

# MIZZOU

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[Home](#) » [Summer 2008](#) » [Features](#) » [Chronicling Missouri's method](#)

## Chronicling Missouri's method

### An uncensored history of the J-School hits the shelves

As part of the School of Journalism's centennial celebration in 2008, the school's dean (Dean Mills) took the expectable step of commissioning a history of the school. The result, *A Journalism of Humanity: A Candid History of the World's First Journalism School* (University of Missouri Press, 2008), is hot off the press.

The book's 283 pages cover forces that have shaped the school, including major programs (print, radio, TV, photojournalism, new media), influential people, legal and ethical issues, funding battles and internal politics.

As a J-School graduate and faculty member who teaches magazine writing, author Steve Weinberg, BJ '70, MA '75, brings an insider's knowledge to the work. As an investigative reporter, he offers an analytical and sometimes critical eye. The dean, in a rare move for institutional histories, gave Weinberg complete editorial independence when he asked him to write the book five years ago.

Although that independence allowed Weinberg to show a few of the school's warts, his research eventually led him back to the source of the J-School's success: Walter Williams invented a hands-on curriculum, known as the Missouri method. "I liken it to the



Journalism students in suits, ties and hats write stories on typewriters in the original Switzler Hall newsroom in 1913. For the J-School's 100th anniversary, current faculty member Steve Weinberg offers an insider's look. Photo courtesy University Archives c11.13.3

Constitution,” Weinberg says. “It may be somewhat dated, but it hasn’t needed a lot of conventions to amend it. Without the Missouri method, this is just another journalism school. I didn’t know that I’d say that five years ago, but it really permeates the place. It might even surprise Walter Williams.”

Weinberg says the trial-by-fire curriculum not only makes good journalists but also creates a bond among graduates that lasts well beyond graduation. He is talking about the Mizzou Mafia, an informal network of graduates who teach journalism, and work in news and advertising around the world. Through a listserv, Web sites, professional relationships and chance meetings, Weinberg says, members of the Mizzou Mafia keep in touch about jobs, issues, ethics and whatever is controversial at the moment.

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*Note: If published, feedback may be edited for length, style and clarity.*

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