

# A Chronology of Censorship

This is not a story. It is an accounting of events. It is all true. Every fact, every date, every quote. The purpose of this document is simply to outline what happened. The story will come later.

You are likely to recognize many of the people mentioned here because I'm using their real names and because they're famous, at least to those of us in marketing research.

Author: Paul Richard "Dick" McCullough

Fall 2012

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## Friday, July 6, 2012

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*I have written a column, "Beg to Differ," for the AMA publication Marketing Research for the last three years. The column was intended from its inception to take a contrarian view in order to raise awareness and encourage debate on issues relevant to the marketing research community. Marketing Research encourages readers to respond to any articles in its BackTalk section.*

*After attending the latest ART Forum (June 2012) and listening to numerous distinguished marketing science practitioners voice the same frustrations that I was feeling, I wrote a column critical of the ART Forum in its current form. I vetted the column with five colleagues with unimpeachable credentials prior to submission.*

*I submitted the column to **Chuck Chakrapani**, the long-standing editor-in-chief of Marketing Research, on July 6, 2012. At that point, I began searching for credible members of the research community who might provide opposing opinions. **Bill Neal** and **Greg Allenby**, two well-known, highly decorated members of the marketing research community agreed to write responses. Bill and Greg are both past winners of the Parlin Award, the highest honor the industry bestows. Bill also was co-founder of the ART Forum, founder of Marketing Research and past chairman of the AMA.*

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## Wednesday, September 19, 2012

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*On September 19, 2012 Chuck received a brief email from **Mary Flory**, managing editor for AMA publications, stating that "Bottom line is, we can't run this column or the two related backtalks." Two things to note about Mary's email: 1) there was no discussion with Chuck, before or after the decision, and 2) there was no explanation given.*

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## Friday, September 21, 2012

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*As soon as I read the below email, I realized there was a problem. What I had no way of knowing was how big that problem would become.*

*Gentlemen [Bill Neal, Greg Allenby, Dick McCullough]:*

*AMA decided not to publish your articles, a decision with which I don't agree. I tried to argue why they should be published but I was overruled.*

*I intend to resign as the editor on Monday. (I just didn't want to do it on the spur of the moment.)*

*I apologize to you for not having been able to get your views published.*

*Kind regards*

*Chuck*

*Bill Neal is not only an historic figure in marketing research, he is an imposing and intimidating presence. When Bill learned of the AMA's decision, he immediately called **Dennis Dunlap**, CEO of the AMA, to question Mary's decision. Dennis told Bill that he supported Mary's decision but admitted he had not bothered to read the column or the responses.*

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## Monday, September 24, 2012

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*Chuck considered the AMA staff decision to not publish a column critical of an AMA event as censorship and, consequently, he resigned the following Monday, September 24.*

*After waiting through the weekend, Chuck wrote Mary Flory, publisher of AMA magazines, to resign.*

*Dear Mary:*

*Please accept my resignation forthwith as the editor of the Marketing Research. I do not agree with censorship in intellectual matters and, while I don't question AMA's authority to censor what it publishes, I cannot lend support to it...*

*... And considering the way I feel about the importance of freedom of thought in intellectual matters, the only honorable course open for me is to resign. If the purpose of Marketing Research is to be a pamphlet for the AMA, I am certainly the wrong editor...*

*With kind regards*

*Chuck*

*I resigned later that day.*

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Wednesday, September 26, 2012

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*Ken Deal, for 12 years the author of the Marketing Research column Software Review, resigned two days later in support of Chuck's resignation. Mary never responded to Ken's resignation email.*

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*After Chuck submitted his resignation, Mary claimed in separate emails to Chuck, Bill and me that they had never intended to censor the column. They just felt MR was not an appropriate venue. Further, Mary suggested Marketing News as an appropriate outlet for the subject. Bill Neal, founder of both the ART Forum and Marketing Research, responded with typical directness.*

*"Mary,*

*In my opinion you have handled your objections about Dick McCullough's opinion piece and the follow-on replies in the most inappropriate manner imaginable. Your actions precipitated the resignation of the best editor of Marketing Research in its history.*

*Your rationale that Marketing Research is not the appropriate forum for such an opinion piece is entirely misguided and demonstrates a serious misunderstanding of the publication's audience...Since its inception, it has placed high value on opinions concerning issues within the profession, especially application and methodological issues. The management of, and the topics covered in, the ART Forum, which I also initiated, is clearly a concern among practicing methodologists in our profession. To suggest that the proper forum is Marketing News and not Marketing Research for such discussions indicates a complete misunderstanding of this very important group of marketing research professionals. I seriously doubt if many of them even read Marketing News.*

*As the word has gotten out into the community of research methodologists about Chuck's sudden resignation, and the reason for it, the feedback I am receiving is one of sadness, disbelief, and anger. Not one person I have talked to has opined that Marketing Research was an inappropriate forum for this discussion. Each sees AMA's refusal to publish the articles as a form of censorship, and attributes that censorship to AMA's inability to forthrightly handle public criticism. Of course, that is your prerogative, but the highly negative impression is, and will remain, lasting.*

*If the ART Forum Committee wants to solicit my opinion on ways to improve the Forum, I will be glad to discuss it with them.*

*W. D. Neal*

*Mary never responded to Bill's email.*

*Chuck wrote two emails to Mary Flory raising questions about her explanations (September 25 and September 26). She never responded to either email.*

*I wrote an email to Mary expressing concerns similar to those raised by Bill above (September 26). Mary never responded to my email.*

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### Monday, October 1, 2012

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Lending some humor to an otherwise serious matter, **Dave Lyon**, member of the Marketing Research Editorial Review Board emailed his resignation to Mary Flory the following Monday, October 1. He never received acknowledgment from Mary. The humor lies in the fact that AMA staff had dissolved the Marketing Research Editorial Review Board some time earlier without notifying editor-in-chief Chuck Chakrapani or any of the members of the review board. So Dave resigned a position he didn't know he didn't hold..

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### Tuesday, October 2, 2012 (approximate)

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**Larry Gibson**, another member of the MR Editorial Review Board, "called Dennis to see where he was on the issue and to warn him that, left unattended, it would inevitably go public and get worse...I [Gibson] started by noting that I was speaking as a member of the Editorial Review Board. He [Dunlap], almost casually, said that the Board had been eliminated some time ago. When I reported this to Chuck, he said he wasn't aware of the elimination, that he hadn't been notified let alone consulted." This is how Chuck learned he didn't have an Editorial Review Board. Larry told him.

In an inadvertent attempt to make this a running gag, when asked by Chuck "who disbanded the editorial board and when, [Dunlap] said he did not know. Mary told him [Dunlap] that there was no editorial board. And he added, unbelievably, if I [Chakrapani] had a functioning editorial board then I do have an editorial board!" (October 16, 2012). Chuck has never received an explanation for the disbanding of the review board, despite explicitly requesting an explanation on several occasions.

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### Thursday, October 4, 2012

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Dennis Dunlap and **David Reibstein**, chairman of the AMA, jointly issued an email apology claiming the AMA action wasn't censorship and expressed willingness to publish the column and responses in Marketing Research magazine. Their email was addressed to Chuck, Bill, Greg Allenby, **Doug Bowman** and me.

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### Saturday, October 6, 2012

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In an email co-authored by Bill and me, we suggested several steps to be taken by the AMA to rectify the situation and ensure censorship could not happen in the future. No one from the AMA has contacted either Bill or me in response to our email (or for any other reason).

In a separate email, I informed Mary Flory that I had not given the AMA permission to publish the column and would wait until all other issues were settled before deciding. I never received a response from Mary.

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## Friday, October 12, 2012

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*The column, both responses and a brief background piece were published at [GreenBookBlog.org](http://GreenBookBlog.org).*

*That same day, Chuck received an email from Dennis requesting a telephone meeting to discuss possible ways to resolve the issues. They agreed to talk the following Tuesday, October 16, 2012.*

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## Tuesday, October 16, 2012

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*Jean-Marc Léger, CEO of Léger Marketing and Chuck's boss, sent Chuck an email noting that Inside Research, an industry newsletter, had reported Chuck resigned his editorship because of censorship at the AMA.*

*During the phone meeting between Dennis Dunlap, Mary Flory, **David Reibstein** and Chuck Chakrapani, Dennis agreed to develop a written policy explicitly detailing the responsibilities of the managing editor and the editor-in-chief. Dennis agreed to publish an apology but refused, however, to admit publicly that the AMA had censored the column. Chuck was invited to return as editor-in-chief.*

*After a week's consideration, Chuck declined to return to Marketing Research.*

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## Wednesday, November 7, 2012

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*Many of the leading marketing researchers in our industry have been following these events fairly closely. **Steve Cohen**, another past Parlin Award winner, on November 7, 2012 shared some additional concerns with David Reibstein, chairman of the AMA. In an email to Dave, Steve said "I did have lunch today with **Dawn Lesh** and she told me that **Diane Schmalensee** was "let go" as an editor of MR Magazine (reasons not given) and Diane was told that all of the editors -- including Chuck -- were let go, when you and I both know that several resigned in protest of Dunlap's poor decision-making...What the heck is going on here?"*

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I doubt that this story has fully run its course. I will update this chronology as future events unfold.



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