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Inside Journalism

Columbia College Chicago

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INSIDE JOURNALISM

A Newsletter Published by the Journalism Department of Columbia College

CENSORSHIP DEBATE CONTINUES

Teachers and students alike are still discussing the implications of the Supreme Court's recent decision approving censorship of high school student newspapers.

Les Brownlee, advisor for the *Columbia Chronicle*, opposes the decision. He says, "Sure students will make some mistakes. Sure there are going to be abuses, but even these are better than a situation in which an administration is allowed to clamp down on expression."

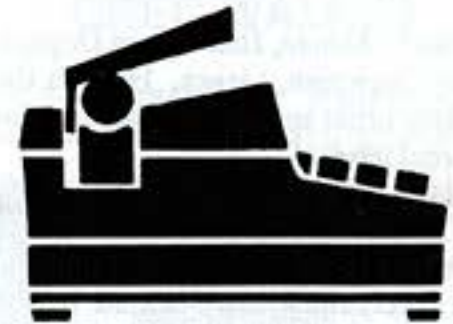
Many journalists and educators

feel that the decision will dampen the curiosity of young people and inhibit the learning process.

Carolyn Hulse, instructor and internship coordinator in the Journalism Department, strongly disapproves of what she interprets as "society trying to put blinders on young people and force them into an unthinking acceptance of the status quo."

Carolyn adds, "Because young people are frequently ill-informed about life's most critical problems, repressing their exploration of these problems does no more than guarantee the spread of ignorance."

Media Law and Ethics instructor Holly Garland feels that the Court



underestimates the intelligence of newspaper readers and says she is against any branch of government interfering in freedom of speech--although, she adds, proper guidelines should be provided.

Although disappointed in the decision, Nick Shuman, instructor for the Journalism Graduate Program, says that proper instruction can have positive effects on the developing high school press.

"Young reporters and editors can benefit from supervision from their seniors in preparation for similar controls established by publishers of the news organizations they may be working for in the future," Nick says.

Larry Yellen, Investigative Producer for WLS-TV and instructor for Media Law and Ethics, focussed on the aspect of prior restraint, implicit in the decision, which he says sets a bad example and a bad precedent.

"I think prior restraint should be allowed in the rarest of circumstances. Any time you allow higher authority to restrict publication until approval, you say that prior restraint is permissible."

College press across the nation, noted to be the boldest of student press, was certainly relieved to find that the Supreme Court specifically

TEACHER'S ARTICLE CAUSES FLACK

One day you might write an article that will strike a nerve in some of your readers or advertisers. The article might cause readers to cancel subscriptions or advertisers to pull their ads.

That's what happened to Lynn Miller, a free lance writer and copy editing instructor at Columbia. She wrote an article concerning gay law students and the discrimination they face. It appeared as a cover story, entitled "The Legal Closet," in the February issue of the *Student Lawyer*, a Chicago-based publication of the American Bar Association. Apparently because of it, the U.S. Army pulled an ad from the issue.

"This action confirms what my article was about--that homosexuals face a lot of discrimination in terms of career," says Lynn, who is also contributing editor for the publication.

Lynn is happy that the ABA publication ran the article, in spite of the attempted intimidation. "The *Student Lawyer* runs very few ads. The lost income represents a significant sum for a small publication."

The Army did not disclose why it was pulling the ad, according to Lynn. But it obviously knew that the article contained information it would prefer not to see in print.

She advises students not to get discouraged if something they write upsets someone. "It's part of the business. You're not writing to make people happy. You're writing to keep them informed." --Eric Peterson

excluded college and university publications from their decision.

The editor of the *Chronicle*, Penny Mateck, says she is pleased that the issue is not relevant to college papers. At the same time, she sees a need for pertinent advising from the faculty.

"The *Chronicle* is an extension of the Journalism Department and it's a learning process," says Penny.

Nat Lehrman, Journalism Department Chairman, agrees. He sees the student press as a training ground for the real market.

"You don't teach students a sense of responsibility by dictating to them, and I certainly don't intend to tell anybody what they can print and what they can't print," says Nat. "I do, however, want them to learn to avoid irresponsible writing--whether it's protected by the First Amendment or not." --Josephine Gibson

COPY EDITING: TASTES LIKE SPINACH, WORKS LIKE MAGIC

For most journalism students, copy editing is like pulling teeth. The painstaking process of weeding out

errors and tightening up writing is enough to drive the budding journalist into another profession.

However, good copy editing is vital to maintaining the editorial integrity of a publication, according to three instructors at Columbia College.

"Sound editing maintains credibility, which is a publication's goal," says instructor Lynn Miller. "Copy editors are the backstop for that. If everything works the way it should, copy editors catch errors, fill holes and improve the writing of a publication."

When a publication's copy editing breaks down, it loses its readability, according to Gary Hengstler, news editor of the *American Bar Association Journal* and a copy editing instructor at Columbia. He says that when this happens, a destructive trickle-down effect occurs, which ultimately leads to the publication's loss of credibility. And this obviously can create a risk of losing subscribers and advertisers.

Precise copy editing also provides a publication with its style.

"All great publications, such as the *Wall Street Journal* or the *New York Times*, have distinct styles," says Bill Prewitt, Newsroom Electronics Manager of the *Sun-Times* and in-

structor for the Journalism Department's Editing on Computers course.

"The reporter can dictate the style, but it is the copy editor who fortifies it," says Bill.

All three instructors agree that learning good copy editing skills is helpful to all journalism students.

"Copy editing skills are an excellent foundation for you, regardless of your particular interest in journalism," says Bill. "A person with these types of skills can adapt himself to any situation."

Among the advantages of having good copy skills is that it improves your own writing.

"This is because, once you learn to critique the writing of others, you can apply the skill to your own," says Lynn, who also points out that there are more copy editing jobs than reporting positions.

"Copy editing is traditionally the area with the most jobs. Most journalists, if they have management ambition, will at some point have to put in some time at a copy desk."

Journalism Department Chairman Nat Lehrman adds that, "Even though copy editing feels and tastes like spinach, journalism students must learn to digest it--if for no other reason than they'll be tested on usage, spelling and line editing in their entry-level jobs. Lacking a competent and confident knowledge of these skills, they won't get the job in the first place." --Eric Peterson

DEMYSTIFYING SCIENCE

The ostracizing of Ryan White, the Indiana school boy who contracted AIDS through a blood transfusion, is a perfect example of how scientific ignorance can result in fear and irresponsible behavior.

Ryan, now happy and accepted in

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH

3/24 Chicago Tribune columnist Clarence Page addresses Journalism Club in Ferguson Theater, 2:30 p.m.

APRIL

4/13 Mike Royko, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for Chicago Tribune, 1:30 pm, W809

4/15 Summer internship application process begins

MAY

5/6 Application deadline for Fischetti Scholarship

5/13 Application deadline for Follett Fellowships for graduate study

a new home town, testified before members of Congress recently that an intensive AIDS education program in his community made the fear and hate disappear.

Columbia College's Journalism Department is leading the charge against scientific ignorance through its new program in Science Writing & Reporting. Developed in cooperation with Columbia's Science Department, the program was introduced this Spring to meet the rising demand for writers who can, simply and accurately, communicate scientific and technical information.

Columbia's new program, by joining writing and reporting skills with scientific knowledge, is committed to training a new kind of journalist--one who can bridge the widening gap between the scientific community and a public which needs scientific and technical information to make informed, responsible decisions.

Students who complete the Science Writing & Reporting program will be able to bring scientific knowledge and a humane perspective to today's most critical issues--issues such as nuclear energy and nuclear waste, pollution and the environment, genetic engineering, AIDS and disease prevention, the space program, computers, drugs, and health and nutrition.

Graduates will find that Columbia's new program is unique in the Chicago area and that the demand for their skills is high. An exciting array of challenging, well-paying job opportunities await the skilled science writer (especially one who makes a science writing internship part of his/her required credits).

In addition to science reporting assignments on major newspapers and magazines, there are jobs for science writers in many areas of government, on scientific and technical trade publications, in public information offices of large corporations, and in industries with technical writing requirements. --Carolyn Hulse

THE BUSINESS OF WRITING

You're a journalism student, and you want to know how to get your articles published in newspapers or magazines. A published article is not only good for your resume, but it's also a good way to earn money doing what you like to do.

The Journalism Department offers a course in magazine article writing, taught this semester by Michael Kiefer. Michael has been published in a number of major magazines, including *Playboy* and *Esquire*. Here's what he says about some of the basics of placing articles:

*The first thing you have to do is your homework. Ask yourself if the magazine is appropriate for the article you're writing. Familiarize yourself with the magazine and the editors to determine what section your article should go in. When you make your first call, find out who edits the section of the magazine you're interested in.

*Next, contact the editor by phone, introduce yourself and try to appear confident. Tell the editor your idea, and think of this as your first interview. If you're nervous, it helps that you can't be seen, Michael points out.

*The primary purpose of the phone call is to let the editor know the article is coming. Never send a story to a magazine that an editor is not expecting.

*When you write your query letter, remind the editor of the call and explain again what the article is about. Think of it as your second interview and give it your best shot. This is your first chance to show the editor how you write. As you write your article, recall all the lessons you've learned about being professional. Do your research and get your facts straight. If you have a deadline--meet it. Editors like to work with people who are dependable.

Michael's final advice is, "Put your psyche in neutral and send the article with an open mind. Remember, the tastes of editors differ widely and a rejection from any one of them doesn't make you a bad person. You've got to keep your ego elastic."
--Larry DuBose

ALUMNI PROFILE: GREG WALKER

Alumnus Greg Walker says Broadcast Writing and Copy Editing



J-Alumnus Greg Walker

are two courses that have helped him the most since he began working for Associated Press in 1985.

Greg, who graduated from Columbia a year later, works the rewrite desk, handles call-backs, and monitors wires and newspapers at Associated Press in Chicago during the late night shift.

He also worked at the *Southtown Economist* as a stringer in 1987 for about a year, covering school board meetings and several City Hall offices in the south suburban area.

All of this didn't happen overnight. Greg, who graduated with a 3.8 grade point average, says that students have to be dedicated.

He also stresses that they should apply for the various scholarships that are available, such as the John Fischetti Journalism Scholarship, or

the Al Weisman Communications Scholarship.

Greg received full tuition from a Fischetti Scholarship and received \$300 from the Weisman fund, which he says helped him financially and exposed him to a lot of people who would not have noticed him otherwise.

He also says the Weisman Scholarship helped him launch a project called **Comics and Education**, a handbook geared toward educators on how to teach reading skills by using comic books.

Greg has done some free lance writing and was a reporter for the **Columbia Chronicle**, where he was able to use his interviewing and interpretive reporting skills.

In giving advice to other journalism students, Greg quotes journalist Carl Rowan, who once told him, "Be serious and remember there are more than eight hours in a day in which to work." --Carla Jones

JOURNALISM CLUB

We've formed a Journalism Club as a first step toward establishing a student chapter of The Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, an organization aimed at serving the needs of the journalism community.

The club will sponsor many activities. For example, journalism personalities from radio, t.v. and the print media will be invited to speak at private sessions. They'll give practical advice on how to network and push open the doors of journalism.

The Club also plans to arrange special trips to newsrooms, magazines, t.v. and radio stations. It will hold contests and seminars to promote journalistic excellence.

Once the club becomes a chapter of SPJ, members will also be able to seek assistance through Carecnet, a service designed to help members

find their first job.

The Society of Professional Journalists has over 300 chapters and a membership of 20,000, which includes students and professional journalists nationwide.

Belonging to the Journalism Club is a great way to establish connections within the business world. "We hope to set up a network for members to keep in touch with one another after graduation," says Les Brownlee, faculty advisor, "and also to let other members know about job opportunities." --Lynda Horton

MAGAZINE PROGRAM NEWS

This Spring, we added two new courses to the growing magazine program. It's now probably the largest such undergraduate program in the country. At present, a student can be a periodicals specialist by taking 15-18 magazine credits as part of a 36-credit journalism requirement.

The new courses for Spring are Photo Editing and Design for Editors.

Photo Editing is rarely taught elsewhere, and we are fortunate to have the manager of **Playboy's** Photo Department, Jeff Cohen, to impart some of the tricks he's learned in this fascinating trade. Jeff was a free lance photographer for many years, for **Playboy** and others, and was hired by yours truly in the '70s to work full time as an editor in the **Playboy** organization. He is running a truly complex organization today, and says he enjoys sharing his knowledge with our young magazine majors.

Burt Winick, a full-time faculty member in Columbia's Art Department, has joined us to teach a unique art course. The course is dedicated to teaching layout, design and typography -- essential magazine skills -- to those of us who do not have artistic talent. True, on most magazines an art director designs the magazine.

But editors, many of whom cannot draw a lick, must understand, and often must supervise this process. Burt will teach them how.

Burt has had a great deal of experience in publication design. Apart from his experience as Art and Production Director of **Cahners**, which did 12 publications, he has had his own design company, called **Visual Communications**, and he has been involved with the design or re-design of about 50 magazines.

The other courses, which include production and editing courses (two different kinds), are taught in alternative seasons.

Our ultimate goals with this program are two: First and foremost, to help students locate entry level-jobs with many of the special-interest magazines located in the Chicago area; and secondly, to build up enough experience within the school to start our own magazine. More about that in future issues of **Inside Journalism**. --Nat Lehrman

INSIDE JOURNALISM

A newsletter produced by and for students of the Journalism Department

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