



**VICTORIA GALLAGHER**

President

Southern States  
Communication  
Association  
vgallagh@ncsu.edu

## The Pursuit of Innovation

What an honor it is to serve as your SSCA President! As I look back on the events and panels of last year’s conference in Greenville, SC and forward to the mid-year meeting of the executive council at NCA and to our conference in Nashville, TN (Go Jason and conference planning team!), I am struck once again by the vitality and innovativeness of our association and its members. Indeed, as

our current strategic plan indicates, SSCA is dependent on a highly engaged and principled membership, upon the connections we make with our various constituents, and on the development of meaningful individual and professional relationships. But without the innovations that our members contribute in pedagogy, in scholarship, in performance, and in practice, we would be little more than a kind of social club with some admittedly weird rituals.

Innovation is on my mind once again this summer as I work with a team of scholars and digital production experts to prepare to exhibit the Virtual Martin Luther King (vMLK) project at the Smithsonian Museum

of American History the weekend of October 13-15, 2017 (<https://vmlk.chass.ncsu.edu/>). The vMLK exhibition will be part of a larger event called the ACCelerate Creativity and Innovation Festival, meant to showcase the academic/scholarly work of faculty from the ACC universities. Planners of the event have indicated they expect between 30,000-40,000 visitors over the course of the three-day weekend.

The interpretive framework that informs the vMLK project is based on Kim Gallon’s concept of a *technology of recovery*, a term which describes black digital humanities

Please see **Innovation**, page 5

## There ain’t No Tear in my Beer Because Nashville’s almost here!

April 4-8, 2018 we’ll gather in Nashville for SSCA’s 88th annual convention. We put our call for papers out late May/early June. I’m not sure when this little gem of an article will be published, but I’m writing this mid-July 2017 and we are open for submissions; the deadline is September 8, 2017. And folks seem to be generally digging the theme: “Muses and Musings in the Music City.” I think the theme offers us a lot of possibilities to reflect, consider our inspirations, consider the differences we can make, etc... If this article is published before September 8th, I encourage the reader to consult the full call on our SSCA homepage, [www.sscanet.net](http://www.sscanet.net). And thus far the planning process has gone very smoothly. The division and interest group planners have been Rock Stars, though most of our work will come after the September 8th deadline. Big thanks in advance to ev-



**JASON MUNSELL**

First  
Vice President

Southern States  
Communication  
Association

[jmunsell@columbiascedu](mailto:jmunsell@columbiascedu)

everyone involved in the planning processes. I will report on and offer a rough draft of the full program at our NCA meeting this November. For submitters, you should hear back from us late October or early November. Please note that the deadline for our UHC (Undergraduate Honors Conference) is in December and our new 2nd VP, Pam Bourland-Davis, is doing a fantastic job preparing for that conference.

I’m pleased to announce (unless something bad and huge happens) that NPR’s Ann Powers will serve as our keynote speaker at our annual awards luncheon on Saturday, April 7th, 2018. Ann serves as NPR Music’s critic and correspondent. She writes for their music blog, and we hear her on various NPR music programs.

Please see **Nashville**, page 5

**INSIDE  
THIS ISSUE**

Director’s  
Notes  
Page 2

UHC  
Nashville  
Page 3

Conscience and  
Connection  
Page 4

SSCA  
Podcast  
Page 4

Click to connect  
with SSCA.



# From the Director

## Annual Financial Review Underway

August is the month when SSCA undergoes its annual financial review. The review will be completed by John D. Harvard, Certified Public Accountants & Business Advisors. Mr. Harvard's firm has been completing the annual reviews for SSCA dating back to Emmett Winn's term as Executive Director. As soon as the review is completed and the report from it is received, the results and related documents will be posted to the SSCA website.

## Preconference Site Visit

A pre-conference visit to the Sheraton Nashville Downtown Hotel is scheduled for August 24 and 25 for First Vice President Jason Munsell, Executive Director Jerry Hale, and ConferenceDirect representative Janet Fisher. A summer visit to the site of the upcoming conference is a regular part



**Jerold L.  
HALE**

Executive Director

Southern States  
Communication  
Association

director@ssca.net

of the SSCA calendar and to do list. It is a critical part of the conference planning process since it will have been three years since the Executive Director and Time and Place Committee Chair would have done the initial site visit. The pre-conference visit allows the First Vice President an opportunity to see the meeting space and begin planning for the best possible utilization of the meeting rooms and banquet spaces.

## Conference Submission Deadline

As a reminder to the postings and email sent in June, the deadline for receipt of submissions to the Nashville conference is September 8. The call for submissions, which was distributed in several ways, may be found on the SSCA home page.

## New Dues Structure Takes Effect

At the annual conference in Greenville, based on a recommendation by the Finance Committee, the membership approved a new dues structure for SSCA. Those dues took effect August 1.

# CONNECTIONS

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**Jerold L. Hale**  
Executive Director

**Thomas Ezell**  
Editor and Designer

Southern States  
Communication Association

School of Humanities  
and Social Sciences

2 Greenway  
Charleston, SC 29424

**Don't forget to visit the SSCA website at [www.ssca.net](http://www.ssca.net)!**

# BOGO – Why Not in Nashville?



**Pamela  
BOURLAND-  
DAVIS**

**Second  
Vice President**

Southern States  
Communication  
Association

pamelagb@georgiasouthern.edu

Those ever-present research papers can be both rewarding and daunting – perhaps for the faculty as much as the students. For students, the Theodore Clevenger Undergraduate Honors Conference, provides the students a chance to “buy one get one,” or, effectively, the chance to double and triple the value of their work. An accepted submission also means an enticing trip to Nashville.

Getting students from your university to Nashville begins with your sharing information about the UHC.

Dr. Chris Geyerman of Georgia Southern University has had student papers submitted and accepted for about twenty years consecutively now. He said he uses what amounts to a looping approach where students who presented at the UHC are asked to share their experience in current classes, and if available the next term, are asked to recount their experiences again. He also indicated that he tells students

the submission process early in the term, e-mails the call for UHC papers, and reminds students again as they are working on their final projects.

Emily Arnold, one of Geyerman’s students, said that her professors had encouraged her to submit. “Having them reach out to me like that convinced me that my papers were worthy of being submitted and accepted.” Another student, Ashley Whittemore, similarly said that she had received positive feedback, and the UHC allowed her to “showcase her work to a large audience that also appreciates communication research.”

Whittemore had such a positive UHC experience in 2016 that she completed a study independently—not for any class—on a subject about which she was passionate, and submitted it for the 2017 conference.

Arnold, who is completing an internship this summer, talked about the UHC presentation in terms of providing more confidence. “I also loved having a cheering squad in the room made up of my Georgia Southern peers and professors.”

Geyerman said, “After presenting, I think they feel a real sense of accomplishment, and a new appreciation for the scholarship in our discipline.”

Both Whittemore, now working for an arts center, and Arnold stressed that the

UHC presentations were helpful to them beyond the classroom.

Arnold, who put her presentation on her resume, said that the interviewer asked her directly about the experience. She added, “I essentially presented my personal research again to my interviewer on a much smaller scale.” She said, “It showed me that hiring managers do pay attention to accomplishments listed on resumes, and that I should be proud to have had the opportunity to present at the UHC.”

Whittemore said that she is constantly presenting ideas and strategies to her supervisors. “The UHC challenged me to be more receptive to feedback and criticism, and taught me to be more objective when an idea is presented that I might not personally agree with or believe in.”

As your fall term begins, pull that Theodore Clevenger Undergraduate Honors Conference call for papers, and start looking for those students you can encourage to apply—that encouragement makes a difference. Research, whether in the form of traditional papers or in applied formats, will be due at the end of the term, December 15, 2017. Papers will be reviewed anonymously.

For those student papers accepted, “buying one” and getting multiple benefits sounds like pretty good odds—especially in Nashville.

## Welcome Phillip Byrd

On August 1, Phillip Byrd began providing IT assistance for SSCA. Phillip has a B.A. in political science from Auburn University and has one more semester of classes to complete his B.S. in computer science at the College of Charleston. He came highly recommended by the College’s chair of computer science and several of the computer science faculty members. Phillip will follow Jordan Downey in the role of providing IT support. Jordan worked with SSCA dating back to Carl Cates’ term as Executive Director. Thanks to Jordan for his service and welcome Phillip!

# Reflecting on Conscience and Connection

What is a professional association, at its very essence? In the years that I have served SSCA, including as President, it has been my great honor to be a part of this community and to dedicate my efforts toward making our organization stronger. Everett Dirksen reflected that, “When all is said and done, the real citadel of strength of any community is in the hearts and minds and desires of those who dwell there.” In

SSCA, I think that the common residual in our hearts as scholars, teachers, servants, and friends is the shared mission of teaching, research, and service that brings us together. But I also think it is more than that.

I believe that our common bond has to do with conscience and its intersection with communication, which underscores our commitment to each other and to our community, and fuels our desire to achieve something together that is larger and more lasting than ourselves. We strive to make our scholarship matter, to equip our students with the tools to be responsible citizens, and to serve our disciplines, our civic communities, and those we love. You’ll recall that I chose conscience as the theme for our 2016 convention, when we gathered in my adopted hometown of Austin. The idea of conscience is a principle that is of great importance to me, and, I would also argue, to the future vitality and viability of our association.

Most of us initially think of the standard definition of conscience as some kind of “inner voice” – as Merriam Webster offers, it is “the sense of consciousness of the moral goodness or



**ROSEANN M.  
MANDZIUK**

Immediate  
Past President

Southern States  
Communication  
Association

mm07@txstate.edu

blameworthiness of ones own intentions, or character together with a feeling of obligation to do right” ... further, it is defined as “conformity to what one considers to be correct, right, or morally good.” So we think of phrases like having a “guilty conscience”, or a “clear conscience.” But, I also would argue that conscience must be understood as always oriented toward something beyond ourselves, such that our judgments

are made within the context of events, actions, and others.

Moreover, our communal sense of conscience requires work to renew and reinforce it. Hence, conscience intersects powerfully with communication and requires expression and enactment. I think of conscience as in the best sense, a commitment to social justice that is invigorated by compassion and caring. So, that is what I think brings us together in SSCA, and makes us so strong: our commitment to each other, to our teaching and research missions, and to our community.

We support each other as together we seek to teach boldly, make our research matter, and mentor the next generation of communication professionals and scholars. So, I ask you recommit to the idea of conscience: be courageous, take risks, and be willing to be critical, and remember your commitment to others. SSCA is stronger because of what each of us uniquely brings to our organization. It has been my honor to serve as an officer, and I look forward to continuing to work with all of you as together we endeavor to devote our time and talents to fostering our connections keeping the SSCA community strong into the future.

## SSCA Podcast on the Horizon?

A podcast produced by Southern States Communication Association would be beneficial for the organization and its members. A podcast is something that currently no other regional or national communication organization is doing. The podcast is an affordable communication tool that could be another mode to distribute information about the association. Podcasting can serve as another way to reach out to members and share important information help the organization keep current, offer more to publishers, and the community. With the encouragement of SSCA President Victoria Gallagher, SSCA member David Nelson produced a demo podcast over the summer. He distributed it to the Association’s Executive Committee for feedback. Stay tuned because David’s idea has exciting potential!

# Innovation

Continued from page 1

work that seeks to restore the humanity of black people lost and stolen through systematic global racialization; and *public address as experience*, a conceptualization which foregrounds rhetoric's materiality through the invention and interpretation of spaces that combine auditory, kinetic, and visually immersive elements to illuminate rhetoric's affective energies. Key content includes: the 1957 Royal Ice Cream Parlor sit-in, the role of pastors, congregations, and church sanctuaries in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the history of Durham's black community, King's 1960 "A Creative Protest [Fill Up the Jails] speech, the historic context for the speech, and the advent of urban renewal and the impact it had on churches and communities.

As I work with colleagues to determine how best to give visitors access to all facets of

the project – including the virtual reality and gaming platforms – in a limited space, with limited electrical outlets, the way in which collaboration brings forward innovation is, thankfully, vividly apparent.

I know that our SSCA collaborations will lead to equally innovative, principled and meaningful results, as in the coming months we work together to:

- Enact the new membership and conference fee structure approved at our meeting in Greenville (thanks to the great work of the finance committee and the leadership of Roseann Mandziuk),
- Expand our marketing and outreach efforts (look for information in this issue about an innovative SSCA podcast format being developed by David Nelson),
- Develop and enhance our convention and member services (an on line conference submission system may indeed be possible for SSCA...stay tuned!),
- Strengthen ties with state associations (one

of our keynote speakers from last year's conference, Rhondda Robinson Thomas, will be featured at the Carolinas Association Conference this fall!) and

- Take on the challenges that face our departments and institutions (SACs accreditation, challenges to the basic course in university core curricula and so on).

In that spirit, I ask you to please take a minute to (re)acquaint yourself with the strategic plan posted on the SSCA website and accessed via the link below. Read through the objectives and the ideas for action. And, then, e-mail me (vgallagh@ncsu.edu) with your proposals, reactions, feedback and innovative ideas.

Thank you for the opportunity to work together with you to build and enhance our SSCA community.

<https://ssca.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/2016/march%209%20final%20complete%20ssca%20strategic%20plan.pdf>

# Nashville

Continued from page 1

She has previously worked for the *LA Times*, *NY Times*, and *Village Voice*. Ann is also an author and has a new book coming out this August, 2017, *Good Booty: Love and Sex, Black and White, Body and Soul in American Music*. Big shout out to Mary Meares, one of our planners, for helping me make "connections" with Ann (see what I did there?). I hope folks attend this event not only to hear Ann speak, but also to celebrate all the award winners and our SSCA community.

Our colleagues at Vanderbilt have been amazingly helpful in the process of planning Vice President Spotlight Panels. Though many are still in the works (well, we'll only have 4 or 5), I'm happy to announce that we'll have a spotlight panel at Nashville Public Library's Civil Rights Reading Room hosted by Vanderbilt's Vanessa Beasley. The library is very close to our conference hotel (though there are some issues with off-site venues and limited seating for this particular panel—I'll offer details later). Librarians

and Reading Room staff will offer a tour as well as lead a discussion, Q-and-A, and show some rare footage of the lunch counter sit-ins and other aspects of the non-violent protests led in downtown Nashville by Diane Nash. Not sure exactly when we'll schedule this event, but be on the lookout for more detail. Big thanks to Vanessa for planning this spotlight panel.

Paul Stobb at Vanderbilt has also been great to work with and he and Bonnie Dow (among others) are in the process of planning a spotlight panel on the many sides of Nashville. Though this is still in the works and I can't promise it will all come to fruition, we hope to include Callie Khouri, (she created the television show, *Nashville*), Dave Pacula of Black River Entertainment Publishing who knows all about Nashville's music industry, and David Ewing, a well-known Nashvillian and historian about the African American experience in the city. Big, big (I mean, a Trump "huge") cheers to Paul and everyone at Vanderbilt for their hard work on behalf of SSCA. Additionally, while we haven't officially scheduled this spotlight panel yet, it will take place Friday afternoon, April 6th,

2017 with a reception to follow that evening sponsored by Vanderbilt. The whole thing will be ship shape. Go Commodores.

There are others things in the works. For instance, I'm also working with Paul to do some outreach to the City of Nashville, the local public schools and community college system (and such outreach is also tied to our most recent SSCA 5-year strategic plan). Moreover, Brandon Inabinet is hopeful we can use Nashville's Parthenon for a spotlight panel on classical rhetoric—stay tuned!

I will share updates as the program takes shape. The title of this article references a well-known Hank Williams song. Truth be told, I don't know too much about country music. In fact, Luke Bryan brought his Farm Tour to the Columbia area and I thought some local dude was opening up his farm for folks to tour. Though Nashville is known as the Music City, Nashville is much more than music; Country/Western music or otherwise. I look forward to a fantastic conference in Nashville and raising my beer in toast to each of you and our SSCA community. Thanks for your submissions and support of our association.

# SSCA DIVISIONS AND INTEREST GROUPS

## SSCA DIVISIONS

- Applied Communication
- Communication Theory
- Community College
- Freedom of Speech
- Gender Studies
- Instructional Development
- Intercultural Communication
- Interpersonal Communication
- Language and Social Interaction
- Mass Communication
- Performance Studies
- Political Communication
- Popular Communication
- Public Relations
- Rhetoric and Public Address
- Argumentation and Forensics

## INTEREST GROUPS

- Association for Communication Administrators (ACA)
- American Society for the History of Rhetoric
- Ethnography
- Kenneth Burke Society
- Philosophy & Ethics of Communication

Don't forget to visit the SSCA website at [www.sca.net](http://www.sca.net)!

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# CONNECTIONS

**Jerold L. Hale, Executive Director**  
**Southern States Communication Association**  
**School of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**2 Greenway**  
**Charleston, SC 29424**