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Why did we write this book?

In May 2003, the sophomores in my Introduction to Journalism course had just completed their culminating activity. After studying the principles and procedures of journalism all year—and after noting how we applied those principles and procedures to our high school newspaper, the Rockville High School *Rampage*—my sophomores had ended their school year by creating a perfect reproduction, a scaled-down newspaper that we called the *Lambpage*.

My approach as adviser to the school's newspaper is always to make my classroom as close as possible to an office in the business world. Therefore, the *Rampage* "leadership team" is always given broad latitude when it comes to devising editorial policy, setting the publication's guidelines and rules, rewriting the newspaper's stylebook, running the paper's staff, setting their own fundraising goals, and even determining their own grading rubrics. I gave each year's staff the chance to completely redesign the paper. They were free to incorporate new fonts, experiment with alternative design principles, suspend old rules about the length of articles, whatever they wanted.

Whatever style the *Rampage* staff sets, the *Lambpage* staff must exactly follow, and that year this exceptional group of students, rising to the challenge of their responsibilities, really seemed to grab hold of the situation. They duplicated every font, every pattern, every design and story and stylebook rule we had. We taught them well: we made them newspaper-manufacturing robots.

Most years, the *Lambpage* appears as a slender supplement to the last number of the *Rampage*, sandwiched between the Senior Section and Senior Wills—an afterthought. That year, though, we published the issue as a regular edition of the newspaper and distributed 2,000 copies of it to the entire school community. Three days after distributing the paper, I sat down with my three sophomore editors in chief, Daniel Chou, Sarah North, and Jackie Wallenmeyer, all of us munching sandwiches and reviewing a "master copy" of the



A tight shot by Alison Zetts captures an “awww” moment in the life of a baby panda at the Washington Zoo

Lambpage, its black-and-white pages marked in garish red to document mistakes drawn to our attention by *Rampage* staff members and RHS students and teachers. Sure, there were mistakes, but it really wasn't a bad issue. In terms of the productivity my students achieved and the knowledge they gained, it was fantastic, allowing me to dream that this bunch of kids would achieve more than they ever thought possible. My philosophy in life is that you have to overcome adversity in order to be successful. You have to taste difficult times in your mouth, roll them around a little. You have to face the possibility of failure and pull through it. Having undergone hours upon hours of adversity, we had punched through the mists of uncertainty. Here we all were; we had succeeded.

I could see it in their eyes—the *Lambpage* didn't quite hit the mark. It wasn't everything they had hoped

Personal Reflection

I can honestly say that working for the Rockville High School *Rampage* has transformed my life.

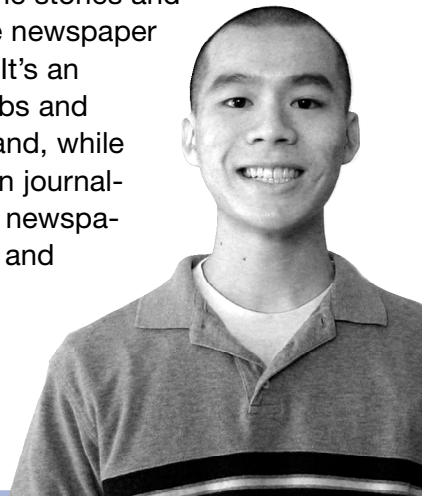
When I signed up to join the school newspaper, I knew nothing about what journalists did—and if I had known, I never would have taken the class! I never would have volunteered to walk up to complete strangers and ask them to buy advertisements. I never would have volunteered to punch out articles for fast deadlines. I never would have come anywhere close to anything even remotely related to newspapers or journalism.

But I am glad I did. For starters, there is one course every freshman at the University of Southern California dreads: Writing 140, a social issues course designed to force freshman to learn how to write on a college level. On that very first essay assignment, the one that nobody is supposed to score better than C on, I got an A-minus. I attribute that grade—and my teacher's comment about "strong writing skills," about writing that "had a punch to it"—to my *Rampage* stylebook.

There are probably a million other things that I could say *Rampage* gave me, but the one that really stands out is that I have learned to pay an extraordinary amount of attention to detail. At USC's student-run *Daily Trojan*, where I work as a copyeditor, the chief copyeditor has been impressed with my ability to catch mistakes that others have missed in grammar and especially in facts. This attention to detail has also helped me in various other school projects. One might say that I developed an eye for perfection.

Beyond all the technical skills, *Rampage* gave me the ability to work with other people. The paper was not run by just a handful of people. Each page required the work of dozens, from those writing stories and taking photos to those editing the stories and designing the pages. The newspaper was all about teamwork. It's an experience that other clubs and groups just can't match and, while I am no longer majoring in journalism nor pursuing a job in newspapers, I can see that each and every skill I learned from *Rampage* can be applied to countless other jobs and careers.

—Daniel Chou



it would be. They weren't satisfied. They were still hungry. We stared at the master copy and talked about the mistakes, how they happened and how to better pick them up. Then it started. "We need to change our copy editing protocol." "We need to change our layout." "We need to establish a beat system so we don't let news articles fall through. We could have had stronger articles." There must have been over a dozen "We need to..." statements made in that 20-minute session. Then the question arose: "How do we find advice and examples of how others do this?"

The journalism textbooks in our newsroom library were stronger on the principles of journalism than on its day-to-day practice in a high school setting. We did have a working stylebook that had been developed by the school's previous newspaper adviser, Kevin Keegan. Keegan had spent the past 23 years being largely ahead of his time, producing a stellar newspaper that raked in hundreds of awards. For the last eleven years of his tenure as adviser, the school's newspaper had consistently won state championships in its division. We certainly couldn't go wrong by starting with his staff's stylebook, his fonts and layout design. Keegan's legacy planted the seed that became this book.

After Kevin Keegan left Rockville High School, it took me two years to learn how to be a journalism adviser, and it was the staff he left behind that taught me. I leaned over their shoulders, I asked them to explain how they did everything, and I kept a journal of all our successes and failures. After three years, I had my own staff in place, and now it was time to ask myself what stamp I wanted to leave on my students and their program. Keegan's success, and the strong alumni interest his success had created, motivated us to keep the paper as fresh and alive as it had been for 23 years.

So we sat there with the sun shining into our room, and the last remnants of our meal on the table, and the black-and-white master copy taunting us with its red tattoos. We started to make changes. Using the already existing stylebook as a starting point, we read the CSPA stylebook and the AP stylebook. We went to NSPA conventions, attended seminars and journalism camps, and dug through Internet sites.

We found that our best sources of information were students themselves. Interacting with other newspaper staffs throughout the country at conventions, in chat rooms, and by exchanging copies of our newspaper for copies of theirs brought us more understanding of what we wanted to do, and how we needed to do it, than any other resource. We also found that everyone wanted to know the same things we were trying to learn.

We began to try to create a textbook that could MOVE a newspaper program directly into the production of a high school newspaper—a map for navigating through the nuances of the publication process.



Photographer Erin Moroney uses a telephoto lens to isolate varsity swimmer Isaac Sherrod's fierce effort to win

Personal Reflection

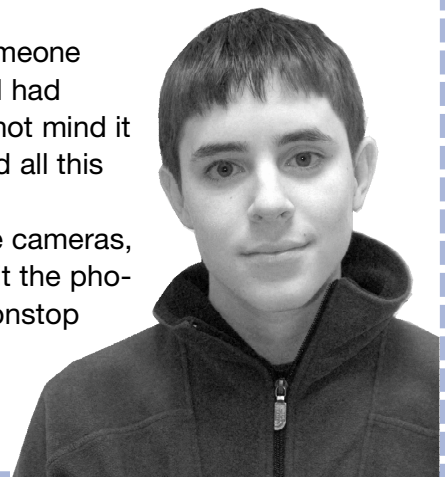
In the ninth grade, when I first laid eyes on our school newspaper, I looked at the amazing front-page photograph and then to the caption. At the end of the caption was a familiar name, the name of a fellow student. Right then I said to myself, “I want to be that name; I want to take pictures for the *Rampage*.”

The following year, I enrolled in an artistic photography class where my basic knowledge of a camera grew and grew. About halfway through the year, I felt ready to confront the journalism advisor. When I went to talk to him, I was surprised by how the newsroom seemed filled with a sense of brisk and cheerful work. I showed the advisor a portfolio of my work, and soon enough I was officially on the staff. Small assignments followed; by the next year I was a full-time photographer, eventually promoted to director of photography. In my senior year, I was given the opportunity to be a part of this textbook project. At first I was hesitant because of the extra work it would add to my already busy schedule, but I stepped up and accepted the offer.

I tried to write the Adobe Photoshop® section as if I were teaching someone who had never laid eyes on Photoshop® before. Being a photographer, I had never before written anything that would be published. I must say I did not mind it as much as I thought I would. In fact, it's kind of liberating because I had all this information stored up and now I have a chance to share it.

Next I had to manage the photography for the manual—to coordinate cameras, photographers, and chapter assignments, and to take, choose, and edit the photographs. That job had me and the whole photography staff working nonstop until the project's due date—a process both arduous and enjoyable. I hope *The Manual* will benefit others; it has already benefited me.

—Eli Gregory



How to Use This Book

Written by students, written for students, this book began as a manual just for our journalism program. We have tried to broaden it, to make it a manual for any ambitious journalism program. We expect you to discover passages that you disagree with, recommendations that you will not follow, details that apply to our program but not to yours.

The point is, every ambitious program needs a book like this one. Guiding principles need to be stated. Correct procedures need to be spelled out. Glossaries and style sheets need to be provided. Every year, every high school newspaper in the country loses all of its most experienced staff, and the incoming newbies need a book like this one to preserve the wisdom won from the experience of the seniors who are gone.

If you haven't already written a book like this for yourselves, use our book as your starter kit, just as we used Kevin Keegan's stylebook as our starter kit. Where you disagree with us, cross out our sentences and scribble in your own. Discuss our ideas, argue about them, and improve on them. That's what we did; that's what you should do.

More than anything else, *The Manual* sets forth a philosophy for how to grow into a better high school newspaper staff, and it spells out how we embody that philosophy in our methods of production. Consider a few of the hallmarks of our program.

The journalism program belongs to the students.

Our staff debates and then votes on how many issues to publish. The staff sets a budget to fit its production goals, and then plans how to raise the money, and then works like crazy to accomplish the fundraising.

Every issue begins with a general staff meeting held about a month before the date of publication. All students have a voice in suggesting the story ideas we will pursue.

Every student learns every job. I'm overstating here, but not by much. Every student sells advertisements. Every student participates in fundraisers. When reporters turn in articles, large teams of peer editors check the stories for both style and factual accuracy—so almost every student is an editor. Every student works on page layouts. Every student proofreads the bluelined pages. Every student critiques the paper after it is published.

We set high standards. Every article gets fact-checked, then fact-checked and style-checked, then fact-checked and style-checked again, by eight or nine people before we accept the article as ready to place in our paper. Fifteen or 20 people proofread every page layout before the paper goes to press.

The staff is a team. Yes, each person has his or her job title and specialized role, but there are plenty of jobs that require equal participation. When the editor in chief turns in an article, the newest, most junior person on the staff may copyedit the article. When the most junior person on the staff brings in a big new advertiser, everyone else on the staff has also been out there trying to sell ads, so they know the value of the newcomer's work and they show their appreciation.

The street sign on the road to success reads, "Hard Work." The newspaper staff is a school subculture in which the leaders have been chosen largely because they have proven that they will work phenomenally hard. They are role models to younger students who work hard—but aspire to work phenomenally hard. All the students involved in our newspaper know that they are involved in the organized pursuit of excellence.

The goal of this book is to explain what to do if you want to apply the organized pursuit of excellence to your high school journalism program.

The typical sports photo shows action, but photographer Greg Moritz captures the coiled intensity of a worried coach intent on unseen action

