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University appoints UK's first chair in digital journalism

Distinguished US academic joins leading school of journalism

Having joined forces to exploit the benefits of new and emerging digital technology, the Department of Journalism at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) and Johnston Press plc (JP) are pleased to announce the appointment of Professor Jane Singer as the Johnston Press Chair in Digital Journalism.

Jane, an Associate Professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Iowa, will play a pivotal role in enabling the UCLan/JP collaboration to exploit the benefits of new and emerging digital technology.

Commenting on her appointment Jane said: "I'm very excited to have the opportunity to work with the University of Central Lancashire and Johnston Press to explore how newspapers, and the people who rely on them, can benefit from the ongoing shift to a world of digital information. This is a period of fundamental change for the news media, so there are lots of possibilities!"

Jane's research into digital journalism has been published widely, including analysis of newsroom convergence, journalist bloggers and online newspaper coverage of U.S. elections. She is on the editorial board of a number of influential academic journals and is associate editor of *Convergence: The Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*.

At Iowa, she teaches conceptual and hands-on classes in online media, as well as undergraduate courses in editing, journalism ethics and political coverage, and graduate courses in communication technology and theory.

Jane's professional experience included 10 years in the editorial department of what evolved into the Prodigy interactive service. She was Prodigy's first news manager, in charge of one of the first around-the-clock news products ever to be delivered to Americans' homes through a computer. She also has five years experience as a

reporter and editor at three daily newspapers in the eastern United States.

Tim Bowdler, Chief Executive of Johnston Press said: "We are delighted to welcome Jane Singer to the Johnston Press Chair in Digital Journalism. We look forward to working with her in the essential task of exploring, developing and implementing new digital forms of factual content creation, production and dissemination."

The appointment marks another step in the growing relationship between JP and UCLan's Department of Journalism, who advised and supported JP in the development of their multi-media newsroom at the Lancashire Evening Post in Preston this year. Following the success of this pilot, JP is now rolling out digital newsrooms across the group, again with dedicated support from UCLan's journalism department.

Head of Department Mike Ward said: "Jane's appointment is a significant development. The digital future holds many uncertainties for journalists and the news industry. To address these, we need to be guided by rigorous research and analysis, not simply gut instinct and anecdotal evidence. Johnston Press is to be commended for its commitment and far-sightedness in making this investment. We are excited by Jane's arrival and our future collaboration in this critically important area."

The Chair's work will be supported by the development of a Digital Media Centre at UCLan. This £1.2 million facility will undertake cutting-edge applied research, examining digital applications such as the development of user-generated content. An announcement on the funding for the Centre is imminent.

Research will also inform curriculum development and teaching across postgraduate and undergraduate courses in the department, one of the largest and longest-established journalism schools in the UK.

Ends.

Notes to Editor

- Johnston Press was first established in Falkirk in 1767 as F. Johnston & Co Ltd. Today Johnston press has in its portfolio many titles that have been servicing local markets for over 200 years, with the Stamford Mercury celebrating 300 years in 1996.

- In 1988, F. Johnston & Co Ltd became a fully listed public company on the London Stock Exchange and changed its name to Johnston Press plc.
- Johnston Press is currently the 2nd largest publisher of local and regional newspapers in the UK and currently hosts almost 300 local internet sites.
- UCLan's Department of Journalism, one of the most highly ranked in government-sponsored quality assessments, has over 40 years' experience of journalism education.
- The Department enjoys extensive links with the media industries. Professional journalists and editors frequently visit Preston to meet and work with our students.
- The majority of the Department's graduates seek careers in professional journalism and have succeeded in gaining employment with the BBC, the Press Association, national and regional newspapers, radio and TV stations, and online news providers.

Jane Singer: Additional biographical details

Jane's primary teaching and research interests are in the area of online journalism, particularly the intersection of print and interactive media. She is especially interested in media ethics and in the sociology of online news work, or the people and processes behind the creation of online journalism.

Jane holds a Ph.D. in journalism from the University of Missouri-Columbia, an M.A. in liberal studies from New York University and a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Georgia. Her research has appeared in a variety of academic publications, including "Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly," "Journalism Studies" and "Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism." Her new book about the ethics of online journalism, co-authored with Cecilia Friend of Utica College in New York, is scheduled to be published in 2007 by M.E. Sharpe.

Jane currently is an associate editor of "Convergence: The Journal of Research into New Media Technologies," housed at the University of Bedfordshire, UK; and an editorial board member of "Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly," the "Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication," "Journalism Studies" (housed at the University of Cardiff, Wales, UK) and the "Journal of Mass Media Ethics," as well as a new journal launching next year called "Journalism Practice" (also to be housed at Cardiff). She is a contributing editor of "Media Ethics" magazine and is active in the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and the International Communication Association.