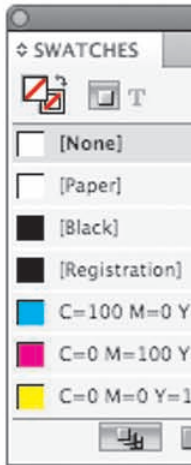


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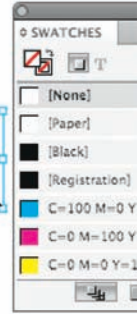
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NEWSPAPER
SURVIVAL
GUIDE

SECOND EDITION





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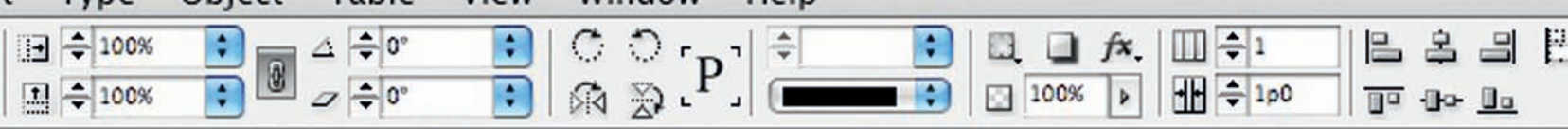
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PREFACE

In 2005, when I wrote *The Student Newspaper Survival Guide*, less than 40 percent of North Americans had broadband Internet service at home, Facebook was still called thefacebook.com, YouTube had just launched and Twitter was something little birds did. Most student newspapers at the time published stories in print before posting them online, and few had taken more than a tentative step into the world of multimedia storytelling.

It's hard to believe how much things have changed in just a few years. Today, people are accustomed to watching video not just on their computers (more than 68 percent have high-speed Internet at home), but also on iPods, cell phones and tablet PCs. Many college students spend more time on social media than they do sleeping. Mobile media and multimedia have radically transformed student newspapers into 24-hour news organizations that publish on multiple platforms.

This new edition of *The Student Newspaper Survival Guide* is designed to help you make sense of these changes and figure out how to make your news organization more effective, more efficient and more creative.

In it you'll find:

A new chapter on multimedia that explains the basic concepts of digital storytelling and offers tips on recording audio, shooting and editing video, producing slideshows and creating interactive graphics, maps and databases

A new chapter on social media that will help you use Facebook, Twitter, CoveritLive, Storify and other tools to find news, report it and distribute it widely

An expanded chapter on covering a campus that offers tips on localizing international and national stories, reporting on higher education and writing about science and medicine

A new section on computer-assisted reporting

A revised chapter on websites that explores in greater detail how to use online and mobile technology to report breaking news

An expanded chapter on newswriting that includes more examples from award-winning student stories

Tips from a veteran sportswriter on how to produce a great college sports section

10 ethical dilemmas you can discuss with co-workers at a training session or editors meeting

An expanded chapter on advertising that now includes sections on marketing and distribution

More examples of page design from some of the top student designers in the country

An expanded chapter on editing that includes sections on planning special projects and working with a student media board

A revised chapter on reporting that includes advice on how to cover breaking news and traumatic events.

To research *The Student Newspaper Survival Guide* I studied campus newspapers from around North America – struggling publications with small staffs as well as impressive, professional-quality newspapers that routinely sweep awards contests. I interviewed professional journalists, journalism educators, student newspaper advisers and business managers.

I also talked to students – hundreds of reporters, editors, photographers, columnists, ad sales people and webmasters – asking each of them what challenges they faced and what advice they had for the next generation of student newspaper staffers. This volume is a compendium of their suggestions.

If you've picked up this book, you're probably part of a student newspaper staff, or soon will be. You may be an editor or reporter, a photographer or designer, an ad salesperson or a business manager. Or perhaps you're a student newspaper adviser looking for new ways to train, motivate and inspire your staff.

Whatever your role, welcome. Whether you're doing this for a class, checking out a potential profession, or just want to have fun, working for a student newspaper is one of the most eye-opening and empowering experiences you can have in college.

It also can be one of the most challenging. Over the months or years you work on a newspaper, you will encounter many obstacles. People you need to interview won't want to talk with you, subjects will decline to be photographed, businesses will refuse to buy ads. People you depend on will let you down. Heated debates will break out in the newsroom over photos and stories and headlines and ads. You'll face ethical and legal issues you don't know how to deal with.

This book is designed to help you cope with these challenges and to give you the resources you need to make reasoned decisions.

The first chapters of the book focus on editorial issues – everything from recruiting and training a staff, to photographing sports and campus events, to steering clear of legal minefields. Here's where advisers, editors, reporters and photographers can look for guidance and ideas on the issues they deal with on a day-to-day basis.

Later chapters address design and production – how to put out a readable and attractive paper that invites readers to pick it up and a website readers will turn to.

The last chapter deals with advertising and marketing, including training and motivating your sales staff, promoting your publication and keeping your revenue flowing.

Each section includes tipsheets, checklists, Q&As and essays from professionals, some of them well-respected

leaders in their fields, others who are just barely out of college themselves. At the end of each chapter is a list of projects, readings and websites you can explore to deepen your understanding of your craft and make your news organization run more smoothly.

My inspiration for this book comes from my students at *The Otter Realm* at California State University, Monterey Bay, where I taught for a year and a half, and those at *Golden Gate [X]press* at San Francisco State University, where I teach now. On both staffs, students were always hungry for ideas to make their papers better. I hope they and other students will see this book as a valuable resource. I thank them for their help, advice and support in preparing these pages.

One thing to remember: Student newspapers are training grounds for journalists, yes, but they are also boot camps for life. Your campus newsroom may end up the most valuable classroom you have during your college years. Take full advantage of your rights. But be mindful, too, of your responsibilities. As a journalist you have the power to help and to harm, to expose wrongs and ruin careers. If you understand this power and use it wisely, you can change your corner of the world.

RACHELE KANIGEL

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When I set out to write this book, I knew I'd need help. I wanted this to be a compendium of advice from student journalists, college newspaper advisers, advertising and business managers, media lawyers, professional journalists and others dedicated to sustaining and nurturing the student press.

But I had no idea how much help I would receive. Now, as I think back over the two years I worked on this book – and the year I spent revising it – I'm overwhelmed by the generosity of my colleagues in journalism and journalism education. What touched me most was how much people were willing to share. Often I'd post a query to the College Media Advisers' Listserv on some esoteric topic (Who owns the copyright to material your student newspaper publishes? Does your paper have a mission statement? Can anyone recommend a good student sex columnist?) and within an hour I would have half a dozen helpful responses, many from people I'd never met in person. Thanks to all the advisers who contributed tidbits of information. I promise not to bombard the list with questions for a while – at least not until I start working on the next edition!

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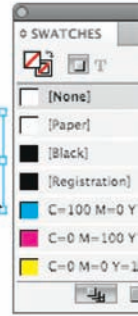
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 Chris Poore, *Kentucky Kernel*, University of Kentucky
 John Puterbaugh, *Kane County Chronicle*
 Lilah Raptopoulos, *The Minaret*, University of Tampa
 Daniel Reimold, *The Minaret*, University of Tampa
 Cera Renault, *Golden Gate [X]press*, San Francisco State University
 Alison Roberts, *The State*, Columbia, S.C.
 Josie Roberts, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*
 Michael Roberts, NewsTrain
 Tom Rolnicki, Associated Collegiate Press
 Amy Rolph, *The Daily*, University of Washington, Seattle
 Ed Ronco, KCAW Raven Radio
 Nils Rosdahl, *The Sentinel*, North Idaho College
 Mike Rosenberg, *Detroit Free Press*
 Laurel Rosenhall, *The Sacramento Bee*
 Misha Rosiak, *Golden Gate [X]press*, San Francisco State University
 Adam Rubin, *New York Daily News*
 Kenneth Rystrom, *The Why, Who and How of the Editorial Page*
 Leigh Sabey, *Northern Colorado Business Report*
 Peter S. Scholtes, *City Pages*
 Lauren Schuker, *The Harvard Crimson*, Harvard University
 Kevin Schwartz, *The Daily Tar Heel*, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
 Davis Shaver, *Onward State*, Penn State University
 Becky Sher, Knight Ridder/Tribune
 Cheri Shipman, *The Battalion*, Texas A&M University
 Brian Singler, *The Missourian*
 Melissa Silverberg, *The Daily Illini*, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
 Emmet Smith, *The Plain Dealer*
 Chris Snider, Drake University
 Lance Speere
 Ron Spielberger, College Media Advisers
 Mike Spohn, *The State Press*, Arizona State University
 Sree Sreenivasan, Columbia University
 George Srouf, *DoG Street Journal*, College of William and Mary
 Brian Steffen, *The Simpsonian*, Simpson College
 Emily Stephenson, *The Daily Tar Heel*, University of North Carolina
 Robert F. Stevenson, *The Forum*, Lander University
 Brian Stewart, *The Daily Iowan*, University of Iowa
 John Strauss, *The Ball State Daily News*, Ball State University
 Scott Strazzante, *Chicago Tribune*
 Sean Patrick Sullivan, Canadian University Press
 Patricia Tisak, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*
 Brian Vander Kamp, *The Flip Side*, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
 Peter Velz, *Collegiate Times*
 Dave Waddell, *The Orion*, California State University, Chico
 Brian Wagner, *The Daily Herald*
 James M. Wagstaffe, Kerr & Wagstaffe, LLP
 Matt Waite, *St. Petersburg Times*
 Arvli Ward, Student Media UCLA
 Tom Warhover, *The Columbia Missourian*, University of Missouri-Columbia
 Megan Watzin, *The Diamondback*, University of Maryland
 Tom Whisenand, photographer
 Kyle Whitfield, *The Daily Reveille*, Louisiana State University
 Denny Wilkins, St. Bonaventure University
 David Williams, Oregon State University
 Bradley Wilson, *Technician*, North Carolina State University
 John K. Wilson, Collegefreedom.org
 Carie Windham, *Technician*, North Carolina State University
 Mark Witherspoon, *Iowa State Daily*, Iowa State University
 Kelly Wolff, Educational Media Company at Virginia Tech, Inc.
 Stacy Wynn, *The Daily Tar Heel*, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
 Suzanne Yada, *The Spartan Daily*, San Jose State University
 Christine Yee, *Contra Costa Times*
 John Zeratsky, *The Badger Herald*, University of Wisconsin-Madison



THE
STUDENT
NEWSPAPER
SURVIVAL
GUIDE





Howard Stone



William Townsend



Jordan Williams

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- Community lends support **Page 7**
- Timeline of Friday's events **Pages 8-9**

THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

MONDAY
AUGUST 30, 2004
Vol. 96, No. 006

The University of Mississippi Serving Ole Miss and Oxford since 1911. www.thedmonline.com

Bound as brothers



J.D. Johnson The Daily Mississippian

An **Alpha Tau Omega** member comforts friends outside his fraternity house Friday morning. The ATOs spent most of the early hours in the Beta Theta Pi house. **Fire scene investigation concludes, memorial service set for Thursday**

MICHAEL NEWSOM
DM CAMPUS NEWS EDITOR

Fire scene investigations at the Alpha Tau Omega house ended over the weekend as the community prepares to say goodbye to three of its members.

Federal, State and local agencies have wrapped up their on-site look into the cause of the fraternity house fire that killed three Ole Miss students early Friday morning. All the while, memorials were being planned.

The investigation into the fire

that killed William Townsend, Jordan Williams and Howard Stone has been turned over to the University Police Department.

The investigators said that they found no evidence of foul play and no evidence the fire was intentionally set.

The starting point of the fire has been isolated to one of the basement bedrooms along the south side of the structure on the east wall.

Investigators found several possible points of origin for the fire,

therefore samples must be sent to the Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) laboratory in Maryland to be analyzed to help determine the cause of the fire.

Joey Hall, an ATF special agent assigned to the Oxford bureau, commented on the samples.

"It will be a priority for them to turn it around, get some answers," Hall said.

Hall said that about 25 agents trained to investigate the cause of fire were summoned to campus.

He said that it is common for

his office to deal with on-the-scene fire investigations.

"It is kind of what we do every day. With the amount of loss, along with the fatalities, once we got the calls, we jumped in with open arms," Hall said.

He also said the samples would be analyzed today, and more will be known about the cause of the fire after the results are returned.

Hall worked with ATF agents, the Mississippi Bureau of Investigations, University Police, Lafayette County Sheriff's and Oxford

Police Departments.

Investigators took pictures, collected physical evidence at the scene and interviewed witnesses throughout the community.

The fire investigation has been turned over to UPD, so that engineers can be brought in to determine if the structure of the ATO house is sound enough for students to go in and collect any of their belongings that are salvageable.

Stone was the last casualty of the fire to be identified. **Authori-**

See **THURSDAY** page 5

FIGURE 1.1 A fraternity house fire at the University of Mississippi in August 2004 highlighted the many roles a student newspaper serves. *The Daily Mississippian*, University of Mississippi.



CHAPTER 1

THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT PRESS

It was about 6:15 on a Friday morning when Michael Newsom, the campus news editor for *The Daily Mississippian* (thedmonline.com) at the University of Mississippi, got a wake-up call from Elizabeth Ogden, the paper's former photo editor.

“Michael, I heard that the ATO (Alpha Tau Omega) house is on fire. It's probably nothing, but you should check it out,” she said.

Newsom rolled over and went back to sleep. But five minutes later the phone rang again. It was Ogden.

“Michael, it's bad. Get down here,” she said.

Newsom dressed quickly and drove toward Fraternity Row at the Oxford, Miss. campus. As he neared the neighborhood of Greek residences, he saw smoke billowing around the Alpha Tau Omega house, a once stately, brick building with white columns in front.

As firefighters battled the blaze, dazed fraternity members milled about, looking for information about their missing brothers.

Newsom set to work interviewing students, fraternity members, the fraternity's adviser – anyone who would talk, anyone who could help him piece together the facts of the story.

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Ed Ronco

Challenges of student newspapers

Getting help

Later that morning, *The Daily Mississippian* reported the grim news on its website: Three students had died in the fire.

Over the next several hours and through the weekend, the staff posted updates, stories and photos, as well as radio and video reports from the newspaper's sister student broadcast stations, about the fire on the newspaper's website (Figure 1.2). On Monday, the print edition of the paper was filled with in-depth coverage of the tragedy, including profiles of the victims, a timeline of events and information about how to help the surviving fraternity brothers.

The fire on August 27, 2004 challenged *The Daily Mississippian* staff in many ways. Official sources were tight-lipped, making it difficult to get information. Photographers were shooed away from the scene. Reporters and editors, just settling into their new roles on the fourth day of classes, grappled with unfamiliar equipment and difficult decisions.

But the fire reminded the University of Mississippi of how essential the paper, along with its affiliated radio and television stations, were to the campus and larger community.

"The nation wanted to know exactly what was going on in Oxford, Miss., and we told them," says Emery Carrington, the newspaper's editor-in-chief that year. "Ole Miss. parents,



FIGURE 1.2 Though news of the fire broke after the Friday edition of *The Daily Mississippian* was printed, the staff was able to post updates throughout the weekend on the newspaper's website. *The Daily Mississippian*, University of Mississippi.



TIPS FROM A PRO Susan Goldberg

The college newspapers where you now work don't need to look like the city newspaper in the nearest town. In fact, they shouldn't. They should be laboratories for cutting-edge journalism.

In addition to the late nights and pizza and camaraderie, make the most of every assignment. Do things that help make your college paper indispensable to readers. Don't be afraid to try new, unconventional approaches. What kind of approaches? Here are a few you might consider:

- 1 **Make sure to reflect your community.** Is your front page attuned to what college students are talking about – music, sex, stress, the job market? Do those boring and often inconsequential student government stories really belong out there?
- 2 **Make use of the latest technology.** Can you podcast your news so students can download it and listen to it when they want to?
- 3 **Make other people do your work.** Provide a platform for a series of different Web logs – a dorm blog, a Greek blog, a rate-the-prof blog.
- 4 **Make a local mark.** Leave national and international stories to someone else. It's not your area of expertise and folks can get that information off any number of national websites. Instead, focus on news that is local and useful for your campus readers.
- 5 **Make the stories you write accessible.** Use everything in your toolbox of tricks – lists, charts, highlights, summaries, tips – to help quickly usher people into your content.
- 6 **Make watchdog stories your hallmark.** Your on-campus location puts you in the catbird seat to see what the university is up to. Exploit that advantage. How is the administration spending money? Who gets a free car? Whose lover just got a high-paying job? Nothing you do will be more compelling to your

readers than revelatory and exclusive local content.

- 7 **Make change; be a crusader.** Editorial pages too often are boring. Set out to make your pages provocative. Take up a cause. Work in concert with the news side. Get some action!
- 8 **Make some hard choices.** Newspapers are drowning in dull, turn-of-the-screw 12- to 20-inch stories. Figure out the handful of stories you are going to tell really well on a given day – stories where you can really add value. Brief everything else.
- 9 **Make hearing your readers a priority.** Ask your readers what they'd like to see you cover. I'm sure you think you know – but do you really? Invite them to tell you, and actually listen to their answers. Maybe you'll learn something that will surprise you and suggest a groundbreaking avenue of presentation or coverage.
- 10 **Learn your craft.** Newspapers are the public trust. Be proud of that responsibility, and take it seriously. But don't shy away from being bold about it.



SUSAN GOLDBERG is executive editor of Bloomberg News. She got her start at *The State News* (statenews.com) at Michigan State University, where she was a general assignment reporter, county reporter and assistant editor.

These tips are adapted from a speech she gave at the National College Newspaper Convention in San Francisco in 2005.

alumni, fellow fraternity members, the media and the general public created an unprecedented amount of traffic on our website – over 1 million hits within the first 24 hours of the fire, 2 million by the end of the weekend.”

THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT PRESS

The tragedy at the University of Mississippi highlights the vital role a student newspaper plays on a college campus. Whether it's a stapled sheaf of photocopied pages distributed every couple of weeks or a professional-looking daily broadsheet, a college newspaper serves many functions.

- It's a chronicle of campus life that informs the campus about everything from scientific research and protest demonstrations to championship basketball games and out-of-control fraternity parties.
- It's a community forum where students, faculty, administrators and staff can debate issues of common concern.
- It's a watchdog that barks when a cafeteria is cited for health code violations or hale athletes drive around with handicapped parking placards.
- It's a training ground for the next generation of journalists.

Let's look at these roles and the responsibilities and challenges that come along with them.

THE CHRONICLE OF CAMPUS LIFE

Every campus has its events, issues and personalities, and a student newspaper is often the only unbiased publication for reporting on the life of a college community. While the primary audience for college papers is students, a good paper covers the whole campus.

“One of the responsibilities of a newspaper is to reflect the nature of the community it serves,” says Melvin Mencher, a longtime journalism educator and author of *News Reporting and Writing* (Mc-Graw Hill, 2008), a leading journalism textbook. “A student newspaper should be able to understand and display all dimensions of a campus community, not just student life but the concerns of the university employees, faculty, administrators and staff.”

THE COMMUNITY FORUM

A college campus can be a fragmented place. Freshmen and transfer students may feel lost and alienated. Seniors and commuters may be so wrapped up in their majors and schoolwork that they're unaware of what's happening on the rest of the campus. And students can feel overwhelmed at times by a monolithic entity that can raise their tuition, their rents and their health care costs with little warning.

“The student paper can be a unifying force,” says Mencher. “It should represent students from around the campus. And it should establish some kind of leadership, demanding the highest quality education for students, so students have an outlet for their frustrations, their excitements, their passions.”

In the days and weeks after the University of Mississippi fire, for example, the opinion section and the website comment boxes overflowed with letters and email messages expressing prayers, sadness and outrage (Figure 1.3).

ATO fire leaves three students dead		
Post your feedback on this topic here		
Date	Subject	Posted by:
08/27/2004	God bless and be with you, men of...	Candy
08/27/2004	All the Taus in Western Michigan wish...	Kurt Pease
08/27/2004	God be with the families of these...	Missy
08/27/2004	I am so saddened about this and my...	Julie
08/27/2004	First I want to let the ATO...	Mike
08/27/2004	I heard about this tragedy on the...	Lindsay
08/27/2004	I feel terrible for all of those...	Josh Loper
08/27/2004	Were the 3 dead before the fire?	M
08/27/2004	Thoughts and support are with you...	Brother Leighton Mohl
08/27/2004	As the father of an Ole Miss Student,...	Charley Cook
08/27/2004	Pray for these kids and their...	prayers
08/27/2004	As a Beta alum, my prayers go out to...	Tom Rice
08/27/2004	The loss of our interfraternal...	Stephen Rupprecht
08/27/2004	My heart goes out to the families of...	Sympathy

FIGURE 1.3 As news of the fire spread students, faculty, alumni, parents of students and members of the community shared prayers and messages of mourning on *The Daily Mississippian's* website. *The Daily Mississippian*, University of Mississippi.

Journalism and the movies Eugenia Chien

Movies about journalism are great for inspiration, motivation and illumination. Stick a video in the newsroom's DVD player, throw some popcorn in the microwave and gather the staff for an evening of fun flicks and discussion.

The Front Page (1931) What are you willing to do to cover a big story? In this classic comedy, an editor convinces a top reporter to put off his marriage long enough to cover the hottest story in town. The original film stars Pat O'Brien, Adolphe Menjou and Mary Brian. B&W, 99 minutes. (A 1974 remake features Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau and Susan Sarandon. Color, 105 minutes.)

Foreign Correspondent (1940) A crime reporter turned foreign correspondent is caught up in the espionage and danger of World War I. Alfred Hitchcock's famous scene of an assassin escaping into a sea of rippling umbrellas is just one of the unforgettable images from this movie. Joel McCrea and Laraine Day star. B&W, 120 minutes.

His Girl Friday (1940) In a clever remake of *The Front Page*, the tables are turned when an editor (Cary Grant) tries to stop his female star reporter (Rosalind Russell), who happens to be his ex-wife, from leaving the newspaper business. Howard Hawks directs. B&W, 92 minutes.

Citizen Kane (1941) If you don't know what "Rosebud" refers to, you've got to check out this thinly disguised biopic about newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst. Orson Welles writes, directs and stars. B&W, 119 minutes.

Teacher's Pet (1958) Clark Gable plays a tough city editor who doesn't believe in college-taught journalism. He goes head to head with a journalism professor, played by Doris Day, when he pretends to be a student in her class. B&W, 120 minutes.

All The President's Men (1976) This riveting movie tells the story of how two journalists brought down President Richard Nixon in the Watergate scandal. Dustin Hoffman and Robert Redford play Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward of *The Washington Post*. Color, 139 minutes.

Absence of Malice (1981) A Miami reporter, played by Sally Field, unknowingly ties an innocent man (Paul Newman) to the murder of a union leader. Color, 116 minutes.

The Year of Living Dangerously (1982) A group of journalists grapples with the political upheaval

of the Indonesian government in 1960s Jakarta. Linda Hunt becomes the only actress ever to win an Academy Award playing a man – with no cross-dressing or gender confusion involved. Mel Gibson stars. Color, 117 minutes.

Under Fire (1983) A photojournalist finds himself on a mission to photograph a rebel leader in war-torn Nicaragua. Along the way, it becomes difficult for the journalists to stay neutral. Nick Nolte, Ed Harris star. Color, 128 minutes.

The Killing Fields (1984) Based on a true story, this movie explores the relationship between *New York Times* journalist Sidney Schanberg and his Cambodian assistant Dith Pran when Schanberg is unable to help Pran escape the Khmer Rouge. Sam Waterston, Haing S. Ngor star. Color, 142 minutes.

Salvador (1986) A freelance journalist leaves his out-of-control life in San Francisco to cover the bloody civil war in El Salvador. James Woods and James Belushi star. Oliver Stone writes and directs. Color, 122 minutes.

The Paper (1994) This movie captures 24 hours in a hectic New York newsroom, after two young black men are arrested for the murder of two white businessmen. Ron Howard directs. Michael Keaton, Glenn Close and Robert Duvall star. Color, 112 minutes.

Welcome to Sarajevo (1997) American and British journalists find an orphanage in Sarajevo and walk past the line of ethics when they decide to rescue the children. Stephen Dillane, Woody Harrelson star. Color, 102 minutes.

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas (1998) Legendary gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson (Johnny Depp) takes a dizzying, hallucinogenic road trip to Las Vegas with his sidekick, Dr. Gonzo (Benicio Del Toro). Color, 128 minutes.

The Insider (1999) Russell Crowe plays a scientist who violates his contract with a tobacco company when he exposes addictive ingredients in cigarettes. Ethical quandaries arise when broadcast veteran Mike Wallace (Christopher Plummer) and producer Lowell Bergman (Al Pacino) report the story. Color, 157 minutes.

Live from Baghdad (2002) CNN made television news history when it became the only news network remaining in Baghdad on the eve of the first Gulf

War. Michael Keaton and Helena Bonham Carter star. Mick Jackson directs. Color, 108 minutes.

Shattered Glass (2003) Stephen Glass, a young journalist at *The New Republic*, had everything: talent, a coveted job and adoring friends. This movie explores how Glass betrayed everyone by fabricating stories. Hayden Christensen, Chloe Sevigny and Peter Sarsgaard star. Color, 94 minutes.

The Pentagon Papers (2003) James Spader plays Daniel Ellsberg, a military analyst who risks treason charges when he seeks to publish a series of

classified government documents detailing the true nature of America's involvement in the Vietnam War. Color, 92 minutes.

Capote (2005) Philip Seymour Hoffman plays the young Truman Capote as he reports on the murder that inspired his true-crime classic *In Cold Blood*. Color, 114 minutes.

State of Play (2009) A grizzled investigative reporter and a young blogger investigate the murder of a congressman's mistress. Color, 127 minutes.

The wounded community needed to vent, and *The Daily Mississippian* provided a place to do that.

THE WATCHDOG

Colleges and universities may be institutions of learning, but they can also be hotbeds of corruption and scandal. Some undertake questionable research, some misuse state funds, some employ sexual predators.

And on many campuses, the student newspaper is the only institution able to investigate and report such matters.

The Daily Mississippian took its watchdog role seriously after the fraternity house fire. When fire investigators seemed to be holding back information about the cause of the blaze, a *Daily Mississippian* editorial demanded answers. Reporters filed several Freedom of Information Act requests to find out what investigators knew. When government officials finally turned over the investigation report more than six months after the fire, Carrington, the editor-in-chief, posted the entire document on the newspaper's website.

"People really wanted to know what happened," she says. "We felt the community could use it to gain some closure on this tragedy."

THE TRAINING GROUND

Countless professional journalists got their start at college newspapers. Broadcast journalists Bill Moyers and Walter Cronkite worked at *The Daily Texan* (dailytexanonline.com), the student newspaper of the University of Texas at Austin. Michael Isikoff, who broke the Monica Lewinsky story for *Newsweek*, reported for *Student Life* (studlife.com) at Washington University in St. Louis. James Fallows, David Halberstam, Michael Kinsley and Susan Faludi all served as editors of *The Harvard Crimson* (thecrimson.com). Columnist Molly Ivins began to hone her razor-sharp pen in the pages of *The Sophian* (smithsophian.com) at Smith College, and Garry Trudeau created the prototype for Doonesbury for the *Yale Daily News* (yaledailynews.com).

Many believe student newspapers, more even than journalism degree programs, are the best way to launch a

career in the field. The clips and experience you get at your college paper can pave the way to internships and jobs.

This training role is even more important today as the field of journalism undergoes cataclysmic changes. The industry is looking to the next generation of journalists – that's you! – for leadership and innovation. Experiments tried at college news organizations – new ways of reporting the news, new ways of communicating with readers, new ways of delivering content, new ways of telling stories – could well pave the way for what journalism becomes in the future.

THE ENHANCED ROLE OF ONLINE PUBLICATIONS

Now that virtually all student newspapers are online – and in fact a few are online-only – they have the potential to play an even more important role than ever. For one thing, the audience is vastly bigger; student publications are not just seen by students, faculty and staff and a few campus neighbors but by alumni, prospective students, parents of students, media professionals and Google searchers from around the world. The immediacy of the Web allows student journalists to report vital information in seconds – often before campus or police officials or the professional press. Student journalists are often the ones to break a campus story of national or international significance, such as a shooting, a bomb threat or a protest that turns into a riot.

In addition, the Web presents opportunities for student journalists to do much more than simply report the news. With social networking tools and mobile technology you can mobilize a community in a matter of minutes.

These new opportunities bring with them new responsibilities. In the old days, if a college newspaper reported a scandal or made a mistake, it would cause a stir on campus. Period. Now a big story – or a major error – can make its way around the world. Professional news organizations often pick up on stories first reported on a college news website, sometimes replicating facts in student news reports without checking them (unfortunate but true). If you paint someone in a negative light or get a vital fact



REFLECTIONS OF A COLLEGE NEWSPAPER EDITOR Ed Ronco

Shortly before I graduated from Michigan State University, I had a conversation with my mom about what I had learned. You know, the “how was it?” discussion. College was great, and my professors and classes taught me innumerable things about academic subjects and life in general.

But I had to admit that my most valuable lessons came from working on the student newspaper, *The State News*. Filling the pages of that paper as a reporter, a news editor and finally editor-in-chief my last year gave me insight into every aspect of journalism, and, also, every aspect of humanity.

I had the chance to write about people who were grieving and celebrating, frustrated and elated. I talked to countless readers on the phone, some who said nice things and others who told me I was a buffoon. (That’s fine; maybe I was.)

I got to cover – or lead the coverage of – hundreds of stories, from the formation of a graduate student labor union, to the departure of the university president, to the war in Iraq.

When some students on our campus rioted in March 2003, our offices were half-newsroom, half-triage unit. As reporters and photographers ran out the door to gather more news, others came back with red and swollen eyes, seeking relief from the tear gas.

When the United States invaded Iraq, we had stories written 30 minutes after President Bush announced the invasion. After watching Bush’s statement, our reporters conducted reaction interviews, calling university administrators, local politicians and others, and then returned to the newsroom to assemble it into something coherent, all with lightning speed.

And then there was election night 2004. I’ll never forget the scene of that full newsroom in the early hours of the morning, with more than 80 people throwing papers and yelling election totals across the room.

Those were the big successes. The big stories. But it’s the smaller things that I hope you get to experience.

I hope you see the lights burning late in your newsroom and hear the crackle of the police scanner that’s always on.

I hope you see people going in and out at all hours of the day, forgoing social lives, and sometimes academic lives, for the sake of an informed campus.

I hope you get to see the presses roll – blurs of gray and black and red and blue that shoot by at astronomical speeds. Our presses were in a warehouse 60 miles away. I’ll never forget the smell of the ink.

I hope you see your staff step up to the plate for some of the biggest stories of their lives. And when they do, I hope they hit it out of the park.

I hope you feel the thrill of getting on Page One for the first time, or if you’re an editor, I hope you see the look on

the face of a rookie reporter when you help her get there.

I hope you hear the sadness in your co-worker’s voice after he’s interviewed friends and family members of someone who just died.

I hope you talk to each other at 4 a.m., when one of you can’t sleep because you’re worried about a story in the next day’s paper.

I hope you see a really talented photographer hard at work. I still remember driving one of ours down a two-lane highway in rural Michigan as she snapped photos of a runner from the back of my pickup truck.

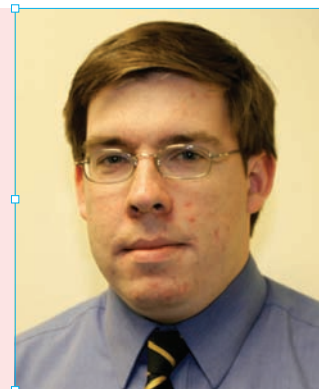
I hope you watch your copy desk kick into action – these people actually argue about commas – and see your page designers turn raw text and photos into works of art.

I hope you take time to get to know the people who prepare your paper for press and troubleshoot your technical problems. Ours were the finest and smartest bunch of people I have ever met, and modest, too – they never once stood up and took a bow or even asked for the opportunity.

And I hope you get to know the people who get up before the sun, the ones who complete the miracle. We had a group of 12 carriers who rose at 5:30 every morning to distribute 28,500 copies of our newspaper around the campus and city by 8 a.m.

When the time comes for you to walk away from it all, I hope you leave secure in the knowledge that people will continue to sweat and toil over keyboards and continue to produce good journalism night after night so your campus can read it morning after morning.

And when you get out into the professional world, I hope you can say to an editor, “Oh yeah, I’ve done that before.”



ED RONCO served as editor-in-chief of *The State News* at Michigan State University in 2004. During his previous years at the paper he was also deputy managing editor, campus news editor, administration reporter and graduate issues reporter. He graduated in 2004 with a bachelor’s degree in journalism and went on to do internships with the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and *The Grand Rapids (Mich.) Press*. He is a reporter and host for KCAW Raven Radio in Anchorage, Alaska.

wrong, you can do irreparable damage. An offensive column or cartoon on a student news website can stir outrage not just locally but globally.

Now, more than ever, student journalists must act professionally and responsibly.

CHALLENGES OF STUDENT NEWSPAPERS

Putting out a student paper can be one of the most exciting parts of your college career, but it can also be filled with frustrations. Student journalists often don't feel the power and confidence that professionals do. Among the common problems:

Lack of respect. “As a student journalist, it can be tough to get readers and sources to take you seriously,” says Becky Sher, former editor-in-chief of the *GW Hatchet* (gwhatchet.com) at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. who went on to work for McClatchy-Tribune in Washington, D.C. and now teaches at her alma mater. “Off-campus sources can present a particular problem.” Administrators and faculty also sometimes fail to give students due consideration.

Conflicts of interest. Even more than professional journalists, student journalists face the challenge of covering the community in which they live. That sometimes means writing about the health violations at the dining hall, the melee after your friend's dorm party or the tenure battle of your favorite English professor. “There are times you can refuse yourself from a story you're too close to, but there are other times that you can't,” says Sher. “After all, the latest tuition hike affects you, too.”

Inexperience. The most seasoned college newspaper staffer may have three or four years under his belt, but many start writing stories, shooting photographs, selling ads, or designing pages with little or no training. That lack of experience can lead to serious mistakes that are on display for the whole campus – or, in the case of an error picked up by the mass media, the whole world.

Interference. While some student newspapers exist in a climate of complete respect for their First Amendment rights, many don't. Every year, administrators at colleges across the country challenge student newspapers that stir up trouble or embarrass the campus.

GETTING HELP

Fortunately, there are resources to help. Most college newspapers have an adviser to guide students through the sometimes-choppy waters of newspaper publishing. If yours doesn't, find a professor or professional journalist you trust to become a mentor or unofficial adviser. Take advantage of local press clubs, Society of Professional Journalists chapters and other media groups in your area that can offer advice.



FIGURE 1.4 A student newspaper should be a community forum where students, faculty and staff can discuss issues and share ideas. *Technician*, North Carolina State University.

Several national organizations exist solely to support the student press. The Student Press Law Center in Arlington, Va., a tireless advocate for student-press rights, offers free legal advice to student newspapers. Associated Collegiate Press, a nonprofit educational membership association in Minneapolis, Minn., and College Media Advisers, a professional association of advisers, sponsor contests, conventions and advocacy services for member newspapers. And many states have statewide student press associations to support student media.

As a journalist, it's up to you to seek out the resources you need and to use them to your advantage.

TO DO

- 1 Many people on college campuses – especially administrators – don't understand the role of the student press or the basic tenets of press freedom. Early in the school year, plan a meeting with key campus officials to discuss the various roles your paper plays and the importance of press freedom.
- 2 Plan an open house to acquaint the campus community with your paper. Create displays of major stories and photos. Explain how the paper works, how students can join the staff or contribute material on a freelance basis, how people can send in press releases and letters to the editor.
- 3 Invite a marketing class on campus to organize a focus group of students to critique your paper. (If you can't get a class to do it, organize a focus group yourself.) Ask participants what they see as the role of your student paper and how well you serve that role. Find out what they like and don't like. Then analyze the responses and see how you can better fulfill their expectations.
- 4 Conduct a reader survey to find out what readers like about your paper and what they don't like. Develop an action plan to address their concerns.

TO READ

Kovach, Bill and Tom Rosenstiel. *The Elements of Journalism*. New York, N.Y.: Crown Publishers, 2001.

TO CLICK

Associated Collegiate Press

Associated Collegiate Press is the largest and oldest national membership organization for college student media in the United States. A branch of the National Scholastic Press Association, the organization sponsors conventions, training workshops and contests for student journalists.

<http://www.studentpress.org/acp>

Canadian University Press

Canadian University Press is a national, nonprofit co-operative, owned and operated by more than 80 student newspapers in Canada.

www.cup.ca

Center for Innovation in College Media

Now a part of College Media Advisers, this nonprofit think tank was created to help college student media adapt and flourish in the new media environment. The blog is a must-read for student journalists.

<http://www.collegemediainnovation.org/blog>

College Media Advisers

College Media Advisers is a membership organization that helps student media professionals improve their media operations. The organization sponsors national conventions and training workshops and advocates for members. Its website is packed with tips and information about college media.

<http://collegemedia.org>

College Media Matters

This blog, written by college journalism scholar Dan Reimold of the University of Tampa, covers news and issues related to college media.

<http://collegemediamatters.com>

Columbia Scholastic Press Association

The Columbia Scholastic Press Association unites student editors and faculty advisers working with them to produce student newspapers, magazines, yearbooks and online media. The association is owned by Columbia University and operated as a program affiliated with its Graduate School of Journalism.

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/csapa>

Society of Professional Journalists

The Society of Professional Journalists is the nation's most broad-based journalism organization, dedicated to encouraging the free practice of journalism.

www.spj.org

Student Media Sourcebook

The National Scholastic Press Association and Associated Collegiate Press have compiled this directory of links and contact information for resources and organizations of interest to student journalists.

<http://www.studentpress.org/sourcebook>

Student Press Law Center

The Student Press Law Center is an advocate for student free press rights and provides free legal help and information to students and the educators who work with them.

www.splc.org

From the chancellor's censure to the Wolfpack's Gator Bowl victory – Technician was there.

As N.C. State's daily student newspaper, the Technician has been the voice of N.C. State students since 1920. Each day, more than 15,000 copies are picked up by faculty, staff and students from some 60 dropboxes on campus.

The largest student publication on campus, the Technician reporters cover university news, people and events. They have the front seat to Wolfpack athletics and give voice to student opinions. Each issue is the place to find the latest campus happenings, as well as student reviews, the crossword puzzle and campus classifieds.

But Technician is more than just the paper to pick up on the way to class – it's a great way to get involved in university life.

From the chancellor's censure to the Wolfpack's Gator Bowl victory over Notre Dame – Technician was there.

Technician Open House
Sept. 2, 7 p.m. • 323 Witherspoon Student Center



FIGURE 2.1 Technician at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, N.C., hosts an open house every fall to recruit staff. Technician, North Carolina State University.