to Davidow.

“Ben’s been fundamental in us becoming multi-platform because he’s a digital-native producer, uncorrupted by radio.” said Davidow.

“It’s one of the reasons we’ve continued to expand, as opposed to some other news outlets,” Tobin said with respect to the station’s digital coverage.

Grosack said she was fortunate to get hired so quickly, and is excited about her new position in the development division, as well as the prospect of working alongside others who share a common background. “I was very fortunate to get a job right after graduating,” she said. “I’ve always been passionate about WBUR, so to be able work for an organization I respect so much is really exciting.”

As for Jimerson, the newly-appointed Burke intern (named after Tufts alum David Burke (A53) and awarded to outstanding Tufts students who hold a potential to excel in a journalism career) is thrilled to be the newest member of the so called “Jumbo Mafia” currently expanding its turf at WBUR.

“I have to pinch myself. I’m just soaking it all in and trying to learn as much as I can from this experience while it lasts.”

Belle Frank (A76), director of strategy and research for Y&R, has just published the book *The Advertising On-Ramp: Getting Your First Advertising Job*.


Neil Swidey (A91), staff writer for *The Boston Globe Magazine*, was recently named a *National Headliner Award* winner for feature writing.

CMS Alumni Board members in the news!

CMS on the Web

Please take a moment to visit our website, where you’ll find photos, useful links, and video files from many of our events. If you have a career update, please send it to John Ciampa.

You can also visit our Facebook page by clicking on the icon above.
Alumni Updates

Arielle Baran (A13) is an assistant account executive at Derris & Company.

Benjamin Bell (A08) is a digital producer for This Week at ABC News in New York.

Ned Berger (A10) recently concluded a two-year stint at Wee Beastie in New York, and will be on the job hunt following a six-week tour of India. In the meantime, you can view his work by clicking here.

Josh Berlinger (A12) is a reporter with the Associated Press, covering the first legislative sessions in Juneau, Little Rock, and Oklahoma City. You can find two of Josh's stories from the national wire here - http://bigstory.ap.org/author/joshua-berlinger.

Melissa Burke (A11) works at FierceMarkets as a marketing solutions coordinator.

Lily Carey (A12) is teaching elementary school in Baltimore.

Emily Chapper (A09) is a research analyst at Turner Broadcasting.

Amy Connors (A12) is enrolled in the doctoral program in sociology at Vanderbilt University.

Marty Donovan (A12) is working as a writer’s assistant for the Disney XD show Kickin’ It.

Daniel Fowler (A03) is the media relations and public affairs officer for the American Sociological Association in Washington D.C.

Emily Friedman (A12) is working at WCG, an integrated communications company in San Francisco.

Rebekah Gilbert (A09) is an account manager at Google.

Ben Gittleson (A11) is a desk assistant at ABC News in New York.

Chelsea Grayson (A12) is attending graduate film school at New York University.

Travis Grodkiewicz (A12) is interning at the Tufts European Center in Talloires, France.

Hannah Ehrlich (A08) is a marketing and publicity manager at Lee & Low Books in Boston.

Melissa Fiorenza (A06) just published the book Twentysomething Girl: 1,001 Quick Tips and Tricks to Make Your Life Easier.

Ally Gimbel (A09) wrote and produced a segment of "Treasures of New York" that aired on WNET.

Lai San Ho (A13) is working as part of the camera team in post-production for Austin de Besche's new film.

Kelly Hyland (A12) is a research assistant at Massachusetts General Hospital’s Mongan Institute for Health Policy.

Claire Kemp (A12) is working as a marketing associate in New York City for True Action.

Niki Krieg (A12) is pursuing a master’s degree in modern European studies at Columbia University.

Alissa Krinsky (J92) is the director of communications for Invenergy LLC, a wind energy company in Chicago.

Elizabeth Landers (A13) is a freelance desk assistant at CNN’s New York City bureau.
Jane Lee (A04) works in home video production at Sesame Workshop. She also produces outreach content, which includes initiatives like “Growing Hope Against Hunger.”

Patrick Lee (A10) is an intern at Will & Tale, a creative production company in Los Angeles.

Katherine Leidl (A13) is working at Fablevision.

Hui Lim (A11) is a digital executive with Newcast in Singapore, the social media and branded content specialist division of ZenithOptimedia.

Shaye Martin (A12) is in the Accelerated Leadership Program in business, marketing, and sales at Dell, Inc. in Austin, TX.

Dave Naden (A08) is a corporate concierge for Les Concierges, a travel company in San Francisco.

Julia Nagel (A08), a digital marketing analyst at Voxiva in Washington D.C., recently produced this piece on cervical cancer at HIV in women.

Kenim Obaigbena (A11) is a video director in New York City. Check out her recent work at http://vimeo.com/kenimo.

Romy Oltuski (A11) is a features assistant at Harper’s Bazaar in New York City.

Griffin Pepper (A10) is a communications associate at the D.C.-based public affairs firm Dewey Square Group.

Simone Press (A08) is an editorial recruiter at the Huffington Post.

Laurie Rabin (A13) is a production assistant at Nick Jr.

Amanda Roberts (A11) is an operations associate at Hill Holliday in Boston.

Lizzy Roberts (A12) is working at NASA in California on a project called NASA ArtSpace.

Daniel Rosen (A10) is working at Fullscreen, a media company that creates content for YouTube.

Kathryn Robinson (A12) is working in marketing and social media strategy for a music startup company affiliated with Spotify called “PlayMySong” in Helsinki, Finland.

Hilary Sieber (A12) is a research assistant at WNET/THIRTEEN in New York.

Patrice Taddonio (A06) is an account manager at PBS’ Frontline in Boston.

Meredith Turits (A09), an online associate editor for Glamour, was recently profiled at Levo League.

Sarah Ullman (A10) is a producer/manager at Maker Studios in Los Angeles.

Saumya Vaishampayan (A12) is a reporter for MarketWatch in New York City.

Jeremy White (A09) is a reporter for the Sacramento Bee.

Rosanna Xia (A11), a staff writer for The Los Angeles Times, played a big part in this story: “Inspired by a photo, a reader’s kindness makes a big difference.”

Erin Yoon (A12) is interning in Boston for the non-profit organization, United Planet.
Senior Projects

Editor’s note: Roughly 65 percent of our large graduating class elected to do a CMS Senior Project. This is an original “capstone” project, meant to tie together the CMS minor in an area of particular interest to each student. Some of our seniors write theses based on research or empirical investigation, but most of them do other things: write screenplays or television pilots, shoot and edit films, design media literacy campaigns, develop social media around a particular topic, produce podcasts, mount multimedia performance pieces, and so much more. Below you’ll find a small sampling of some of this year’s outstanding Senior Projects:

Elliott Davis - The Inside Pitch: How the Media Shaped Baseball’s Steroid Era

I believe that the media played a significant role in baseball’s steroid era. Because the sport was coming back to life in the late 1990s after the players’ strike of 1994, there was an intense pressure put on sports journalists not to rock the boat, despite clear evidence that players were cheating. Therefore, journalists were too afraid to expose the scandal and they kept their mouths closed and their typing fingers holstered, and this allowed for the secret to get more and more ugly. If it weren’t for this, baseball may not have experienced such long-term damages to its image and accountability, and more recovery time could have been possible. In my research paper for my CMS Senior Project, I provided an historical overview and analysis of the MLB’s steroid era in an effort to show why the media was so silent.

Lizz Grainger - Wisteria Lane

My CMS senior project was a pilot for a television series that is a spinoff of the hit show Desperate Housewives. My series, titled Wisteria Lane, captured the original flavor of desperation and secrets; it reconnects dedicated Desperate Housewives fans to the beloved street by establishing new connections with new characters that lead interesting and different lives, but still live in the neighborhood that is known for its secrets. I had a lot of fun listening to my own neighbors’ stories, incorporating them into my pilot episode, and inflating them to make my dramedy pop. Writing this screenplay was the highlight of my Tufts academic career. Not only did I learn the conventions and formatting for screenwriting, but I kept the nature of Wisteria Lane alive, which I miss watching every Sunday, and filled the hole in my heart that the Desperate Housewives series finale left me.

Madeline Hall – Journalists Under Fire: Intersections of Freedom and the Turkish State in Journalistic Practices

The focus of my research pertained to the legal and professional constraints placed on press freedom in Turkey as a function of an increasingly authoritarian executive power overseen by the ruling Justice and Development Party. The biggest challenge to this process was addressing the many different social, political, and ethnic conditions that inform this phenomenon without trivializing any single component. However, the opportunity to interview individuals in Turkey as part of a research trip in January of 2013 deeply heightened my understanding of the issue and helped parse out the more intertwined aspects of my topic.

Kaitlyn Leidl - When Textbooks Go Digital: How iBooks Are Transforming Education

For my CMS senior project, I created an iBook. iBooks are interactive textbooks specifically for iPads that provide multidimensional platforms to educate. My iBook curriculum was called "Follow the Leader: Is It That Simple?” and focused on leadership development for eighth grade students. Using the application iBooks Author, I created the content of my iBook using many different platforms such as YouTube videos, book excerpts, PDF articles, websites, discussion questions, sketchpads to draw ideas, word-searches, and more. In utilizing all iBooks Author had to offer, I was able to get a firsthand look at digital education. iBooks appear to be a wonderful way to supplement education, making learning more exciting and tangible.
Laurie Rabin - STEM in Preschool Television & Curious George Spec

This project involved both research and creative components. I did research on the presence of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) in television shows available today for preschool viewers, curriculum development and STEM standards for young children, and effective methodology for television production with educational objectives. Then, using that research in combination with input from academic and industry advisors, I put the research into practice by writing a spec script of the STEM-focused preschool television show, Curious George. While Curious George addresses many elements of STEM, I focused my episode on computer programming, a topic that is rarely covered in preschool content. The process and openness of the CMS senior project provided me with the opportunity to gain a rich academic and creative background in the field that I am planning to enter after graduation, giving me confidence and relevant experience in children's media.

Veronica Richter - Marketing to Teenage Girls: Ethical Guidelines and Creative Insights for Marketers in the Cosmetics Industry

This was a research project that sought to pin-point the developmental and psychological changes and vulnerabilities in the adolescent girl population that are constantly manipulated by marketers. The goal of the project was to create an ethically-minded campaign for a beauty product that abided by and respected this sensitive and impressionable time in a woman’s life. What I found most interesting and promising about the project is that by not respecting developmental changes during adolescence and doing whatever it takes to sell a product, marketers are creating increasingly similar campaigns that in a print-magazine context all look more or less the same. This creates a tremendous opportunity for ethically marketed products to stand out using ethical techniques. As an aspiring marketer, I found this incredibly exciting and felt more hopeful in thinking that marketers could actually have a positive impact the world.

Rebecca Santiago – “Once she's talked about, she's done for” – or is she? The fallen woman, the media circus, and Cat Marnell

Last summer, I and much of the New York publishing industry became obsessed with Cat Marnell, a web writer who rose to notoriety during her tenure as xoJane.com's beauty editor. Marnell wrote candidly about her drug use, and caused a small scandal with a public meltdown that culminated in her quitting her job at xoJane to "[smoke] angel dust with [her] friends." What ensued was a small media circus, in which the press attempted to paint her as a 21st-century Edie Sedgwick. Marnell, however, alternately played into and defied that definition of herself, embracing the "downtown disaster" stereotype but asserting her agency through personal essays and calculated personal branding. My project examined the way Marnell both played into and was played by the press, and attempted to pinpoint and articulate her je ne sais quoi. I used my research to write feature-length articles, and devised a plan for pitching those to a number of web and print publications.

Alex Schmider – The uncertain Future of the Social Entertainment Experience

My senior project examined the potential consequences of increasingly privatized entertainment experiences. In other words, I was interested in evaluating how the proliferation of media technologies and the diversification of viewing preferences for movie watching might more broadly influence social relationships, particularly those in the family.

As exhibited both by an extensive literature review of the most preponderant movie exhibition forms and sociocultural patterns in the past century, and through the assessment of popular themes in led focus group discussions, I found that, as individuals increasingly watch on their own devices, customize screening schedules, and self-select content, the family audience inherently disseminates into independent members on entirely unique entertainment consumption trajectories. While my project was not able to answer all questions about possible implications for this trend, it did inspire new questions to be asked about our most important relationships and the way those are maintained within a more privatized entertainment environment.
A semester at GateHouse Media

By Nina Arazoza (A13)

Editor’s note: For each newsletter CMS asks one of its students to write a story based on their internship experience. For this edition, we asked Nina Arazoza to share her experience working for GateHouse Media, which owns and operates a number of weekly and daily newspapers and websites across the region. Arazoza worked as a general assignment reporter, covering the Boston suburbs of Malden and Watertown.

A couple of months ago I had absolutely zero confidence in my ability to find a job or even an internship. As a second semester senior who opted to spend a full calendar year abroad I felt very behind. It seemed that everybody around me was preparing for interviews and signing contracts (even if it was just a handful of engineers and economics majors).

While my experience in Santiago, Chile, taught me plenty about navigating foreign institutions, Chilean politics, and cultural nuances, I spent little time contemplating my professional future. I interned at the Santiago Times while abroad but I was still concerned that I had forfeited potentially invaluable summer internship opportunities in exchange for my language skills and an unconventional school year.

After wrapping up my capstone research paper and final major requirements I was finally ready to redirect my attention. My experience in journalism, no interest in diplomacy, and general lack of a clue about any other industry lead me to pursue an editorial internship with GateHouse Media.

As any international relations major knows, we spend the majority of the semester reading until our eyes bleed and the time that’s left over analyzing and writing about what we read. It sounds pretty simple but above all it teaches us to have a critical eye and to hone our writing skills. I felt that this skill set was applicable to reporting.

This thought process lead me to the Malden Observer and the Watertown Tab, two local weekly publications owned by Gatehouse. I spent the semester splitting my time between the two papers and writing on a wide spectrum of local issues. It might seem like there is little connection between community news and coursework on international politics, but I’ve found that they both require patience and a willingness to dig deeper about important issues.

My time with GateHouse has also resulted in countless discussions about the state of newspapers and journalism in general. My internship supervisor was prone to lengthy rants on just about any topic, but my personal favorite is the “newspapers are hurting but news isn’t going anywhere” rant. The fate of print publications is a hot button issue right now but there is nothing quite like seeing firsthand how individual publications are affected by the change.

Above all the internship has pushed me to think, not just about local issues, but about my interest in publishing. I most likely will not pursue a career in journalism because my affinity for feature articles has pushed me towards long form media and other types of publishing, but that is a realization I never would have made if I didn’t decide to intern at GateHouse.

This semester has given me the chance to explore my professional interests and regain some of the confidence I was stripped of as a junior. It has taught me that the best way to alleviate job search anxiety is to just get out there and try something—even if it’s not in the field you ultimately end up in you will still learn.
The Old Guy project

By Jennifer Burton

Editor’s note: filmmaker Jennifer Burton came to Tufts in the fall of 2012. Based in the Drama and Dance Department and Communications and Media Studies, she teaches classes in film criticism and this spring pioneered a new class in film production. She reports here about the premiere of this creative new course.

When my student, senior Lai-San Ho (A13), was hired by award-winning cinematographer Austin de Besche the day after he worked with her on our Tufts production shoot of Old Guy, I was elated. I knew that my idea to create a professional film experience for students was already off to a great beginning.

Let me back up. When I came to Tufts this fall from California as a professor of the practice in film, one of my goals was to provide students with a real-life mentoring experience from working filmmakers. I wanted to give my students exposure to valuable real-world film production, while also getting them involved in a project that was socially engaged.

We decided to do a comedic web series called Old Guy, about the stereotyped depictions of aging in American media. The series was inspired by my real-life father – a professor-turned-actor-at 75 – who pointed out that the script and commercial roles he is called for are often based around “Old Guy” stereotypes (e.g. “Old Guy Lecher,” “Old Guy Senile,” “Old Guy Incontinent”). By contrast, each of our “webisodes” begins with a stereotype role, then expands into the much more complex reality of “Old Guy’s” actual life.

I was buoyed by the enthusiasm and generous offers of collaboration of the professors already interested in developing independent film at Tufts, including Drama professors Sheriden Thomas and Natalya Baldyga, our production designer Ted Simpson and costume designer Linda Ross Girard, also of the Drama department, along with filmmaker Don Schechter (A01, G03) and Tufts film pioneers Howard Woolf and Julie Dobrow. I worked with my production company colleagues (Five Sisters Productions) and asked favors of friends in the industry.

The team of writers included award-winning screenwriter and novelist Gabrielle Burton (my mom!), and television veteran Darin Henry (Seinfeld, Shake it Up!). Our actors included the series stars Roger Burton (The Jay Leno Show, Up All Night) and Peri Gilpin from Frasier, along with Tufts alums Erik Leupp (A12) and Elly Bernstein (A12), a costume designer.

In class, my students learned about producing by having hands-on experience from script to screen. More than an internship experience, they gave input and were part of the creative team. They researched media imagery of aging, and explored related academic subjects, including the social impact of media, demographic separation of age-based entertainment, and issues facing aging Americans. They participated in casting actors for the two weekend Boston shoots and learned how to launch a successful Kickstarter campaign to get themselves to Los Angeles for the third part of the filming.

On the set of Old Guy
Doing a web series, we were able to keep costs low and give the project a real chance to be seen - thus expanding the professional credit opportunity for students. But a big part of my goal was also teaching my students not to chase the numbers or try to make something just to make money or get fame. I wanted students to understand the artistic and social aspects of filmmaking - to think about what they're making, why they are putting something into the world, what they are trying to say, and to remember that storytelling matters. In the end, the goal is to have the three and four minute episodes of Old Guy cross demographic lines and appeal to college students as well as their parents and grandparents - making viewers laugh while making them think.

I couldn’t be more pleased about the comments I’ve been receiving from students about their experiences.

Sam Plasmati (A13) said: “Working on Old Guy has been like nothing else I've done at Tufts. I've had plenty of experience studying film academically or experimenting with “guerrilla filmmaking” (a few students trying to whip up a film project with whatever resources they could scrounge up and no budget), but Old Guy has been my first chance to actually see first-hand what it's like to work in this industry. It was an incredible experience, and the chance to actually come to L.A. and work with professionals was something I never thought I'd get the chance to do through a Tufts class.”

Bruce Wang (A13) said he appreciated learning “how to successfully run a Kickstarter campaign and how to talk to professionals in order to assemble a crew of passionate filmmakers. "Another valuable aspect of the class was the opportunity we had to see the Burton sisters direct actors,” he said. As a student filmmaker, I rarely get the chance to see how a real director works with an actor, how they deal with tension, how they elicit the performances they want from an actress, and how to handle the challenges of directing child actors. I will remember what Jenn and her sister Gabrielle said about assembling a team of people who genuinely care about the project. The best film shoots tend to be the ones in which people are invested in the project and where there is a welcoming and fun environment created on the set.”

Ho also noted that “Old Guy was different from any other film practice course at Tufts in that rather than working as individuals or in small groups on our own little projects, we were all working on one major league project. That allowed us to specialize and it also made the stakes much higher, which pushed us to work harder than ever. Getting to collaborate with professional crew was another thing that set Old Guy apart. I learned an immense amount about what the actual jobs of different people on a set are, about how to be effective at producing, directing, lighting...you name it, and especially about the intricacies of the area I focused on, which was cinematography. Plus, I was able to make connections with people in the industry in both Boston and L.A.”

We are talking about making this an annual class, and I’m excited about the possibilities. I’ve been really pleased to see how students have blossomed and grown over the semester, already applying the skills they’ve been learning with Old Guy to their own passion projects.

I wasn't sure what was going to happen when I had the idea, and frankly, it's been exhausting, but I felt passionate about bringing this new production opportunity to Tufts, and I'm really proud of the team that came together to make it happen, especially because we were able to draw together students, professors, and creative talents from CMS, International Literary and Visual Studies, Drama and Dance, the Experimental College, and other departments. This was a project bigger than the self on multiple levels, and I look forward to what we’ll be able to do in the future.
Carrying on the good fight

By Madeline Hall (A13)

No event is as highly anticipated by the Communications and Media Studies Program as the annual Edward R. Murrow Forum on Issues in Journalism.

This year’s forum, the eighth, took place on April 26 and featured noted alumnus Jonathan Tisch (A76) reprising his interviewing role opposite featured guest Christiane Amanpour, CNN’s chief international correspondent and ABC’s global affairs anchor.

Amanpour’s stunning career in international reporting reflects many of the achievements claimed by the forum’s namesake, Edward R. Murrow, whose own career took flight with on-the-ground coverage of wartime London. Covering the Gulf War was Amanpour’s first major assignment, and her unrelenting initiative landed her on the frontlines of the conflict representing CNN, the then-burgeoning cable television news network. Amanpour credited the network not only with the launching of her career, but with the triumph of the war itself, stating “I think it is by general consensus that CNN won the Gulf War.”

Her career took her to Bosnia next in her most notable correspondent role. Covering the conflict that had escalated outside the observation of the international community, Amanpour described the first instance of living in repressed fear while reporting. Comparing her reporting of the genocide in Bosnia as opposed to the Gulf War, Amanpour said, “The real fear is when you are reporting that you aren’t an observer standing anywhere on the side, you are an observer who happens to be inside with the civilian population and therefore you are at equal risk… to do that day after day, week after week, year after year, builds up a massive reservoir of repressed fear, because if you don’t repress it you can’t do your job.”

Despite fear’s pervading presence in many of the conflicts she would cover, Amanpour does not define her life by it. During the forum she spoke about her Iranian upbringing at the dawning of the nation’s 1979 revolution, when Amanpour was introduced to political strife at an early age. Despite confronting the dangers of the new religiously-mandated state, Amanpour acknowledged her physical and psychological well-being in childhood. Rather than creating discord in her philosophical outlook, she reflected “that my worldview was laid (in Iran) by the fact that I was borne of a Muslim Iranian father and a catholic British mother. There was never any question that the religions couldn’t cooperate.” The inability of the religious discord in Iran to disrupt this inner harmony of her own family’s beliefs further strengthened Amanpour’s resolve.
Of particular significance to the Tufts media community is Amanpour’s success as a female reporter. Speaking to an audience that included the female heads of the four major media sources on campus – the Daily, the Observer, WMFO, and TUTV – Amanpour’s insistence on equal pay for equal work resonated sharply.

“Look,” she said, “I grew up in Iran in a patriarchal society, and yet I never once felt that there was anything that I couldn’t do because I was a woman. That was never communicated to me ever.” Bordering on incredulous, Amanpour’s frustration with female professional marginalization brought the issue to the front page during the forum, and not simply as a “women’s issue.” In a call to action of sorts, Amanpour declared that “it’s time that we all leveraged our economic power and learned how to negotiate to get exactly what we want as fiercely as men know how to negotiate, and never ever, ever accept to be paid a penny less for equal work as your male colleagues. Ever.”

In response to a question posed by Tisch about the problems and promise of being a female reporter, Amanpour said that her gender enabled her to get certain stories that males colleagues simply could not get. “Because I’m a woman I could go into the kitchen and interview the Egyptian woman who had acid thrown on her” she said. “But I am also the reporter who got an exclusive with Hosnei Mubarak” – and that, said Amanpour, had nothing to do with being a woman.

Gender disparities in journalism do not encompass every problem faced by the profession. Speaking on the infusion of opinion into what was once a fact-based profession, Amanpour asserted that “it is even more incumbent upon us now to be the eyes and ears as a professional journalist and to get up off our seats and go to those places, be able to bring back the reality of what’s going on there.”

Whether or not the next generation of journalists had the stuff of respectable reporting, Amanpour appeared confident that young reporters will keep the truth as a goal above all else.
Taking it to the streets

By John Ciampa

It’s rare that a college course thrusts students directly into the worlds they are learning about. More commonly, classroom-based learning is a passive experience that resides outside the real world: you absorb information, analyze and contextualize it, use it as a basis for research, and then present your findings.

But what Gail Bambrick, a senior marketing communications writer at Tufts who also teaches, discovered long ago in her classes that often intermingle theory and practice, is that the best kind of learning is often found beyond academic buildings, in environments outside the ivory tower that demand students apply their knowledge in practical and tangible ways.

Among Bambrick’s courses is a “Social Marketing” class she teaches each spring. In the past, the class focused on having students develop marketing and communications strategies for local organizations as a means toward improving their scope and outreach—a model largely based in theory and conception that remains. But this past spring, Bambrick elected to take that concept a step further—the course would no longer exist as a purely theoretical one, but would instead move beyond the development stage and into the realm of implementation, with students pounding the pavement to seek out and work directly with local non-profits beyond the safe confines of campus.

Together with colleagues Steve Atlas, a seasoned public television producer, and Jesse Littlewood, a project manager for the digital campaign firm EchoDitto, Bambrick established a syllabus centered on the notion of combining research and application. Together the three discovered that having students learn successful marketing concepts while assisting small and often-underfunded local enterprises made for a win-win situation, all the while dovetailing the interests of Tufts and its promotion of “active citizenship” with the surrounding community. Bambrick, Atlas, and Littlewood also worked with Shirley Mark, director of the Lincoln Filene Center for Community Partnerships at the Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, to identify several local non-profit organizations in the Medford and Somerville area in need of help with their communications and media outreach.

The course was structured around dividing the class into small groups assigned to different organizations of their choosing. During the semester, each group had to meet with members from its organization at least three times to slowly build a rapport with each group, all the while introducing them to marketing ideas and techniques that could potentially propel the organizations toward realizing their goals.

Lea Ruscio, the interim executive director at the Center for Arts at the Armory, located on Highland Avenue in Somerville, said that her organization’s biggest challenge is publicity and outreach, something that Bambrick’s students were able to buoy by augmenting the center’s social media presence through a targeted campaign strategy based on their research about the center’s work and those who utilize it.

“We received a marketing and social media strategy from the students and also a series of recommendations for moving forward,” she said. “What’s most helpful is that they not only provided ideas, but also outlooks and expectations based on their research—they’re not just saying that we need a membership program, they’re also outlining for us how that would look and who our targeted audience might be.”

“It was a challenging, learning-type process,” said Jane Lee (A14), one of the students who worked directly with Ruscio. “We really had to get to know the organization and its culture before we could make appropriate recommendations.”

Bambrick credits Atlas with putting forth the idea of working with non-profits and getting students to consider their applications outside the classroom. She also admits that prior to his involvement, the scope of the class was much broader in its scope and therefore more nondescript, in that students could simply conceptualize freely because they wouldn’t necessarily be employing their ideas. It was, in a sense, more hypothetical, but also less real.
“This class was different because we had real organizations,” she said. “It became a way for students to actually learn about how to work with clients—a skill they’ll need after graduation.”

The class also brought in guest speakers to fortify what it would take to work successfully with those clients, providing an outline of real-world needs and demands while also feeding students with the insights about how they could pinpoint marketing strategies based on their own knowledge of communication and marketing theory.

**Social marketing in action**

One of the student groups joined forces with the Medford Boys and Girls Club to enhance the organization’s scope and outreach. After several site visits, the group established a deep connection with the club and was able to set up an event with former Boston Bruin Tom Songin.

The students joined Songin for the public relations event at the club in late-April, which included a gym hockey game and an autograph session with close to 75 children. It was one of the club’s biggest events of the year.

“The experience of working with an organization in a hands-on way is what makes this class,” said Nikki Bank (A15). “Our only limitation was that they weren’t always able to implement everything we suggested because of time constraints or staffing issues.”

“Those are the challenges we’ve always faced,” said Jacqueline Rudis, the club’s director. “But the students brought us really sound ideas and presented them with lots of energy and enthusiasm. It’s important for non-profits to get that kind of support.”

Kevin Soh (A13) echoed Bank’s and Rudis’ comments, and in doing so presents one of the central challenges of the course. In theory, it sounds like the perfect idea, but these types of organizations often require the kind of long-term and consistent support that doesn’t fit neatly into an academic calendar, or for that matter, a revolving student body.

“What happens when the course ends?” said Atlas. “That’s something that we’re wrangling with.”

One idea is to slowly build up relationships with a set number of organizations that students can return to in subsequent semesters. The organizations could then be rotated into the course depending on fit and need.

“It’s an important question to consider,” said Bambrick. “We certainly want to take the long view with this class, and we also believe it’s in the best interest of Tufts to invest in what we’re trying to do.”