COMMUNICATIONS AWARD

T HIS award is given each year to reward and encourage communicators who, on a sustained basis, bring mathematical ideas and information to non-mathematical audiences. This award was established by the Joint Policy Board for Mathematics (JPBM) in 1988. JPBM is a collaborative effort of the American Mathematical Society, the Mathematical Association of America, the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics, and the American Statistical Association. Up to two awards are made annually. Both mathematicians and non-mathematicians are eligible.

CITATION

John Bailer, Richard Campbell, and Rosemary Pennington

The 2021 JPBM Communications Award is presented to John Bailer, Richard Campbell, and Rosemary Pennington for their engaging, entertaining, and enlightening *Stats+Stories* podcast that for over six years has brought "the statistics behind the stories and the stories behind the statistics" to public radio and a broad podcast audience.

Biographical Note

John Bailer is university distinguished professor and founding chair of the department of statistics at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He is also an affiliate member of the Departments of Biology, Media, Journalism and Film, Sociology and Gerontology and the Institute for the Environment and Sustainability. He received undergraduate degrees in mathematics and statistics and in psychology from Miami University and pursued his graduate studies at North Carolina where he received a Ph.D. in Biostatistics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He was a staff fellow at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences before joining the faculty at Miami University in 1988.

He is President of the International Statistical Institute (2019-2021), and he previously served on the Board of Directors of the American Statistical Association. He is a Fellow of the American Statistical Association, the Society for Risk Analysis, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. His research has focused on quantitative risk estimation, but he has also collaborated on research addressing problems in toxicology, environmental

health, and occupational safety. Promoting quantitative literacy and enhancing connections between statistics and journalism are more recent passions. The *Stats+Stories* podcast he developed with journalism colleagues grew out of that interest.

Bailer has taught 26 different courses since arriving at Miami including a few that he designed. Team-teaching a course with a journalism colleague ("news and numbers") and another with a graphic design colleague ("advanced data visualization") are two of his favorite teaching experiences, and he is happiest when connecting his students to problems posed by external clients and helping his students effectively communicate work to clients and the public.

He enjoys hanging out with his family and kids, walking his dog, reading fun fiction, traveling internationally or working on his Butler County donut trail passport.

Response from John Bailer

I am deeply honored and delighted to be a recipient of this award. The notification was a complete surprise. It is truly humbling to have our work in the company of outstanding communicators who previously won this prize including John Allen Paulos whose books *A Mathematician Reads the Newspaper* and *Innumeracy* influenced my thinking about communicating mathematical and statistical concepts to a general audience. Joint Policy Board for Mathematics—thank you for recognizing the *Stats+Stories* team with this tremendous honor.

One of my first reactions to hearing about this award was the recognition of the importance of partnering with good people. I've been blessed to collaborate with Richard Campbell for more than a decade and with Rosemary Pennington during the last six years. These colleagues are tremendous professionals, and I've learned much from our work together. It really isn't accurate to refer to this as 'work'—the podcast has been a vocational avocation.

Co-teaching a course on News and Numbers with Richard in 2009 provided a connection with an amazing journalism colleague, and provided the proof-of-concept that viewing ideas through the lens of statistics and the lens of journalism was a worthwhile endeavor. The emergence of the podcast from this connection seemed natural and the addition of a moderator, first Bob Long and then Rosemary Pennington, completed our panel for the podcast. Thanks are due to the many colleagues who helped make the 'on air' panel sound and look good (sound and recording engineers, web page support, and podcast/show production) and to the College of Arts and Science at Miami University for facilities and other resources contributing to the podcast. Sponsorship and other support from the *American Statistical Association* allowed the podcast to go to a weekly release schedule, and the connection with *Significance* magazine

provided a means to connect to a larger pool of potential guests with interesting stories.

During times when allegations of false news are common and trust in science varies, there continues to be a call for a forum to consider the statistics behind the stories and the stories behind the statistics, and I hope that our podcast can continue in this role.

Biographical Note

Richard Campbell is professor emeritus and founding chair of the Department of Media, Journalism and Film at Miami University. He is the author of *60 Minutes and the News: A Mythology for Middle America* and co-author of *Cracked Coverage: Television News, the Anti-Cocaine Crusade and the Reagan Legacy*. For Bedford/St.Martin's Press, he is the lead author of three textbooks, including *Media and Culture: Mass Communication in a Digital Age*, now in its 12th edition. Campbell earned his B.A. in English from Marquette University and his Ph.D. from Northwestern University in the Radio-Television-Film department. He also worked as a print reporter and broadcast news writer in Milwaukee. In his 48-year teaching career, he has also worked at Mount Mary College, UW-Milwaukee, Middle Tennessee State University, and the University of Michigan. In addition to the *Stats+Stories* podcast, his most recent projects include the digital Oxford Observer and Report for Ohio—initiatives aimed at getting more young journalists real-world experience and hired to cover under-reported areas in both rural and urban communities. He is also the executive producer of *Training for Freedom: How Ordinary People in an Unusual Time & Unlikely Place Made Extraordinary History*, a 2019 documentary on Oxford's role in the historic events of Freedom Summer in 1964. A former high school English teacher and girls' basketball coach in the Milwaukee Public School system, Campbell grew up in Dayton, Ohio, where in 2015 he served on the city's planning committee for the 20th anniversary of Dayton Peace Accords. In 2019, Campbell received Miami's Benjamin Harrison Medallion Award "For Outstanding Contribution to the Education of the Nation."

Response from Richard Campbell

I am stunned. I thought my numerical literacy prowess had peeked during my Dayton, Ohio, high school days when I served as president of the sophomore math club. But to the point: It has been an absolute pleasure working with our team on *Stats+Stories*. So much so that I keep doing it in retirement, still learning from the terrific guests we have had on the podcast over the years. At Miami, John Bailer and I had worked together to get a quantitative literacy requirement into our college's curriculum. As part of that initiative, we team taught an honors class called "News and Numbers" in 2009 and developed the podcast in 2013. As a one-time reporter and long-time journalism educator (with some math

phobia issues), I remember how nervous I was in that first class with John. But when he put up a data graph culled from a national newspaper and asked the students, "What's the story here?", I relaxed. Storytelling is something I knew about and to realize this renowned statistician expected a good data chart to tell a story put me at ease. John and I had common ground. I do recommend that every journalism student take statistics courses and that every math and stats major take journalism courses (plus, all our high schools should be requiring quantitative literacy classes). The ability for a mathematician or scientist to translate the complexities of her work into a story for a general audience is key to challenging the anti-science and anti-evidence strains running through our mediated culture. John, Rosemary and I grateful are for this prestigious award ... and proud of our *S+S* work. Thank you, MAA.

Biographical Note

Rosemary Pennington is an assistant professor of journalism in Miami University's Department of Media, Journalism & Film. Her research focuses on media representations of marginalized groups, with a specific focus on the representations of Muslims. She's the co-editor of the books *The Media World of ISIS* and *On Islam: Muslims and the Media* from Indiana University Press. Pennington received her Ph.D. in mass communication from Indiana University in 2015. In her pre-academic life, she worked as a broadcast journalist in the newsrooms of public broadcasters WOUB and WBHM. While working at WBHM, Pennington's science and medical reporting helped her win the Alabama Associated Press's Best Specialized Reporter award two years in a row and the Douglas L. Cannon Broadcast Award for Excellence in Medical Reporting three years in a row.

Response from Rosemary Pennington

This is perhaps the most surprising thing to have happened to me in my professional life! Thank you, Joint Policy Board for Mathematics, for this honor and for the recognition of our work. I once counted myself among those who professed to hate math—born more out of frustration with how it was taught than any real feelings about the subject itself. As a working journalist I carved out a niche as a science and medical reporter which helped me develop a deep appreciation for all that math can help us understand about our world; it was an appreciation that only grew during my graduate studies. Sometimes, all it takes is the right story, or the right storyteller, to unlock the beauty of math for someone who may have struggled with it in the past. (That was certainly the case for me.) One of the things I have loved about my work with *Stats+Stories* is that I learn so much with each interview. Hearing our guests tell the stories of their research, field, or methodology has made a subject that, in my youth, felt very abstract feel very accessible. It's really been a privilege to be part of this program and I am truly honored that our work on *Stats+Stories* has been recognized in this way.