

Editor's Note

I am pleased to report that our November 2016 conference, *Freedom of Information Laws on the Global Stage: Past Present and Future*, exceeded our expectations in both attendance and presentations. As a result, Volume 7 of *JIMEL* will be entirely devoted to scholarship generated by the symposium, which attracted practitioners and scholars from every continent except Antarctica.

This issue contains four articles that underscore the diversity of scholarship that was present at the Freedom of Information Conference. The first article, *From Sweden to the Global Stage: FOI as a European Human Right?* by U.K.-based media law professor David Goldberg, sets the stage for the historical context of the conference. A groundbreaking scholar on the history of freedom of information laws, Professor Goldberg poses the question: Does the European Court of Human Rights have an opportunity to declare freedom of information as a stand-alone human right? Tom McClean, in *Why the French FOIA Law Failed*, argues that France's 1978 statute has effectively been a "failure," despite its similarity in text to FOIA laws in other countries. Dr. McClean, the head of the Uniting Organization in Australia, traces low use of the French statute to the institutional, social and political context into which the law was introduced. In *Sunlight Where It's Needed: The Case for Media Information*, Professor Roy Peled posits an "accountability gap" between the media's role in democratic societies and its scrutiny-free operation. Mindful of press freedoms, Professor Peled, an information expert who teaches at the Hebrew University, calls for creating disclosure requirements for news organizations and social media to reduce censorship and curb irresponsible media behavior. This issue's final article, *Legislating Usability: Freedom of Information Laws that Help Users Identify What They Want*, by Dr. Mark Weiler, offers a fascinating analysis of the description conventions that must be in place before the government can identify and retrieve information. Dr. Weiler, a library studies scholar at Wilfrid Laurier University in Canada, contends that government officials and civil oversight groups could improve usability of FOI statutes by recognizing the importance of statutory clauses that require government bodies to publish descriptions to facilitate access. A second group of symposium articles will be published in Issue 2 of this volume.

As we look forward to Volume 8, I am pleased to announce that JIMEL is organizing a 2018 symposium conference entitled *Fake News and “Weaponized Defamation”: Global Perspectives*, in partnership with the *Southwestern Law Review* and *Southwestern International Law Journal*. The symposium will be held in Los Angeles on January 26, 2018.

Fake news is often associated with the rise of extremist voices in political discourse and, specifically, an agenda to “deconstruct” the power of government, institutional media, and the scientific establishment. It is also a phenomenon that has long historical roots in government propaganda, jingoistic newspapers, and business-controlled public relations. “Weaponized defamation” refers to the invocation, and increasing use, of defamation and privacy torts by people in power to threaten press investigations, despite laws protecting responsible or non-reckless reporting. Armed with “lawyered-up” legal teams that journalists—and many news organizations—cannot match, those with wealth, or backed by wealth, can disarm the power of press watchdogs with resource-sapping litigation strategies.

Authors whose completed papers are accepted for publication will be provided with round-trip domestic or international air travel (subject to caps) to Los Angeles, California; hotel accommodation; and complimentary conference registration.

Deadline to submit an abstract is September 25, 2017.

Deadline to submit a completed paper is January 5, 2018.

For additional information, including a more detailed Call for Papers, please visit www.swlaw.edu/globalfakenewsforum or e-mail jimel@swlaw.edu.

As always, your comments, suggestions, and feedback of any kind are welcome.

Professor Michael M. Epstein
Supervising Editor