

Developing Skills for Sound Video

A Broadcast Staff Manual Developed for Kent State University's Master of Arts

Program in Journalism and Mass Communication

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Abstract

The implementation of a broadcast journalism program in the high school setting is a complex effort that requires lessons in reporting, videography, sound engineering, editing, and staff management components. Students who are trained in broadcast journalism will graduate with many marketable skills that they can use in any profession. According to the leading scholastic broadcast advisers in the nation, there currently is no staff manual uniquely created for staffs to guide a group of students. This project, a broadcast staff manual and accompanying WordPress website, with resources and guidelines for developing a broadcast program based on research and applied practices, will serve as a guideline for existing and developing scholastic broadcast journalism programs. The manual will include a mission statement, suggested staff goals for the year, a sample deadline schedule, staff position descriptions and flow chart, style rules, coverage ideas, class and studio expectations, grading policy, staff building suggestions, and basic instructional handouts.

Keywords: Broadcast, Staff Manual, Staff Management, High School Journalism, Video, Advising, Scholastic Press

Statement of Purpose

The dissemination of information has been evolving since the invention of movable type in China in the 11th century. As groundbreaking as this invention was to society then, the invention was just the beginning. Today, the emergence of more modern smartphones and apps that allow people to be more mobile with video and broadcasting has also changed the way people communicate. One group that has been affected by this evolution in communication has been students. Students now possess the technology to communicate through video like never before. Although there is more access to video, staff manuals to help structure scholastic broadcast journalism student programs are still not present or available for everyone.

Studies have shown that in 2012 smartphone users were consuming 9.39 minutes of film and video on their smartphone every day (Gilbert, 2012). In addition there is a movement that is embracing more video use in teaching students. “On the student side of things, video may be the best way to improve learning styles, especially when it comes to remembering key facts and figures. Forrester Research estimates one minute of online video equates to approximately 1.8 million written words. In addition, 90 percent of information transmitted to the brain is visual, and visuals are processed 60,000 times faster in the brain than text” (Tsur, 2014).

Students of all grade levels are now able to contribute to this media stream with great ease because of the video technology provided to them on their smartphones. “Currently, [Internet] video accounts for 40 percent of all consumer Internet traffic, and will reach 62 percent by the end of 2015. The sum of all forms of

video (TV, video on demand [VoD], Internet, and peer-to-peer [P2P] communications) will continue to be approximately 90 percent of global consumer traffic by 2015” (Greenberg & Zanetis, Jan 2012, p. 9). A large job market for television and online broadcast has been added to with such trends. The need for students graduating from structured scholastic broadcast journalism is apparent with such trends in video production.

The media classroom is unique from standard classrooms in that there may be many different tasks, assignments, and levels of learning going on simultaneously. In contrast to a standard class where the teacher is lecturing and then asking the students to all respond to the same set of questions to evaluate their learning, the media classroom requires students to work on different tasks such as interviewing, writing, filming, and video edits in order to provide an outcome demanded by the teacher. This is the beauty and the overwhelming difficulty of managing a project-based learning environment. “Developing a plan that addresses students having different roles and working on different projects is a challenge, especially for new advisers. Add to that, the students also are learning how to balance student First Amendment rights with legal and ethical responsibilities” (Dodd, <http://jeamentoring.org/2013/08/19/develop-newspaper-staff-manual-high-school-media/>, 2013). As Julie Dodd, former co-chair of the JEA Mentoring Committee, points out, for advisers and media teachers, there is a real need for a staff manual that can provide a structure and organizational guide for operating in such an environment. With the guide, students can quickly understand their role, from job to job, and from year to year (2013).

Randy Swikle's sample newspaper staff manual is available through the website jeamentoring.org (Dodd, 2013). In addition, a sample yearbook staff manual can be found through the Herff Jones website ("Staff manuals," 2011). But one area there seems to be a void of such a manual is for broadcast staffs. The broadcast staff faces the same tasks Dodd addresses, if not more. On a broadcast staff, a team of reporters, videographers, lighting and sound specialists, producers, and directors must all know their roles and tasks.

Top broadcast advisers, recognized by the Journalism Education Association (JEA) in the first Broadcast Adviser of the Year competition, sponsored by Lindenwood University, Michael Hernandez (Manhattan Beach, Calif.), Matt Rasgorshek (Omaha, Neb.), Don Goble (St. Louis, Mo.), and Alyssa Boehringer (McKinney, Texas) have been teaching broadcast journalism combined for more than 50 years, and all confirm that they do not possess a comprehensive staff manual that includes a mission statement, suggested staff goals for the year, a sample deadline schedule, staff position descriptions and flow chart, style rules, coverage ideas, class and studio expectations, grading policy, staff building suggestions, and basic instructional handouts. Alyssa Boehringer (personal communication, March 8, 2014) stated, "We don't have a 'manual' but my producers make a short video guide to our broadcast style." Don Goble (personal communication, March 8, 2014) stated, "I don't do manuals like that. We have a lot of info listed on our site (<http://lhstv.weebly.com/class-information.html>)." Matt Rasgorshek (personal communication, March 8, 2014) stated, "I'm inclined to say no [manual exists], but I was asked a few months ago about curriculum for JEA."

Handbook, though? I haven't seen one." Although no manual exists, they believe that there is a strong need for such a manual. A manual lays out a structure for a staff. They responded to the question of why a manual, with clear guidelines for operating a broadcast newsroom, has great advantages. Goble (personal communication, April 20, 2014) stated, "Everybody can't be a director. If one person fails to do their job big or small, the show fails." Boehringer (personal communication, April 20, 2014) stated, "... kids deserve to have their classrooms resemble a professional newsroom." In some cases advisers have gone without one due to their experience. Although Arizona adviser Brian Turner does not use a manual, Turner (personal communication, April 20, 2014) stated, "In that situation where there was a lot of equipment, it might've been very useful, especially if the advisor was just an English major, with no real world industry experience."

A staff manual provides a road map for students who must work independently on assignments like a video segment. Without this road map new advisers and new staff members will find it more difficult to successfully run their program. The difficulty in running a broadcast program can be directly seen in the number of classes and staffs currently operating in public schools. In a 2013 survey conducted by the Virginia High School League, less than 20% of the 330 Virginia high schools had a course for students to learn how to produce videos. In comparison, the number of yearbook and newspaper programs is more than double this number.

The cost of a broadcast course with regards to equipment and resources could be a major roadblock for schools. However, it is possible to use the electronic

devices students already possess to implement a course on video production. The more pressing issue is the availability of a model guide for a broadcast staff for up-and-coming broadcast advisers to guide them. “Another issue that limits student engagement with technology in the classroom is that many educators are not trained to use digital communication devices as teaching tools” (Plopper & Flemming, 2012, p.53).

Statement of Project

In 2013, the Huffington Post posted that YouTube had one billion unique users each month, which in numbers would have ranked them as the third largest country behind China and India (2013). The startling number of users involved with YouTube through uploads and videos watched each month would seem to suggest individuals are being educated in the field of video production at a younger and younger age. The statistics may support the idea that people know how to technically record, upload, and watch a video quickly, but it may not support any further understanding. One specific example when it relates to young people producing videos is with regards to the law. Professor Loretta Vignier, William Paterson University found only one student out of 80 in her media courses “knew anything about copyright law and license free footage and music” (2013, p.43). Students will often incorporate songs from iTunes and videos from YouTube without consideration of copyright (Vignier, 2013). This is just a small example of how schools are not preparing students to be knowledgeable consumers and producers of video. “This [university broadcast journalism classroom] is the place to

set the standards – the ethos – for men and women to work by for the rest of their professional lives” (Bliss Jr., 1977, p. 61).

Although Edward Bliss, Jr. spoke of the need for strong broadcast journalism basics in 1977, it still rings true today. Research by Bob Bobkowski, Mark Goodman, and Candace Bowen (2012) supports the idea the majority of schools in the U.S. do not possess broadcast journalism programs (p. 253). With this in mind, the majority of schools continue to neglect to offer resources like a staff manual to help with proper staff structure and production techniques in writing and reporting stories for video. It is the hope that this project will present steps and an outline for potential and current broadcast programs.

Understanding the current collective mindset of students in the digital age is critical in helping them become better journalists. Marc Prensky stated, “Our students today are all ‘native speakers’ of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet” (2001, p.1). So it would seem to be a viable argument to say students should innately be better at creating content with these devices, if they are in fact “native speakers”. However, according to the research done by Janna Andersen and Lee Rainie (2012) individuals born after 1985 have no advantage over any other age group when it comes to understanding how digital media works. Rather, one of the experts Andersen and Rainie included in the investigation, David Ellis, director of communications studies at York University in Toronto, stated, “They’re just like people who haven’t grown up digital. And of course the immersive nature of 24/7 connectedness creates the illusion that Millennials can somehow tap into a form of collective intelligence just by being online, while looking impatiently

for messages every three minutes” (2012). Scholastic journalism has the task to correct this gap in aptitude. The broadcast manual will offer a plan for young digital learners to make real contributions to the collective learning that takes place with the media. Martin Hirst and Greg Treadwell wrote, “However, it has been our experience at AUT that while our students (average ages 19-23) are avid consumers of social media and participate fully in social networking; they are less likely to be producers of news-like content through blogs, uploading video to YouTube or by taking up their own amateur news enterprises” (2011). The objective is to produce a tool to help students move from avid consumers to producers of news content.

The project, a broadcast staff manual, will contain specific guidelines for all teachers and potential broadcast staffs. The manual will include a mission statement, which guides the staff and adviser in a collaborative goal-setting path. The ultimate goal will be to maintain strong journalistic standards in the course of reporting the news. Staff goals for the year will also be included which involve improving viewer numbers, engagement with the community, and improving the quality of each program. A sample deadline schedule will be provided to model how a staff might meet smaller tasks in achieving the final product. Staff position descriptions will guide students in understanding the diverse set of roles that they should master as a broadcast journalist. Style rules will help staffs be unified in presenting the news visually. A set of coverage ideas will help get the staff brainstorming for potential stories. Class and studio expectations provide a model for helping maintain order and cohesion in the work environment. A grading policy will guide the adviser in assessing a project-based classroom. Some basic

instructional handouts will be included to help students understand the essentials of shooting interviews and b-roll. And finally a list of suggestions for team building will be provided to encourage a unified approach to the task of presenting the news.

Limitations of the Project

In providing a broadcast staff manual, it must never convey a sense of rigidity and lack of flexibility. Advisers might not think the manual is useful if the characteristics of their program seem to not fit the details of the manual. Advisers without production space, production equipment, or classroom space might not think that a staff manual would be applicable to them. Therefore the number one limitation to this project is making sure that it is not exclusive, but rather as inclusive as possible for all potential programs.

The danger of outdated technology presents itself as well when developing a project that is centered on video. No matter what the circumstance may be, the suggestions included in the manual will be applicable. The manual will be adaptable to a variety of space and school conditions. This manual will not be restricted by specific equipment however. The road map will be one that can be applied no matter what devices are present for recording and producing stories.

Along with a transformation in equipment, so too, could the formal approach to storytelling change. With the incorporation of social media, video editing and production has evolved. This manual will include methods to address that evolution. "The high school graduate intending to major in radio-television in college should remember that when broadcasting first entered academic curriculum, it was generally taught as a skill. The courses were primarily exercises in manipulating

equipment. Since then, broadcasting has developed into a social responsibility and its study has broadened correspondingly” (Weaver, 1966, p.185). Weaver states in 1966 that understanding broadcast journalism had changed. Today it is still changing, as the idea of the backpack journalist, the one person who can do everything on a phone, is also a transformation that might evolve further.

In some states and school systems, laws allow for more freedom with regards to free speech. While this manual will suggest topics and story ideas for staffs to use, in addition to guidelines for best practices in law and ethics, no manual can prevent administrators from operating inconsistently and inappropriately in their position of authority. The establishment of prior review will be a force some staffs will have to account for when scheduling their broadcast program. This limitation must be considered on a school-by-school basis. The manual will address ways to respond to legal and ethical situations as they occur with a staff.

After a live broadcast of a segment on same-sex marriage, a school’s broadcast staff in Montgomery County, Maryland fell under scrutiny and had to follow a new procedure for producing its segments. Montgomery Blair High School students had to follow specific requirements before being allowed to produce and air any further shows. “The superintendent has offered a lengthy process for student broadcast journalists to follow. Under the guidelines proposed by [Superintendent Paul L.] Vance, students producing live television programs would have to fill out a form complete with signatures from the principal, media specialist and the teacher sponsoring the show. Student producers would also have to supply the show’s title, instructional objectives, the name of the teacher who will be present during the

airing, hosts' questions and guests' resumes or biographies" ("Student broadcast not," 1998). The manual will not be able to address each individual case like this one in Maryland, but it will attempt to create a structured environment with clear steps to take in a similar situation.

A clear statement about copyright laws will be included in the manual, in order to educate students on how to proceed without violation of any regulations.

Literature Review

Defining The Term "Broadcast"

Roger Walters stated, in his book *Broadcast Writing*, "Broadcast is legally defined as delivery by radio transmission (over the air) of programs intended for general public use" (1994, p. 7). He readily admits later that this term has been adapted, as technology has evolved. Today it is more accepted to use the term telecommunications as it refers to a broader sense of the idea.

In addition to the notion of broadcasting information, there must also be a consideration of audience. In the business of broadcast, station managers must be concerned with the ability to maintain a certain portion of the viewing audience for financial reasons. In scholastic broadcast journalism, the consideration of audience is important for many other reasons. It must provide: content created for a student audience, content which interests the student body, and content that is newsworthy. These three considerations are essential in composing this manual, because in many schools there is no FCC to oversee violations, but rather the staff to self-regulate.

The manual seeks to instruct staffs how to meet and abide by journalism ethics and needs of the community.

Define Content of Message

In the educational setting, viewers have many needs regarding the information they are searching for daily. The content of a broadcast can be in the form of a very simple news brief, or it can be disseminated in a longer, more in depth segment. Harrower stated broadcast news differs in presentation, but that it has the same goal of print, and that is to “tell your story in a clear, compelling, way” (2007, p. 164).

The process of determining the content can also be a task that requires much thought and communication. Students should develop a chain of command and a hierarchy of staff positions to enable students to work on their own to pitch ideas, critique ideas, and assign and produce story ideas, in a fair and efficient manner (Klink, 2002). “Producers are responsible for laying out the newscast, deciding what stories will lead the newscast, and determining the flow of the rest of the stories so that they best hold the attention of the viewers” (White, p. 433).

It will often be the case that there is more content than the allotted time will allow. The director will need to be trusted with making final edits to the show based on sound decision-making (White, 2005, p. 434). The director is considered the staff’s highest editor and makes final decisions with regards to the show.

Define Packaging and Production

When reporters begin their work, many steps must take place before the final show can be viewed. This task can be very daunting to students and advisers,

due to the fact that in addition to the reporting skills a student must possess, there are a variety of other skills the individual and the team must command. According to Ted White, “ If they are done well, packages have all of the elements that bring a story alive: good pictures, interesting sound bites, and a well-written script. As mentioned, if any of these elements is weak, the story may be downgraded or kept short” (2005, p. 257). More directly state, “A package is a story put together by a reporter that includes interviews, narration, and cover footage” (White, 2005, p. 489).

Production is a larger term that encompasses video and audio production of the show. It can refer to any of a number of tasks including pre-production work, which includes scripting and casting, to post-production, which includes editing. (Walters, 1994, p. 36-39)

Define School Resources and Equipment

According to Donald Emery, one-time superintendent of Scarsdale Schools in the state of New York, a problem that many schools face is the importance of equipping the students with the appropriate resources to do the work. He compares it much like the task of equipping a first-rate library. “All of the hardware, storage forms, and related human services are roughly parallel in both instances. The administrator is trying to provide tools for teaching and learning to faculty and students” (Emery, 1966, p. 177).

With the increasing amount of affordable handheld technology included in most smartphones or iPods, resources are much easier to come by. Some staffs now are forgoing the big video cameras for smaller devices. In fact, 2014 JEA Broadcast

Adviser of the Year Michael Hernandez sees some advantages to using this equipment over the traditional broadcast setup. “Broadcast news is always about being fast and cheap. So if you need to cover breaking news in a hurry, or just produce news packages on a tight budget, you should consider the iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch for your entire production studio” (Hernandez 2012).

With an iPhone, the reporter can record in the highest resolution, edit and produce story segments, and even post them to the web all on one device. Although the technology may seem somewhat intuitive, resources within a school are not limited to just the equipment for gathering the stories. A staff must still have educational resources to allow students to learn how to best use a camera on a phone, how to ask questions that get the best information, and how to construct a story that best captures the essence of the news. (Klink, 2002)

Define Job Preparedness

Knowing how to work a camera and a microphone is not everything that a young journalist needs to know in order to succeed in the field. The broadcast journalism classroom and staff can provide a journalist with many building blocks for a long successful future of storytelling. Professional newsrooms feel the strain when scholastic programs fail to prepare budding reporters. Johanna Cleary concluded from a 2006 study that, “American newsrooms are filled with knowledge workers who are asked on a daily basis to be creative and productive, often without a great deal of opportunity for professional development support to refresh their skills. But that gap may also provide opportunities for journalism educators” (p. 263). The structure of a manual can offer members of a staff guidance in developing

ideas, working within deadline schedules, and ways to better communicate, thereby helping develop each of the members of the team. This is something that even the professional marketplace sees as invaluable.

Methodology

Resources will be developed and/or identified for educators through the creation of a staff manual, and links to organizations such as the Broadcast Education Association, Journalism Education Association, National Scholastic Press Association, Student Television Network, and the Student Press Law Center. The staff manual will consist of materials any broadcast journalism class/staff can use to give its program a firm foundation in teaching and running a student television news staff. The mission statement will provide a clear objective for a broadcast staff. The section on goals will provide even greater opportunity for a staff to strive for journalism excellence. The section on staff positions and responsibilities will define the job tasks of each member of the class/team. The sample deadline schedule will assist in guiding a staff for a period of the year in producing the show. The guide for the workspace will allow for the team to manage the room in an efficient manner.

The staff manual will provide structure in the area daily operations, staff management, deadline management, equipment use, and news production. The manual will also factor in key educational components in regards to scholastic press law.

Explanation of Project

According to the research, the use of video in mass communication is increasing on a large scale, based alone on the numbers involved with YouTube.

Added to that, professors and writers are finding that there is an ill-conceived assumption that students are knowledgeable with regards to video production. But experts once again affirm students are unaware of sound journalistic principles and laws with regards to video.

The research also supports the need for a staff manual for broadcast staffs. As stated by the top broadcast advisers involved in the Journalism Education Association, no staff manual currently exists for staffs and/or advisers to use in beginning or sustaining their broadcast programs. In addition, although some resources exist currently for broadcast education, there is no manual that includes information on staff positions, procedures, a mission statement, and a guide for legal understanding. Advisers confirm a broadcast manual would be a valuable resource for advisers and staff members in the unique project-based learning environment of the broadcast classroom and studio.

This project will present a complete staff manual with a staff mission statement, schedule for an entire school year, staff qualifications and job descriptions, style guide, coverage ideas, class expectations, staff contract, grading policy, staff bonding suggestions, handouts on audio and video skills, and an equipment guide. The staff manual will be published as a pdf and as a WordPress website at www.broadcastmanual.wordpress.com. The website will be organized with a main screen that has six main windows to navigate and then several tabs at the top. The top tabs will include items to help with the broadcast staff organization, broadcast staff building, a show schedule, information for legal and ethical guidance, an equipment guide, and a place for useful forms and handouts. This information

developed over the course of several years through a culmination of interviews, research, and collaboration.

Conclusion

The goal is a manual for use in the broadcast classroom and for broadcast programs to enhance the development of video broadcast. This manual exists where there is a need for information to guide the broadcast adviser and student staff member. The manual is in pdf form for download as a reference item. In addition, a website will stand as an online resource with enhanced content for new and veteran broadcast teachers. The project also provides existing journalism organizations with a resource for their members and young advisers.

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