Cover to Cover: A guide for Those who wish to create a student magazine

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Cover to Cover

A Guide for Those Who Wish to Create a Student Magazine

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Introduction

Throughout their college career, journalism students receive many pieces of advice. Fellow students whisper suggestions about which professors to take. Professors offer their opinions regarding the leads and content of most stories they get their hands on. Readers agree or disagree with coverage. One piece of advice, however, stands out among the rest. The way to get ahead in the journalism industry is to gain practical experience that is applicable in future jobs.

Makes sense, right? That’s why student newspapers are such staples on college campuses. And that is why a student magazine should also be offered as a way for future magazine journalists to test and refine their skills in preparation for future employment.

A group of students at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville believed this to be the case. We wanted to pursue careers in magazine journalism and wanted to have an outlet through which we could gain experience in the industry. So we created it. *Scoop* magazine was born through hours of work and research and overcoming various stumbling blocks. Some of the pitfalls may have been avoided had there been more readily-available information about starting a student magazine. But perhaps future start-up publications can benefit from our experience (and this resulting guidebook), and then the ranks of student magazines offering future journalists another place to prepare for their careers will grow.
Timeline

The First Year of *Scoop*

- **Spring 2005** – Discussions began regarding the launch of a student magazine at the University of Tennessee.

- **August 2005** - Meetings to create the prototype for the magazine were initiated. The final editorial board of five students began meeting with Dr. Lyn Lepre of the School of Journalism and Electronic Media.

- **November 2005** – The editorial board presented *Scoop* magazine to the faculty of the School of Journalism and Electronic Media.

- **January 2006** – “Magazine Industry Workshop” class began. *Scoop* would be created in this class.

- **March 2006** – The magazine was sent to the printer.

- **April 2006** – The printer returned the finished copies. Students worked hours stuffing envelopes to mail the magazine to the audience.
A strange truth exists in the world of student magazines. While, arguably, information and/or research on the subject of student magazines would, more than anything else, benefit a group trying to start one, information such as this is scarce. Searching for “student magazines” on the Internet yields mediocre results, and magazine textbooks (at least the ones I’ve seen) do not list the phrase in their indexes. In fact, I would describe trying to start a magazine and searching for this information as what it must feel like to be a forest ranger searching for a cell phone signal in the woods. We know it might be here somewhere, but where do we begin to find it?

One problem with the information available is that the category is not always well-defined; even the definition of what counts as a magazine is not always straightforward. Some research deals with literary magazines at college institutions, or it is outdated in some way, or it could possibly even refer to high school publications. This is not the ideal model for a group of students and/or faculty attempting to create a magazine affiliated specifically with a journalism school. The characteristics of a literary magazine, for instance differ greatly from that of a magazine that focuses on campus life, the former allowing for more fictional work, the latter a more structured format. While certainly some facts from information about publications like this are useful, it cannot be applied as a parallel entity. When four other students and I conducted a survey among various magazine schools, we also found results that suggested that some people used the term magazine loosely.
Because we did not want to begin our magazine experience with a lack of information, the group of people with whom I worked and I conducted some primary research into student magazines around the country. We attempted to contact 54 schools, but in the end surveyed 38 colleges and universities with magazine journalism programs to find out if they had a magazine and, if they did, the details of this publication. In the end, we talked to 15 schools that did have student magazines, 18 that did not and three that had unusual circumstances noteworthy enough to set them in their own category of results (these will be included in the discussion later). While the experience of creating a magazine cannot be summed up nicely in facts and figures and would vary from case to case, certain facts help to paint a picture of the student magazine world.

One basic aspect of the student magazine is the organization and structure of the magazine's editorial staff. While undergraduates generally staff these magazines, the way in which these staffs are chosen is different from school to school. Variances occur between magazines regarding this characteristic. Some magazines are created as part of a class, the class members serving as the staff and creating the content. Nine of the 15 student magazines highlighted in our survey results were produced in one way or another as part of a class. The others, however, were not associated with a class offered in the school's curriculum. The students who created these publications became involved in various ways. At Bloomsburg, for example, people from various majors are encouraged to participate even though the magazine is published in cooperation with the journalism school. Freelancers are occasionally hired at publications created both inside and outside of class. Alumni write some of the content at various schools, including at the alumni magazine at the University of Iowa. No set pattern is established throughout the
schools in relation to their magazine staffs. In “Student Magazines at Journalism Schools,” a study focusing on 40 magazines associated with journalism programs, Tom Wheeler found similar results in that “editorial models include: staff editors plus nonstaff reporter/writers; staffers who report, write and edit with a few if any freelance contributions; and a range of combinations.” In other words, there are no universal rules when it comes to staffing a magazine.

A constant element regarding student magazines, however, is that professionals in the magazine-teaching sphere seem to believe that a hands-on approach to learning about this industry is beneficial for the students. A lab atmosphere benefits students because they “tend to see the classroom as a ‘pretend world,’ in which they are preparing something for the teacher, rather than learning something they might need in the media professions.” Lost in the land of academia, students can easily lose touch with the purpose of their classes. Rather than absorbing the knowledge they need, they might focus on the grade. One idea behind the student magazine is that it brings the real world into the classroom, shattering this divide. The result is “one ‘real-world’ experience that entails substantial motivation and satisfaction as well as the application of principles and skills acquired in class.”

Several advisers for student magazines would certainly fall into this grouping of advocates for the laboratory magazine experience. In the world of the student magazine, an adviser plays an important role, “typically involved in all phases of production from brainstorming to proofing bluelines, serving as a sounding board, teacher (writing editing, design), critic, grader, motivator, counselor (particularly regarding legal, ethical and technical matters) and all around problem-solver,” according to “Student Magazines:
Survey Reveals Few Common Policies in Student Magazines,” a study by A. Lanan.8 In the laboratory experience as Georgia Southern University, the professor acts as the “publisher” of the magazines for which the students craft proposals and prospectuses.9 At other schools with magazines, the general trend seems to be one adviser per magazine, but there were exceptions. Columbia College, Chicago has three faculty members involved in the production of their magazine (which is created in a class). Two of these advisers serve as editorial specialists and one as a visual specialist.10 Four members of the faculty throw their hats in the ring at Columbia University. The adviser with whom we talked guides the class with the assistance of an adjunct, a consulting art director and another professor who helps him.11 The University of Alaska, Anchorage, on the other hand, did follow the one-faculty-member model, but, at the time of the survey, was considering enlisting the help of another professor so that one could focus on content and another design.12 This research and these results indicate that the job of a faculty adviser is a time-consuming one that can be handled by one person, or split into a job for two or even more.

Magazine characteristics vary slightly in regards to publication schedules and general characteristics, according to sources. Of the student magazines that are published, the most common publication schedules are one, two and three times per year, according to University of Alabama’s George J. Frangoulis.13 Seventy-two percent of the magazines, or 45 of the 63 magazines he studied, published at these intervals.14 The study by Lanan also shows the general trend toward publishing annually or biannually, as it found that 69 percent of the magazines he researched published on this schedule.15 The results from our survey were also similar. Of the 15 magazines we called that gave a
definitive answer to this question, 11 magazines published three times per year or less. Syracuse University, one of the other schools not included in these 11, has five different publications, two of which are published once a semester, one of which published one to two times per semester, one of which was printed monthly and one weekly.¹⁶

General characteristics are also shared by a majority of these student magazines. According to the Frangoulis study, 50 (79 percent) of these were “standard magazines in terms of size and format,” while 13 (21 percent) were printed as tabloid-size publications on newsprint.¹⁷ While each does vary significantly in regards to page count, readership and distribution, physical parameters “overlap.”¹⁸ In our survey, there were outliers that shared some characteristics with magazines even though they were not be included in our magazine count due to various differences for our purposes (as we wanted the know the characteristics and information pertaining to glossy, traditional magazines). For example, the magazine at Rutgers University used to be “a full-blown colorful magazine that was truncated into a newsletter on newsprint, for alumni.”¹⁹ And while the University of North Carolina does produce a quarterly publication as part of a class, it is not glossy, but instead on a broadsheet size of newspaper folded to 8.5 x 11.²⁰ For the most part, however, the magazine programs we talked to fell into line with the general results from other research in that their physical characteristics tended to not vary tremendously, most of them adhering to standard ideas about their parameters.

Distribution and circulation, however, was another story. As stated before, these elements of the various student magazines vary.²¹ Circulation numbers ranged from 1,000 copies of The Magazine from Midland Lutheran College in Nebraska²² to 15,000 copies of Columbia College, Chicago’s Echo.²³ While students and alumni seemed to be
the most common audience for the magazines in our survey, some, like Temple University’s Philadelphia People, are distributed to local businesses, thus varying from the “typical” audience. Most of the magazines highlighted in our survey, however, were distributed around campus or via the mail.

While we did not discuss it in our surveys, the technology used by student magazines was a focus in some of the literature on the subject. Generally, schools teaching magazine journalism use Macintosh computers to do so, although some use IBM computers or IBM compatibles. Furthermore, the “availability of computers and the necessary support equipment (laser printers, image writers, etc.) in magazine programs does not appear to be a problem at most schools.” The Georgia Southern University professor who teaches a laboratory course that produces magazine prospectuses noted that despite this fact, some students still suffer from “computer avoidance and anxiety,” which hampers their ability to work in the laboratory setting.

All student magazines must face the issue of funding at some time in their publication life. This issue can either allow the magazine to prosper or lead to its demise, much like it did at Bowling Green State University. Students produced a magazine (Miscellany) at this institution through a special topics class. Miscellany had survived for years, but the magazine folded due to a lack of advertising. In his study, Wheeler concluded that “the most striking commonality is a lack of resources. Faced with budgetary challenges, respondents are creative and diligent but often exasperated.” Approximately half of these 40 magazines’ advisers reported that the publications were funded by a single source, “usually described with terms such as university subsidy, general college fund or academic budget.” He furthermore found that 50 percent of the
40 magazines he studied depended on advertising for at least a portion of its operating costs, though "usually less than 50 percent." As advertising is not a discipline generally taught in a journalism school, this could pose a problem as 100 percent of faculty teaching in magazine school listed less than five years experience in advertising areas of publications. Eight of the 15 student magazines we surveyed sell ads, but generally do not use it to fund the entire cost of printing. Orange and Blue at the University of Florida, on the other hand, used to sell ads, but is conducting an "experiment" to see if they can manage without them. Columbia University has an endowment, but if students want to try to sell ads, they can (they usually don't). Four others reported that they do not sell ads, and one school, while it is included in the count and does have a magazine, did not get the chance to answer the question (while we talked to someone who was able to tell us that the school had a magazine, we could never get in touch with the adviser. The ones that did not sell any advertising at all were funded through endowments, stipends, the departments under which they fell or the journalism school.

During our surveys, we also asked advisers for any advice from which they felt we might benefit as a group trying to start a publication as well as any problems they have had that we might avoid. Some of the responses varied and some were very consistent. From this, we learned several lessons that would help us (and anyone else privy to the information). One of the first steps is to decide whether or not the magazine will be produced as part of a class. Creating a class to produce the publication benefits the magazine in various ways. It gives students an incentive to participate (through class credit). Also, because several students may not have an ample amount of time to
participate on their own, creating specific class time might open up the experience to more people in that now they have a set time frame in which they contribute. Another preliminary step is to firmly decide who the magazine is trying to reach and what it’s trying to do. Goals need to be set before hand. Deadlines also seem to be a large concern. We were advised to hand stories out to writers as soon as possible and to be firm about deadlines from the beginning. In addition to this, editorial board members or class leaders should prepare to have to do things themselves. Clearly defining the roles of students in the class is important, as is avoiding collaborations between students (one adviser had even seen students fight over who was supposed to be doing what). Advisers also recommended that we be innovative and forward-looking.

Finally, the big issue that came up several times was the fact that each year, and sometimes each semester, the staff of the magazine will change. This turnover results in a struggle to keep the continuity of the magazine intact from issue to issue. Students have to be brought up to speed, and this presumably takes time away from production and could cause some confusion. Because continuity is integral to the success of a magazine, creators of a student magazine should address it early on.

While facts and figures related to student magazines are limited, the information that is out there can provide a foundation on which those who wish to produce a student magazine can build. Many of the specifics will change from magazine to magazine, but any magazine is better served when its creators adhere to certain elements. In doing so, students might work on a magazine that they not only successfully produce, but that they and others enjoy.
Part II

Giving You the *Scoop*: A Case Study

In the fall of 2005, a professor, four other students and I positioned ourselves around a table and began to plan a new magazine for the School of Journalism and Electronic Media (affectionately referred to as the JEM school) at the University of Tennessee. Dr. Lyn Lepre, the aforementioned professor, had joined the faculty approximately one year earlier, and had introduced us all to the world of magazines. Adam, Alexis, Anna, Carrie and I (and many others) were hooked, so we set out under Dr. Lepre’s tutelage to create a publication that would fill a hole in the university’s current print options.

The magazine program is a new feature of the JEM school. In the past, a magazine and feature writing course was offered, but when the School of Journalism and the Department of Broadcasting merged a mere two years ago, various tracks in which journalism students could specialize were created. One of those tracks focused on magazine journalism. A sequence of two main classes makes this track unique: “Magazine and Feature Writing” and “Magazine Industry Workshop.” The first time Dr. Lepre taught the latter class at UT, students worked in groups to create a prototype for a hypothetical magazine. Four of the five of us who worked on the editorial board of our new publication were in this class, thus creating a foundation for our future project together.

The natural progression and the popularity of the magazine track made the time right for a publication designed to be printed and distributed. The six of us met every
Friday during the Fall 2005 semester to make that a reality. The interim director of the JEM school offered support of our publication right away, and he and Dr. Lepre discussed the need for a magazine that connected current students, alumni, faculty and staff within its content. We would spend the next few months developing a prototype for the magazine and would present it to the JEM faculty near the end of the semester. The first order of business for the editorial board was to decide on a name.

The first order of business took a while. We wanted a name that would be catchy and intriguing. We wanted a name that incorporated all aspects of the JEM school (in other words, print media, broadcasting, etc.). Basically, we wanted it to be good. Great. Perfect. We laughed about Jemlicious. We chewed on Ink, Screen and Mic. We hovered around 333 (the address of the school). Finally, someone said, “How about Scoop? As in ‘Get the Scoop.’” Scoop. Not bad. Actually, it was pretty good. We all nodded our heads as we tossed the name around in our minds. Dr. Lepre suggested we try it on for size over the next week and decide the following Friday. A week passed, and our magazine had a name. We could now refer to ourselves as the editorial board of Scoop magazine.

In addition to deciding on a name, one of our early duties was to conduct the survey mentioned in Part I. We called numerous schools and gathered information that we hoped would help us in the production of a magazine. One big issue highlighted in the surveys was consistency: How do you keep a publication consistent when the staff can potentially change every semester? As a result of the surveys, we had an inkling of some of the things that waited for us down the road.
From there, we were responsible for the various aspects of a magazine’s identity. We agreed upon the editorial philosophy, or the focus of the magazine. This “explains what the magazine is intended to do, what areas of interest it covers, how it will approach those interests and the voice it will use to express itself.”

The final version of Scoop’s editorial philosophy read as follows:

Scoop magazine lives up to its name. It’s a magazine made for journalism and electronic media alumni, students, faculty and friends that strives to keep its readers up to date with all the events, changes and exciting news at The University of Tennessee’s School of Journalism and Electronic Media.

Not only do we give our readers “the scoop,” we also engage them by involving them – with alumni-written columns, Q & A articles and photo contests, to name a few. This is the reader’s magazine, a magazine that celebrates JEM students past and present. We have no problem taking a little pride in the work that our students have done, are doing and will continue to do. The same pride is taken with the coverage of the faculty and the other numerous ventures of the School of Journalism and Electronic Media, including student media outlets and student organizations.

But Scoop also keeps its eyes on the media, always covering – and uncovering – the latest trends. We represent a journalism school that is preparing students and alumni for a changing job market, and we will be there to explain how and why the world of mass media is changing in an effort to best serve our readers.

Scoop also presents the chance for our readers to think outside the walls of The University of Tennessee. The true journalist is always in search of a story, no matter where it may be. Scoop will be active in exploring JEM’s activities from a broader
national and worldwide scope, again celebrating the work of our students, faculty and alumni who are practicing great journalism across the globe.

More than anything, Scoop is exciting. We are excited by what we do, and we want our readers to be able to take the same pride in their work and the work of their colleagues. Scoop stands ready to launch at a crucial moment in JEM history. This magazine not only functions as one of the first truly converged ventures of the JEM school following its restructuring, but it can also build on all the exciting changes that came along with it. It's an exciting time for an exciting magazine, and Scoop stands prepared to deliver all that and more.49

In addition to the editorial philosophy, we created an editorial calendar that would briefly outline the next five issues. Each issue projected on the editorial calendar had an accompanying lead article and notes about other content. Although pages of the printed magazine might not look exactly as the editorial calendar projects, it helps us to look ahead and plan more effectively. It also shows the longevity of the magazine. As a result of an initiative by the university to expand focus on other areas of the world, we decided to make the theme of our first issue (Spring 2006) “Learning Outside Our Circle.” The next issue will focus on what makes the JEM school unique. The third issue will examine media trends, and the fourth will be devoted solely to the people who make up the JEM school (profiles of alumni, students leaders, etc.). Finally, the issue scheduled for Spring 2008 will take a look at the relationship between journalism and politics, as it will be an election year.50

The editorial formula appeared alongside the editorial philosophy and the editorial calendar on our Scoop to-do list. We spent meeting after meeting discussing the
departments (or sections of the magazine that turn up regularly) that we wanted to appear in our new magazine. After much discussion, we created 10 of these, each of which we felt necessary to better our coverage for the audience. Each one has a specific function.

"Research in the Round" is one department we created. In this department, we highlight various research projects that the faculty and/or students of the school are working on. "Press Passport" is an extension of the interest in travel and international affairs. In this department, we highlight the work that students and faculty are doing on foreign soil. "Ink/Screen/Mic" received its name from one of the titles we were pondering for the magazine. In this section, we update readers on the goings-on of the student media on campus as well as the various media-related organizations. "Who We Are" focuses on one person as a profile of an outstanding member of the JEM community.51

"The Scoop Planner" outlines events that might be of interest to our audience. Alumni will have the chance to write for Scoop with "Retrospect," a department in which one alumnus will offer a memory of their time on campus. Photographs will comprise the content of "A Thousand Words," our photo essay/contest. "Then and Now" is not a text-heavy department, but it is a fun one. It will contrast various elements of the past and the present that have appeared in the JEM school over the years. An alumnus will also be a part of the production of "Trade Tips," our question-and-answer department. Finally, the magazine closes with "Circle View," a back-page photo that catches a moment in the life of the School of Journalism and Electronic Media.52

The references to circles/roundness in the departments' titles hark back to the fact that the JEM school is housed in the Communications Building, which rests on Circle
Park (a circular grassy space surrounded by an arcing parking lot) at the University of Tennessee.

In addition to content, we had to begin working on a design. First, Dr. Lepre hired two students proficient in design to work on this. Unfortunately, they had not attended our meetings or been a part of the creation of our mission nor were they able to attend meetings from that point on. This led to confusion. They didn’t understand exactly what we were doing or what we needed from them as a result. Although we decided to have our resident design guru Carrie finish the designs, our two guest designers did leave us with one important piece of our magazine. They came up with the idea to have a color bar run down the left side of the magazine as a major design element. When Carrie, with the help of Alexis, was done with the mock designs, it was clear that the color bar would be the trademark design element of *Scoop*.

The color bar appears on several pages in various ways throughout the magazine. A translucent color bar (the color taken from the cover photo) extends vertically down the left side of the cover. The cover lines are written over this and the *Scoop* logo appears at the top. A horizontal color bar also runs behind the folio, the colors of it alternating to fit whatever the design of a specific page requires. The bar also appeared as an element in some of the features in the first issue and undoubtedly will appear in feature designs to come. Large photos and plenty of breathable white space also create the look of *Scoop*. All of these elements will become a central component in *Scoop*’s survival as “design has to offer both change and continuity to readers. On one hand, the magazine must look familiar from issue to issue...At the same time, the magazine can’t appear boring or
static.” All of these elements can be used with various subjects and designs, offering the magazine a chance for creativity but at the same time promote a feeling of continuity.

As the date of our faculty presentation crept closer, Carrie had to finalize prototype designs to show them. In order to do so, she needed a cover photo. By default, Adam was chosen as one cover model, being the only guy. The rest of us picked numbers per Dr. Lepre’s request. As my number was the closest, I was the female cover model (I’m not sure if that means I won or lost that contest...). One sunny autumn day, Dr. Lepre brought her digital camera, and we spent an hour or so snapping various shots for a mock cover. We learned from the resulting pictures that future photographers would have to be mindful of business when shooting the cover; the leaves on the trees in Circle Park were much too busy a background over which to place cover lines. Another of the two of us walking in front of the Communications Building, however, served its purpose. Eventually, it was named the real cover for the first issue. In addition to creating some mock spreads for the magazine, we also made a Scoop media kit that included our editorial philosophy, our departments, our ad rate card, our editorial calendar and a short DVD presentation.

After our presentation, we had support from a good majority of the faculty. Scoop was on, and we had to hit the ground running. We would be producing the magazine in the capstone class of the magazine track, and, although generally it would only be published once a semester, we were going to publish two this semester to get the ball rolling. We decided on who would hold what position (Alexis, editor-in-chief; Adam, articles editor; Carrie, art director; Anna, director of outreach; me, managing editor).

And we walked into a classroom of 24 on the first day of the spring semester.
As the semester began, the editorial board (us original five students and Dr. Lepre) finalized the stories that would appear in the first issue. We strove to maintain a balance between the different aspects of the school that we were covering. We wanted a nice mix of alumni-, student- and faculty- focused articles. We also wanted some of our stories to highlight the print side of journalism while others would emphasize the activities of the broadcast crowd. We also had one story that discussed the characteristics of the newly-converged school. In the end, we were pleased with our editorial mix and the outlook for the magazine and were willing to bust it in order to see this project come to fruition.

We realized early on that our passion for the magazine did not extend to everyone. Selling ads without a product was one early challenge. Not only were customers hesitant to buy an ad in a publication before seeing an example of the work, many journalism students in the class did not like being told to sell ads. Unfortunately, selling ads involved the life and death of the magazine as the school was only contributing the mailing costs and a portion (about $2,400) of the money needed to cover printing costs. Some students grumbled and complained about selling ads while others just ignored the assignment completely. Anna, our director of outreach and ad saleswoman extraordinaire, ended up going from business to business to explain our plight to potential customers and asking them to support our endeavor. Our ad rates were low ($125 for a half-page ad, $250 for a full-page and $300 for a cover), but deadlines passed and ad numbers were still unpredictable. Family members and friends of those in the class chipped in and accounted for several ads, and finally, one by one, ads started rolling in. Erin Zammett Ruddy, an alumnus of UT and articles editor at Glamour in
New York City, agreed to buy the back cover to promote her recently released book. We also bought T-shirts and sold them for a small profit and planned to list those that helped *Scoop* by buying a shirt on the back inside cover. Although some students persisted in their plight to shun the selling-ads game, the final total for ad and T-shirt sales in the *Scoop* class was over $5,000.

Our financial woes, however, did not end there. To back up, we had learned of Print Pelican, an online printing company whose rates seemed reasonable for our specifications. Our magazine would be a four-color publication on glossy 8.5 x 11 paper, and we would print 5,500 copies. Though our page number kept changing, it ended up at 60 (with 56 pages plus four covers). The pages would be full-bleed, and we wanted 80# paper stock (in other words, heavy and durable) for the inside pages and 100# for the cover. An aqueous coating would keep fingerprints from smudging up the cover pages. Print Pelican would have to ship them to us (at a cost), but we would mail them out from the school as we wanted to include a survey for the alumni to complete. For these specs, the Print Pelican estimate came in at approximately $8,500. Yay. Great. Or at least doable. Then the other shoe dropped, if you will. Two weeks before we had planned on shipping our magazine’s content to this company, someone finally mentioned university policy to us. Apparently, even though we had sold all our own advertising, once that money was deposited in a university account, it belonged to the university and not us. In other words, could not do what we pleased with the money we had raised through ad sales. Although we can choose the businesses we wanted the school to approach, university policy mandates that an expense like this that exceeds a certain monetary
amount has to be optioned out to find the cheapest bidder. And aside from that, the idea of an online printer did not go over well.

Needless to say, we were a little stunned. Why had no one mentioned this to us? This process would supposedly take weeks, and we were closing the issue for print in two. Basically, it was back to square one. One student in the class knew a local printing place and offered to take us by there. Dr. Lepre, the student and I hopped in a car and headed over to the office, about two minutes from campus. The people we needed to talk to in order to receive an estimate were on a cruise (just our luck), so we had to leave our information and wait for a phone call from someone who was in town and could offer an estimate. We left this business feeling more than a little discouraged but hopeful that this would work out for the best.

As managing editor, it was my responsibility to deal with the printer, so I started to call. My fingers dialed one phone number after another, and the specifics of our magazine became a monologue that I perfected and repeated over and over again to someone on the other end of the phone who promised to send me an estimate as soon as possible. Finally, we received our first estimate. The original place we visited called Dr. Lepre to give her the news. The estimate was over $20,000. And, no, they could not lower the price any. When Dr. Lepre hung up the phone, we sat there and tried to convince ourselves that that number was outrageous and surely higher than the other ones we would get.

Bids in the $10,500 range followed the one exorbitant bid. (As it turned out, that original company did not have the capabilities to print our job and had tried to hire another one of the firms we called to do it. Then they had jacked up the price.) While
these numbers did not have us reaching for a paper bag to prevent hyperventilation, they were not ideal. We did not have the money to print at this cost, so we started to brainstorm. Maybe we could sell carnations on the side of the road for St. Patrick’s Day. Maybe we could have a bake sale. Finally, we decided that a TV trivia contest would be a fun way to raise money and also included our media roots. Although we had reservations about planning this event, we had to do something to raise the extra few thousand dollars now necessary for printing, so Anna began to plan.

In the meantime, we continued to produce the magazine. The class was divided into four “pods” that each had a specific job. The writers comprised one pod, the copy editors another. The designers had their own pod, and the two advertising students belonged to the final pod. The writers produced and rewrote copy, which went smoothly enough. The ad group persisted in trying to make money for the publication. The other two pods, however, ran into a few bumps in the road the first half of the semester.

The first involved the designers. Carrie had designed the mock layouts, which were going to be used as some of the real layouts, in InDesign, a graphic design program that is quickly becoming the standard for the publishing world. We were told that two computers in our classroom/lab would have the program on it for the design group. This only-two-computers-with-the-program situation was not ideal, but would work. Unfortunately, when we started to search for the program, none of the computers had it. They did have Pagemaker, a program that is not compatible with InDesign and is becoming outdated. So Carrie had to work to gain access to another computer lab in the building that did have the program on its machines. She and her design team could only use the lab at certain times, a situation that would become frustrating.
The copy editors also had a turbulent start, as they seemed confused about their jobs. Their role at the magazine was to check the content for grammar mistakes, to fact check the stories, to create a Scoop stylebook that would serve as a set of guidelines for the content of the magazine and to ensure that the stories adhered to the guidelines of the aforementioned stylebook. Their job description did not entail editing for content per se. In other words, they could note a suggestion but could not change the writer’s word and/or style choices. Some of them felt that this job description made them nothing more than “grammar drones.” Whether that sentiment is true or not, however, is a moot point as this is the job of copy editors at many professional publications. The wrinkles were ironed out, however, and they agreed to their job description.

As the production of the issue progressed, we spent an increasing amount of time in the second computer lab as Carrie and the other designers played with the look of the pages. One day, Bonnie Hufford, an editing professor at the JEM school who would be profiled in the issue, dropped in to have her picture take and to hang out. While there, she gave Scoop two huge gifts (in addition to her presence, of course). First, as adviser for the UT chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, she bought $500 worth of ads for the first and second issues. Second, she suggested that I call a printer who is friends with the former director of the school to get an estimate. Even though I doubted the estimate could vary much from the ones we had received thus far, I called. When I talked to this man, he regretfully informed me that he was not capable of completing a job of our size, but he did recommend some of his printing peers. I proceeded to call the businesses that he mentioned. When I spoke with a representative from Inové Graphics in Kingsport, Tenn., I emphasized that we were searching for a printer with whom Scoop
could form a relationship and that repeat business was a probability if the bid was right. Like all of the other printer reps, this man took down the information and vowed to get me an estimate ASAP.

Before the end of the day, I had an e-mail from Inové. I read through it, not expecting much. But when I saw the dollar amount next to the estimate, I did a double take. Surely I had misread. This printing company told us in writing that they could complete our job for approximately $7,400, thousands of dollars less than we had been grudgingly preparing to spend. We practically ran to the JEM office to ensure that this company would be on the list of those that the university would contact for bids. Furthermore, during future conversations with Eric Osborne, the president of the company, he offered to visit us during a trip to Knoxville to explain paper weights and other print issues. This first visit would be one of many, during which we would slightly alter our order (changing paper stocks once and discussing various coatings for the cover, finally opting for a gloss coat). This attention would instill in the Scoop team a feeling that we were working with a printer that cared about our business.

So we continued to work diligently on our magazine, confident that it would now be published. The five of us on the editorial board were often found either in the lab or at a library computer until 11 p.m. or midnight, and several other students would drop by to help whenever they could. We ordered lunch and dinner together while working numerous times. We went through the pages of the magazine multiple times, to the point where they nearly lost all meaning. And while we were tired, we were proud. The magazine was coming together. Sure, there were several fact errors that we were lucky to catch, but we caught them. Certain paragraphs and quotes seemed out of place, but we
fixed them. And we laughed – about the funny things so and so said in class or the klutzy move one of us made spilling papers all over the floor. We took a page from Santa’s book and checked our lists twice, making sure all the i’s were dotted and the t’s crossed. Even Bonnie Hufford offered her assistance to ensure that the editing looked alright. We got closer and closer to the day we would send it off to Eric Osborne.

We sent it to Inové the week after our spring break. He dropped by to pick it up, and we gave him the PDF version and the InDesign file as well as a print out. The next day, Eric called back to let us know that there were some problems with ads, and, as a result, Carrie has to go back and stretch or add color to every ad in the magazine. She did this quickly, and, as a result, there was no charge. Within about a week, we had our proofs (huge sheets of paper with four spreads on each sheet that indicate what the color will look like). We found a few mistakes, like a missing quotation mark and a misused word. A few ads also looked extremely pixilated. Then we noticed that the color was off. It looked yellow, almost like when memories are illustrated in movies. We called Eric, and he postulated that his printer had printed the true color of the publication and that the discrepancy was a normal by-product of the printing process. He did, however, agree to drop by the next day when he was in town to look. When he saw it, he maintained his original opinion, though he called to get another proof to look at when he got back to the office. We were wary of this answer and unsatisfied with the color, but had no extra money to play with in the correction process, so we held our breath. The next morning, Eric called to say that his printer had indeed been at fault and the color corrections would be made free of charge, which we were all relieved to hear. He also
offered a reasonable estimate for the other changes we had to make. He said he would
send us a second set of proofs in a matter of days.

We encountered one more problem during this time. Originally, we had been told
that there were approximately 4,500 alumni that would receive this magazine. We
planned for 6,000 magazines during Scoop’s early days, but when we added the 4,500
alumni to the 400 or so current students then accounted for the various other people who
would receive magazines, we decided we only needed 5,500. Thus, we reduced the cost.
Only a few business days before the magazine was to be printed and returned to us, we
learned that there were, in fact, 4,978 alumni and friends of the college. With these extra
478 people, we now had a shortage of magazines. While we couldn’t up our numbers too
much, we could manage to print 200 more magazines at a cost of 88 cents per unit, thus
creating a little more room to breath while not breaking our “bank.”

Other aspects of Scoop life also continued. Even though we had found a printer
within our price range, we decided to stick with the plan of the TV trivia contest in order
to, perhaps, raise a little extra money to offset the costs of a few ads. The contest was
dubbed “Know the Show?” and fliers went up around campus. Anna had T-shirts made
for the event. Each shirt had a recognizable quote from a popular television show on the
front and the logo for the event (shockingly enough, a TV) on the back. Quotes from
“Friends,” “Grey’s Anatomy,” “Seinfeld,” “The Simpsons,” “Family Guy” and “Sex and
the City” adorned the navy shirts and captured the eyes of those who saw them. Anna
and her community outreach team, and others from the class who were able to help,
began to sit at tables in a prominent location on campus to catch students’ attentions and
persuade them to register for the event. Registration cost $10, but the participant got a
shirt and the chance to win prizes for the cost. They could work in pairs, and grand prize for the winning team was a pair of iPod Shuffles. Runners-up would receive other prizes, and door prizes would be given away throughout the night. All in all, we believed that we had an intriguing and original event on our hands that surely a vast number of students would want to participate in.

Unfortunately, we overestimated students’ willingness to fork over $10. Poor Anna would lug boxes of shirts from Dr. Lepre’s office to the table every day and sit out in the sun trying to promote the event for hours. When the night of the contest rolled around, we had 22 participants rather than the hundreds we had hoped for. While the event itself was fun and entertaining, we lost money. Lots of money. The shirts had cost over $1,000, and we had made approximately $200.

We were still ahead in the game of Scoop, however, as the second set of proofs came in the next Monday. The color looked much better, and, though there were a few minor details we would have changed if we’d had the money and one of the ads still didn’t look right (we hadn’t been able to get in touch with the advertiser to fix it before the deadline), we were pleased with the results. We signed off on it and sent it away.

The magazines came back the Monday following Good Friday. Sixty-five boxes, each containing 90 magazines, were hauled into the JEM office by Eric’s delivery man. As a special bonus, Eric had given us 150 extra copies of the magazine, which further alleviated the strain caused by those mysteriously appearing 478 extra alumni. The faculty started to pick up the copies of the magazine and compliments started to come, via shouts from other offices, phone calls and e-mails. Several faculty members began to
insist we host a “hoopla” to show off our new work. Some even offered to pay for a portion of this soiree.

We also began the process of stuffing the magazines and the accompanying surveys into envelopes to ship. Students from the class set up an assembly line system of labels, envelopes, magazines and sheets of paper, and we all worked whenever we could to release the thousands of copies into the postal system. We shipped it fourth class, and believed we would fall within our original estimated mailing costs of approximately $2,500. Unfortunately, plans and assumptions don’t always pan out, and when we received 27 envelopes that had not reached their intended audience, we noticed that the postmark read $2.55. When we multiplied that by 4,978, we got a big number. Much bigger than we had anticipated. The department would find a way to mail them out this time, but future issues of Scoop would have to be sent another way – through bulk mail, a slower but cheaper process.

The year of Scoop included both successes and pitfalls. The idea was embraced by the faculty, and we got to be part of something uncommon: the inaugural issue of a student magazine. The alumni response to this point has been supportive. We formed friendships over the time we spent together and shared invaluable memories. We learned from each other and the project, and gained practical experience for use in our careers. Some members of the class surprised us with their willingness to help all hours of the day, others with their apathy. Naturally, because we had invested so much time into this project, we were very protective of it and had to deal with various frustrations when our classmates did not place our “baby” as high on their priority list as we did on ours. Furthermore, details that seemed small suddenly became huge hindrances. But those
details will only be a problem once, as the many of the kinks from the first issue have already been/are being sorted out.

We learned that we needed to be very specific with our advertisers. The advertisers need more than just rates and descriptions of audiences. They need dimensions and directions, and, if you only verbally tell them, they tend to forget. They also tend to be much more receptive if they have something to look at before buying. We also realized that our ad rates are a teeny bit too low and will have to be raised in the future to break even. We also feel the need to improve some upon our media kit.

We also learned that we need to pay attention to detail and never assume that people are going to let us know if we are about to make a mistake. No one told us about the university policy regarding the bid process for printers until it was a stress fest to fix. We thought everything was perfectly fine and ready to go. Until we asked for labels for our envelopes, no one mentioned that we had 478 more alumni than the original verbal estimate. We assumed that the estimate for mailing the issues out was fairly accurate, or at least would not vary by as much as it did. No one pulled us aside and said “Hey, did you check to see how much it might cost to mail?” We learned that stumbling blocks like this are going to be in the way of such a publication and that we have to be proactive in thinking about the minutia and the problems that could result from various scenarios.

But despite all the trials with which we dealt, Scoop has been something that those of us who sat around that conference table in the fall of 2005 can be proud of. And I feel confident that I speak for all of us when I say that, after years have removed us from our time at UT and we have long forgotten printer complications and foiled
fundraiser, we will remember the feelings of excitement of producing the first issue of Scoop whenever we see another issue arrive in our mailboxes.


2 Wheeler, 113.

3 Gass, Jonathon, Bloomsbury University. Personal correspondence.


5 Wheeler, 113.


7 Wheeler, 111.

8 Wheeler, 116.

9 Merrick.


14 Frangoulis.

15 Wheeler, 113.

16 Chessher, Melissa, Syracuse University. Interviewed on 8 September 2005.

17 Frangoulis.

18 Wheeler, 113.


20 Yopp, Jan, University of North Carolina. Interviewed on 12 September 2005.

21 Wheeler, 113.

22 Winfield, Joyce, Midland Lutheran College. Interviewed on 14 September 2005.

23 Bloyd-Peshkin.


25 Frangoulis.

26 Frangoulis.

27 Merrick.


29 Wheeler, 114.

30 Wheeler, 115.

31 Frangoulis.


33 Navasky.

34 Prior-Miller, Marcia, Iowa State University. Interviewed on 14 September 2005.

35 Brendlinger.

36 Prior-Miller and Bloyd-Peshkin.

37 Spiker.

38 Bloyd-Peshkin.

39 Stains.

40 Chessher.

41 Barish, Ellen, Northwestern University. Interviewed on 16 September 2005.

42 Chessher.

43 Navasky.

44 Middleton, Kent, University of Georgia. Interviewed on 12 September 2005 and Barish.

45 Spiker.

46 Johnson, Sammye, Trinity University. Interviewed on 12 September 2005.
48 Johnson & Prijatel, 209.
49 Scoop media kit, Spring 2006.
50 Scoop media kit, Spring 2006.
51 Scoop media kit, Spring 2006.
52 Scoop media kit, Spring 2006.
53 Johnson and Prijatel, 214.