Letter From Our DIVISION HEAD

Celebrate what we do—and have fun

By Brian Thornton, Northern Illinois

Writing this introductory column is intimidating. I’ve been stewing over it a while. When I think of all the fine scholars and just plain nice people who have held the job of Magazine Division head before me, I feel overwhelmed. I am indeed standing on the shoulders of giants.

I want to start my job by thanking the people who hired me—in this case, everyone who believed enough in me and all the other new officers to give us the responsibility of leading the division. I hope we can live up to your trust and meet or exceed your expectations. But we can’t do anything without you, so feel free to offer suggestions. Let’s all work to make the Magazine Division the best organization possible.

You can start working toward that goal right away by sending in your ideas for panel sessions for our annual convention, which will be held in San Antonio next year. Send suggestions to Carol Fletcher <Carol.T.Fletcher@Hofstra.edu>, our fearless vice head, who is in charge of programming for the entire convention. We’re eager to receive your ideas.

That said, I must also acknowledge that it’s also traditional for a new president to outline an agenda for the coming new term. I’m going to keep it simple.

In the coming year we officers pledge to celebrate what we all do as teachers and scholars of magazine journalism. We’re preparing the next generation of magazine writers, editors, and publishers. And as scholars we’re creating new knowledge, uncovering new information, and helping students and fellow scholars see the world in a new way. And that’s no small feat. If we perform our jobs well, we can take joy in the many wonderful publications we had a hand in building or maintaining by training future magazine employees and employers.

There is a downside to what we do, however: If we fail to teach our students about the exacting standards of the profession and the ethical responsibilities inherent in their work, there may be more Stephen Glass train wrecks.

When you think about our obligations in this light, it’s easy to see we all have fairly intimidating duties. But despite daunting daily tasks, we need to celebrate and enjoy what we do as much as we can. I try to wake up every morning looking forward to challenging my students. So many people have boring jobs where creativity is forbidden; as a result, they hate their work.

So my second goal, after celebrating our daily tasks, is to have fun. Let’s try to laugh and share with each other what we all have in common—a love of magazine journalism in all its facets.

A crusty old magazine editor once told me that newspaper reporters get to tip only their toes in the ocean of experience because they have to rush back and make today’s 6 p.m. deadline. In contrast, working for a magazine allows the writer a little more time to take a long, deep swim. So my last point is this: Thanks for electing us, let’s celebrate what we do, and then let’s have fun. I always tell my students that magazine writing is fun—or it should be. I would say the same applies to teaching magazine journalism. It should be fun, at least enough to let us look forward to our coming day—and year. ♦

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The 2005 AEJMC convention will be held August 10-13 in San Antonio. To make this convention as successful as the last, we need ideas for panels. If you have an idea for a Teaching Panel or a Professional Freedom & Responsibility Panel for the Magazine Division, please e-mail your proposal to <Carol.T.Fletcher@Hofstra.edu> by Friday, October 15.

Once proposals are in, the division head and chairs will sift through the ideas and look for co-sponsorship opportunities with other divisions. The first weekend in December, in San Antonio, the AEJMC divisions hold a midwinter meeting to begin shaping the 2005 convention program.

To propose a panel, please e-mail Carol Fletcher the following information:

1. The proposed panel title.
2. A paragraph or two describing the background and importance of the topic and what issues panelists might discuss.
3. Whether it would be a Teaching Panel or Professional Freedom & Responsibility Panel.
4. A list of possible panelists, or at least the sort of panelists you would like.
5. Likely co-sponsors, especially within AEJMC.
6. Your name, mailing address, telephone number, and e-mail address. If your panel is selected, it will be your job to get the panelists and moderate the discussion.

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WWW.AEJMCMAGAZINE.ORG
The **SHORT FORM** and Magazine Writing

**Tips on teaching your students how to pack 5,000 bits of information into 500 words**

By Patricia Prijatel, Drake University, and Sammye Johnson, Trinity University

We made that up, but we’ve seen less enjoyable versions of it in the magazine field. Writers increasingly are being asked to tell a comprehensive story about a significant issue in fewer than 500 words.

How do we teach students to write a complete, well-researched article—and add some personality—in slightly more than two typewritten pages?

Four key points can help students in the short-form process: Focus, research, format, and editing.

### 1. Focus

A narrow focus is important to all good writing but it’s essential to short writing. To maintain a precise direction, make sure your students:

- are narrow-minded from the start,
- fine-tune the topic before they ever begin writing.

Don’t sacrifice personality for brevity. Remember that readers will still want the human element, details, and lively writing.

Remember the reader, serving the needs of one person in the audience rather than writing to the amorphous “average reader.”

### 2. Research

The proper focus builds the solid foundation for students’ research, keeping them from wasting time on material they’ll never use. To do this, students should:

- look for data that pack a punch, infusing each sentence with details.
- avoid over-researching a topic by being selective during the gathering process.
- use secondary research for details, primary for perspective and personality.

### 3. Format

A successful short article creates synergy on the page with the strong use of bullet-ed points instead of narrative, meaty titles and subtitles, and the integration of tip boxes and sidebars for data and detail. As part of the writing package, students should create:

- titles and subtitles that work hard, relaying the article’s point in single-meaning informative words and phrases.
- bullet points that make the article more accessible to the reader—and cut space.
- sidebars and tip boxes that list suggestions and resources that might otherwise clog up the article.

### 4. Editing

Brevity is not only the soul of wit, it is also the soul of good writing. Much of the soul of a piece grows in the editing and rewriting process. When students edit their work, encourage them to:

- use strong verbs and nouns to make the point fast.
- eliminate excess adjectives and adverbs.
- find the simplest and most precise words.

All writers can benefit from the classic words of E.B. White, who offered the following advice in *The Elements of Style*, written with William Strunk:

> Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects in outline, but that every word tell.

**SAMMYE JOHNSON discusses short-form writing at the AEJMCC annual convention in Toronto while Patricia Prijatel looks on. Photograph by David Sumner**
Minutes from Toronto 2004

Division secretary summarizes highlights of annual meeting

By Carol Schwalbe, Arizona State

Members of the AEJMC Magazine Division gathered for their annual meeting on Thursday, August 5, at 8:30 p.m. in Toronto.

- Division head Carol Zuegner introduced the division’s officers.
- John Macfarlane, editor of Toronto Life magazine, received a plaque honoring his selection as Professional of the Year. He discussed the differences between journalism in the Canada and the United States (see following page).
- David Sumner presented an award to Kitty Endres and Leara Rhodes recognizing their contribution for starting the division’s online Journal of Magazine and New Media Research.
- Carol Zuegner announced the winners of the best student and faculty research papers.
- Carol Holstead reported 172 entries in the Student Magazine Contest. She presented certificates to the winners; first prize winners also received a check for $100. Carol thanked Carolyn Lepre for helping with the contest. The judges’ comments, available on the Magazine Division website <www.aejmcwebsite.org>, provide helpful information for magazine classes.
- Carol Zuegner discussed the AEJMC assessment, held every five years to evaluate the division’s strengths, weaknesses, and challenges. Carolyn Kitch will serve as the liaison on the standing committee on research.
- After discussing future sites for AEJMC meetings, the division members expressed their preference for Chicago and Cincinnati. With the addition of more special groups, the number of chips will be reduced because the number of days for the convention can’t be increased. Every three years the Magazine Division will receive one less chip.
- There was a brief discussion about ways to increase membership. Carol Zuegner will encourage everyone who presented a paper in the Magazine Division to join. Other suggestions for increasing membership included a social gathering after the members meeting.
- David Sumner proposed a resolution recognizing Barbara Reed for organizing the faculty field trips to New York magazine publishers. The resolution was seconded and approved unanimously. The trip is usually held during the third week of June.
- Members discussed possible changes in the division’s structure. For further details, see the story below.

A motion to adjourn was seconded and unanimously approved. The meeting ended at 10:15 p.m.

Changes in Magazine Division Structure

By Carol Zuegner, Creighton University

Magazine Division members attending the annual meeting in Toronto slightly revised the division’s structure by making the research chair a more integral part of the leadership. The division head oversees all the activities and initiatives, while the vice head is in charge of programming for the annual convention. When a member takes on the vice head position, it’s a commitment to follow the next year as head of the division.

The change would make the research chair, who is in charge of the paper competition for the annual convention, the next in line for the vice head and head positions. By coordinating the annual competition, the research chair gains valuable experience about programming that would ease the transition into the top two jobs.

Members also combined the secretary and newsletter editor positions.

Call for Papers

Submissions are invited from undergraduates, graduates, and educators for Academic Exchange Extra, a monthly peer-reviewed online forum <http://asstudents.unco.edu/students/AE-Extra/index.html>. Extra presents ideas, research methods, and pedagogical theories leading to effective instruction and learning regardless of level, subject, or context. We also seek cogent essays, poetry, and fiction. Send electronic submissions to Elizabeth Haller, Kent State University <editoraee@hotmail.com>.

Articles to 6,000 words on the theory, practice, and administration of education across the full range of humanities and social science-based approaches are welcomed. Possible theoretical frameworks include critical pedagogy, postcolonial race theory, postmodernism, feminist theory, and other cultural studies and perspectives. The use of a theoretical lens is encouraged but not required; see options for other submission types below. We are also interested in social and cultural issues as they intersect with education. We prefer to include an array of diverse material each month, though thematic issues may be considered.

Essays up to 2,500 words are encouraged. Topics may include, but are not limited to, the following suggestions:

- distance learning
- e-communities and socialization
- service learning
- affirmative action
- marginalized or minority viewpoints and experiences
- tenured and post-tenure review
- urban education and issues of student inequality
- postmodernism and education
- canonical revision/non-revision

We also seek poetry to 50 lines in traditional or free-form verses. Fiction to 5,000 words is also encouraged. Subject matter for poetry and fictions is unlimited; however, we will not publish inflammatory or libelous works or works deemed otherwise inappropriate for this journal.
A CANADIAN EDITOR looks SOUTH
Why doesn’t Canada have a New Yorker? he asks
By John Macfarlane, editor, Toronto Life

Macfarlane was a natural choice for the award, which recognizes significant contributions to the magazine industry. He has worked extensively in Canadian media, from an editorial writer with the Globe and Mail newspaper to a stint as editor of magazines such as Maclean’s and Weekend to owner of a book publishing company. He also has served as chairman of the Writer’s Trust of Canada and president of the National Magazine Awards.

At the Toronto convention, Macfarlane talked about the differences between American and Canadian magazines.

The person who reads my speeches before I give them—the person I kiss good-bye in the morning—says I could call this one “If You Think Things Are Bad Down There, Try Living Up Here.” She thinks what I’m about to say paints a bleak picture of cultural life in Canada and that before I begin, I should tell you it’s not all bad. And it isn’t. Our novelists, for instance, are now celebrated throughout the world. The names of Canadian writers appear routinely on the short lists of international literary prizes. Frequently they win them.

But I’ve been asked to speak to you about the differences between magazine journalism in Canada and the United States. And it’s not a happy story.

We Canadians spend much of our lives reflecting on the differences between ourselves and our neighbors to the south. A Canadian pollster named Michael Adams has written a best-selling book on the subject called Fire and Ice. “On any given day,” he writes, “most Canadians like most Americans, can be spotted in their natural habitats driving cars, consuming too much energy and water, spending a little less time with their nuclear families than they would like, working a little more than is healthy watching television, and buying some things they could probably survive without. But differences—both subtle and marked—do exist and do endure. Some are external (gun control, bilingualism, health care), but many exist only inside the minds of Canadians and Americans—in how they see the world, how they engage with it, and how they hope to shape it.”

Some of these differences, as Adams points out, are important. Americans are more than twice as likely to believe that the father of a family must be the master in his own home. Others are trivial. In Canada minivans outsell SUVs by a ratio of two to one; in the United States it’s the other way around.

On the surface we seem similar. But appearances are...well, just appearances. And so it is with magazines. And perhaps the best way to tell you how ours differ from yours is to answer a question Canadians have been asking for as long as I can remember, and it’s this: Why doesn’t Canada have a New Yorker?

It’s not as odd a question as it seems. By almost any measure the New Yorker is the best magazine in America, maybe in the world. Even good magazines have ups and downs. Esquire was a towering magazine in the 1960s; today’s iteration pales by comparison. And the same could be said about New York magazine, which inspired many other North American city magazines, including Toronto Life. But the New Yorker, which has had only five editors since it was founded by Harold Ross in 1925, breaks the rule. It has never lost its way, never wavered in its belief that there’s an audience for excellence. In a time when the print media, scrambling to compete with television, have been busily dumming down, the New Yorker is a beacon of light.

It’s only natural that Canadians should want such a magazine. So why don’t we have one? The reasons are cultural and demographic, but let’s begin with culture. (Continued on page 5)
Two magazines came into our house when I was a boy. One was the Saturday Even-
ing Post. The other was The Star Weekly. It was published by the Toronto Star, one of the largest and most successful newspapers in North America, and like the Saturday Evening Post, it enjoyed great success during the 1940s and ’50s.

The Star Weekly was a good magazine, although, like the Post and for the same reason (television), it didn’t survive the ’60s. And yet I regarded it as inferior, not on the basis of editorial or graphic quality, or what you and I would now call production values. I was no judge of such things back then. Rather, it was a question of image. The Star Weekly was never mentioned on any of the popular radio programs of the day—the Jack Benny Show, the Bob Hope Show, Amos ’n Andy, Arthur Godfrey—whereas references to the Post were frequent. The impression was reinforced with the arrival of television in the ’50s and ’60s. From time to time, Ed Sullivan mentioned the Post, as he did Life and Time and other American magazines, but I never heard him speak of The Star Weekly. It’s doubtful he knew it existed.

Any consideration of magazine journalism in Canada must take account of the dominant reality of Canadian culture—namely, its struggle to cohabit the North American continent with that of a much larger nation which happens to share the same language. Trying to create a distinct Canadian culture wasn’t easy before the advent of the electronic media, but it’s been a lot more difficult ever since.

Canadians of my generation grew up listening to American radio and watching American television, which fostered a predilection for American music, films, books, and, of course, magazines. This was a mixed blessing. I was in my 20s before I realized I had always felt that anything Canadian was, like The Star Weekly, second rate.

I used to believe, for instance, that American politics was inherently more interesting than Canadian politics. I realize now that—to quote Marshall McLuhan—the medium is the message. It’s the power of the American media that gives to American politics a mythic quality the Canadian media, feeble by comparison, cannot possibly confer. And so it is with everything else, from football to fast food.

Americans look into the mirror of their media and see themselves enhanced. Looking into the same mirror, Canadians feel diminished. To believe in himself, a Canadian Harold Ross must first overcome the notion that he is destined by geography to be inferior.

He must also escape another cultural predisposition: excessive caution. America was built by rebels, Canada by waves of immigration. It continues to influence our cultures. America promises its citizens life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; to its citizen, Canada promises peace, order, and good government. It’s not surprising then, that Canadians are less adventurous than Americans. We are accused, and not without justification, of being more averse to risk.

And the greatest risk, of course, is ambition. An American who aspires to be the best at whatever he does is likely to be admired by his peers. A Canadian with such aspirations invites derision. Writing in Saturday Night magazine about the novelist Margaret Atwood, Robert Fulford recalled meeting a professor from Indiana who said the only readers she knew who didn’t like Atwood’s work were Canadians. How did he explain this? In reply, Fulford asked her how she’d feel if her sister won the Nobel Prize. “I’d feel shitty,” she said, making Fulford’s point. When someone close to you has a great success, it’s a reproach because it suggests that you, too, could have had a great success—if you’d been good enough.

This is the cultural context in which Canadians create newspapers, magazines, books, radio, television, and movies, although it’s changing. The generations behind me are psychologically stronger. But the challenges are no less daunting, and the most daunting of them is demographic, not cultural, and can be summed up in two words: Size matters.

Why doesn’t Canada have a New Yorker? Because Canada is too small. There simply aren’t enough of us to make a New Yorker commercially viable. Had I studied economics instead of political science, I might have grasped this sooner. But the light went on for me in the early 1970s, when the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was putting Peter Gzowski up against Johnny Carson on late-night television. One night I was switching from one to the other—no small feat, since the remote control hadn’t yet been invented. The Gzowski show usually suffered by comparison. It was badly produced, and Gzowski, who had distinguished himself as the editor of Macleans and the host of CBC radio’s This Country in the Morning, was uncomfortable on television. On this night, however, his was the better of the two shows, which caused me to wonder how it was that

In Canada, as in the United States, the commitment to good journalism is in decline.
one of these two men was an international celebrity while the other was, as someone I once worked with would have observed, world famous in Canada. The difference between them wasn’t the size of their talent, even if you conceded that on most nights Carson was the more gifted talk show host. The difference was the size of their audiences. One of them worked in a country with less than a tenth that number of English speakers, which meant that even if they were equally talented and attracted the same share of their respective markets, the American would have more than ten times the number of viewers.

The intractability of this truth was brought home to me some years later when I found myself publishing Saturday Night, a magazine that aspired to be Canada’s New Yorker. At the time, it had a circulation of about 125,000 and was losing money. My job, as I reminded myself every day—and as my employer reminded me only slightly less frequently—was to make it profitable, and for quite a long time—seven years, to be precise—to realize that for Saturday Night, as it was then configured, profitability was an impossibility because the country was too small. To attract more advertisers, the magazine needed more readers, but how could it attract more readers when it already had more, as a percentage of the Canadian market, than the New Yorker, the Atlantic, and Harper’s, which barely survived in the vastly larger, to say nothing of richer, market to the south?

For almost 15 years, starting in the late 1980s, I was involved in a small book publishing company called Macfarlane, Walter & Ross. While it published many fine books and more than a few bestsellers, it’s no longer in business because in a country as small as Canada, the writing and publishing of books is fundamentally untenable. In book publishing the margins are tiny, which is fine if you’re publishing a novelist like Margaret Atwood, whose books sell all over the world. But it’s another story if you’re publishing a novelist the world hasn’t yet discovered or a writer of nonfiction which doesn’t, as a rule, travel. So hardly anyone makes money publishing Canadian books, and without government support the industry would not exist. But the wonder is not just that books get published in Canada; the wonder is that they get written at all. A best-seller here is 10,000 copies. The royalty on 10,000 40-dollar books is $40,000 to $60,000, but that’s for one, two, or three year’s work—hardly a living wage. In the United States, where a bestseller is 50,000 to 100,000 copies, royalties of $200,000 to $300,000 are not uncommon—and not because American publishers have bigger hearts, but because they sell into a bigger market.

But back to magazines. Not only is Canada too small to support magazines like the New Yorker. Even the magazines that are available here, as a consequence of our smaller population, less profitable than equivalent American titles. It follows, of course, that they must work with smaller budgets. In the 1970s I edited a magazine called Weekend, which was distributed in newspapers across Canada and had a circulation of 1.7 million. Its competitor, The Canadian, was about the same size. Both magazines expired at the end of the decade after losing the battle for national advertisers to television. What made their demise more than usually regrettable was the fact that they were the only Canadian magazines with budgets that allowed Canadian editors to do things American editors take for granted. At Weekend I could afford to send writers and photographers anywhere in the world, and I did. Sadly, this is a luxury no Canadian editor enjoys today.

This disparity in resources becomes a serious disadvantage when a Canadian magazine is competing with one or more American titles in a field in which it’s Canadian-ness is irrelevant. How does a Canadian publisher compete with the Wine Spectator, Motor Trend, or Popular Mechanics? There was a time, before the Internet came along, when Playboy and Penthouse sold hundreds of thousands of copies every month on Canadian newsstands. So why didn’t Canadian publishers take them on? Because they understood that people buy Canadian magazines for Canadian content and that the readers of skin books are deeply uninterested in the nationality of the nude women they photograph. To compete with Playboy and Penthouse, a Canadian magazine would have had to be better than Playboy and Penthouse, whatever that means, and no publisher in a market the size of Canada could rationalize the investment.

Because publishing magazines is more profitable in the United States, there’s more at stake. If you get it right—think of People or Maxim—you can make huge sums of money. In Canada success is less rewarding, and as a consequence, publishers are less inclined to launch magazines (the rewards don’t justify the risks), and magazine journalists aren’t as highly prized or generously remunerated. I wouldn’t be far off in guessing that Graydon Carter makes more money than the editors of all the Canadian consumer magazines combined. It’s not surprising that Canadians like Graydon Carter, Bonnie Fuller, Bruce McCall, Barry Blitt, Adam Gopnick, and Malcolm Gladwell are drawn to New York, where there’s not only more money to spend but also more to earn.

The marginal nature of Canadian publishing also explains why it attracts so few entrepreneurs. And here there’s a parallel with the Canadian film business. For a country our size, we produce more than our share of actors, writers, and directors. Not so producers. But why would anyone... (Continued on page 7)
Magazine and New Media RESEARCH
Consider publishing in our division’s online scholarly journal
By Steve Thomsen, Brigham Young

Submit manuscripts via e-mail to Dr. Steve Thomsen, Editor, Journal of Magazine and New Media Research, at <stevethomson@byu.edu>.

David Sumner of Ball State continues his great work as managing editor of the journal. The journal’s website is <http://aejmcjournal.bsu.edu>. Please refer to the Submission Guidelines section of the website for details.

The members of the journal’s editorial board are listed at right. ♦

EDITORIAL BOARD
The members of the editorial board of the Journal of Magazine & New Media Research, which is the Magazine Division’s online scholarly publication, are listed below.

- David Sumner
  Managing Editor
  Ball State University
- David Abrahamson
  Northwestern University
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  University of Akron
- Carol Fletcher
  Hofstra University
- Sammye Johnson
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- Lea Rhodes
  University of Georgia
- Carol Schwalbe
  Arizona State University
- Ted Spiker
  University of Florida
- Brian Thornton
  Northern Illinois University

HISTORY NOW
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History has launched History Now, a new online journal for history teachers and students <www.historynow.org>.

History Now features articles by noted historians as well as lesson plans, links to related websites, bibliographies, and many other resources. In each issue the editors will bring together historians, master teachers, and archivists to comment on a single historical theme.

The first issue of History Now tackles elections. Joanne Freeman discusses the contested election of 1800, Liette Gidlow looks at television’s effect on the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debates, Steven Mintz examines the history of voting rights, and Ted Widmer reflects on the electoral process from the perspective of Muslim exchange students.

For further information, contact Karina Gaige <gaige@gilderlehrman.org>; 646-366-9666, the web producer at the Gilder Lehrman Institute.
QUARK vs. INDESIGN: More Watching and Waiting

Although InDesign is making inroads, a requiem for Quark is premature

By Julie Yioutas, University of Texas at Austin

Lately, whenever the topic of publication design arises, the conversation eventually turns to one question: “Quark or InDesign?” I’ve lost count of the number of times I’ve asked or been asked that question. It seems we’re all looking for evidence of a trend to help us make decisions about which program to use and teach.

The Quark vs. InDesign question was the topic of a teaching panel at the AEJMC convention in Toronto. Panelists Shawn McKinney, Texas; John Russial, Oregon; and Carol Schwalbe, Arizona State led the discussion. The audience shared insights and questions during the session, which I moderated. While the conversation was lively and informative, a conclusive answer to the Quark vs. InDesign dilemma remains elusive.

A quick show of hands at the session’s start revealed that about one-third teach Quark another third InDesign, and the rest a combination of the two. Among the panelists, Arizona State is sticking to Quark Oregon is weighing its options, and Texas is a year into its switch to InDesign.

InDesign has been aggressively targeting Quark customers. It offers increased compatibility and integration with other Adobe programs, such as Photoshop and Illustrator. Adobe has also created competitively priced bundles of design software. Adobe.com’s estimated education price for Creative Suite Premium, which includes the latest versions of InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator, Acrobat Professional, and GoLive, is $399. Adobe has also capitalized on Quark’s reputation for being less than customer-friendly. During the session, participants shared Quark horror stories.

Quark is responding to the competition. Over the summer Quark loosened its licensing rules to allow the same version on two computers—a laptop and desktop, for example. For a limited time Quark is also sharply discounting educational prices for instructors, students, and schools. For individual instructors and students, quark.com lists full versions at $199 and upgrades at $99. For lab settings, it offers Lab-Paks at $99 for full versions and $89 for upgrades (prices are per seat with a ten-seat minimum). Quark and Macromedia have teamed up to offer an XPress/Freehand bundle.

InDesign is now in its third version, commonly referred to as CS or Creative Suite. With each version release, there has been buzz about the impending death of Quark. While there seems to be momentum in favor of InDesign, a requiem for Quark is premature. In fact, the absence of readily available empirical data prevents us from drawing any conclusions other than those based on anecdotal information or informal surveys.

New features like transparency and open type, cost-competitive bundling, and frustration over Quark’s perceived lack of customer service have led some to InDesign. The recent formation of a strategic alliance between Adobe and AIGA, the professional association for communication design, has seen graphic designers and smaller design firms. switch to InDesign. It has also made inroads in the publishing world. Over the summer, Hearst Magazines adopted InDesign’s Creative Suite. Five titles have already made the switch, and the rest will follow by 2005.

In Quark’s favor are years of market dominance and organizations’ investment in XPress, both in terms of money and knowledge. Panelists and audience members shared stories of students schooled in InDesign facing internships in Quark environments; job postings that specifically request Quark experience, and the fact that some smaller newspapers are sticking with older versions of Quark (for now). Even as the panel discussed some of InDesign’s more advanced features, participants expressed appreciation for the simplicity of Quark, especially in its interface.

Compatibility between programs and versions will be a challenge. For example, InDesign will convert PageMaker documents and Quark 4.0 documents but not documents created in more recent versions of XPress. In about four years’ time there have been three versions of each program in use (InDesign 1-3 and XPress 4-6). For Macs, the OS X and classic versions add complexity.

In this time of ambiguity in design software dominance, how do we best prepare our students? Some say we shouldn’t be so focused on teaching computer skills. Teaching a particular program may not be as important as teaching students the principles of editing and design.

Others—those without tenure, as one panelist joked—feel responsible for teaching technology. Some schools have decided to teach both programs. If teaching two programs isn’t an option, students should be encouraged to expose themselves to whatever program isn’t part of the curriculum. Familiarity with other Adobe products helps students learn InDesign because of the consistent tools and palettes.

Both programs do essentially the same thing. The interface and some terminology may be different, but the result is the same. In some ways this debate is reminiscent of the Mac vs. PC or Word vs. WordPerfect debates. Whether one will obliterate the other or if there will be a détente isn’t obvious at this point. In the meantime, we’ll just have to watch and wait a little longer.

(Continued on page 9.)
SCHWALBE Wins 2004 GIFT Grand Prize
25 teaching ideas available in souvenir publication

Carol Schwalbe of Arizona State University was chosen as the Great Ideas For Teachers grand prize winner at the AEJMC convention in Toronto. Her GIFT is entitled “The Language of the Senses: How to use your five senses to add color and detail to feature stories” (see the following page).

Carol received a plaque and a $100 check from the GIFT sponsors: Community College Journalism Association, Small Programs Interest Group, and Scholastic Journalism Division. Her GIFT and 24 other great ideas for teachers are included in a souvenir publication. Copies of the 2004 GIFT edition are on sale for $10 or three for $25 (plus $3 each to cover postage and envelope). Limited copies of the 2003 GIFT publication are also available for $5. To order the GIFT publications, send requests to <aejmcgift@yahoo.com>.

The nonprofit GIFT program celebrated its fifth anniversary this year with nearly 60 submissions in the spring; 25 were chosen to participate in the poster session at the summer convention, with Schwalbe being judged as the top GIFT scholar.

New in 2004: GIFT photos from Toronto can be viewed on a public album at <http://photos.yahoo.com/aejmcgift>.

For more information about the GIFT program, go to the following website: <http://www.geocities.com/aejmcgift>.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Athens Institute for Education and Research (AT.I.N.E.R.) is organizing an international conference on Communication and Mass Media, May 23–25, 2005, in Athens, Greece. The €250 (euro) registration fee covers access to all sessions, two lunches, one dinner, coffee breaks, and conference material. Special arrangements will be made with local hotels for a limited number of rooms at a special conference rate. In addition, a number of special events will be organized: a Greek night of entertainment and a special one-day cruise in the Greek islands.

The aim of the conference is to bring together scholars and students of communications, mass media, and other related disciplines. Particular attention will be given to submissions that emphasize the impact of European enlargement and globalization on mass media and communication.

Selected papers will be published in a special volume of the conference proceedings. Please submit a 300-word abstract by e-mail before December 27, 2004, to Dr. Gregory T. Papaiokos, Director, ATI-NER, 14 Solomou Street, 10683 Athens, Greece. Telephone: +30 210 383-4227; fax: +30 210 384-7734; e-mail <atiner@atiner.gr>.

Abstracts should include the title of the paper, the full name(s) of the author(s), affiliation, current position, an e-mail address, and at least three keywords that best describe the subject of your submission.

FUTURE MEETING SITES

AEJMC

The following cities have been selected for future AEJMC conventions:

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>San Francisco</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
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For more information, visit the AEJMC website at <www.aejmc.org>.

AJHA

The following cities have been selected for future American Journalism Historians Association conventions:

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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Cleveland</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>Wichita</td>
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For more information, visit the AJHA website at <www.berry.edu/ajha>.
The **LANGUAGE of the SENSES**

*How to use your five senses to add color and detail to feature stories*

*By Carol Schwalbe, Arizona State*

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**Introduction**
Writers spend a lifetime sharpening their powers of observation. To hone those skills in my feature writing class, I’ve devised a series of writing exercises that focus on the five senses. These exercises help students sharpen their powers of observation so they notice the details that add color and texture to a story. This enables them to take a close look at the trees instead of at the forest, where too often writers get lost or feel overwhelmed.

**Rationale**
These exercises, which can be spread over several classes, help students become better observers, better reporters, and better writers. They learn how to look at a scene in more than one way and see it more clearly. By painting pictures with words, they re-create reality so readers can stand in their shoes. These exercises aren’t graded, so students feel free to stretch themselves.

**Implementation**
- **The language of listening: Hone your eavesdropping skills.** We’ve all been told not to eavesdrop, but it’s one of the best ways to improve students’ skills with dialogue. By focusing on the speech patterns and rhythms of everyday conversations, students gain a better understanding of how real people speak. Students go someplace on or near campus for half an hour and listen in on as many conversations as possible. Back in the classroom, they write a short piece describing the scene and including some dialogue.
- **The language of seeing: The many shades of red.** I give each pair of students several paint chips from a paint store and ask them to come up with names for the different shades. This exercise helps them realize there are many shades of any one color.
- **The language of seeing: The color of food.** First, students list five occasions where people regularly get together over food, such as a coffee break at Starbucks’, a tailgate picnic or a farmers market. They then choose one occasion from their list and describe it based on color. Perhaps all the food is one color: Scandinavian meals tend to be all white. Or maybe the food is of boundless variety, and they describe the exact shade of the tomatoes, the pale sheen of the soufflé.
- **The language of scent: Sniff bags.** I bring in small paper bags replete with familiar scents, such as a sliced lemon, a piece of paper soaked in Old Spice and another in bleach. After I pass the bags around, each student writes about one scent. Some of the associations are magical, such as the taste of grandma’s oatmeal cookies conjuring up memories of happy times together.
- **The language of taste: The power of description.** I list words associated with the sense of taste, such as hot soup, barbecue sauce, saltwater taffy, fresh coffee and warm bread. Without spending time in preparation, the students freewrite, letting their creative juices flow not worrying about grammar, spelling, punctuation, AP style. This is simply to work on the power of description—a very helpful asset for any writer.
- **The language of touch: Writing with precision.** Students write a paragraph describing an object by its parts and dimensions. They then read these aloud and see if their description is precise enough so their classmates can guess what the object is.
- **The language of the senses: Putting it all together.** As a capstone exercise for learning to write visually, I give students an hour to go somewhere one or near campus and use all their senses to observe the smallest details. They come back to the classroom and write a descriptive scene incorporating as many of those sensory experiences as possible without going overboard. I encourage them to give their writing a push with a simile or metaphor.

**Impact**
I’m often astonished by the immediacy and strength of the descriptive passages written while the imagery is still fresh, which helps students learn the power of immediacy in writing and (and procrastinating!).

These exercises make students aware not just with their eyes but also with their other senses. The more they are aware of, the richer their writing will be.

On end-of-the-semester evaluations, most students mention these exercises as one of their favorite—and most valuable—parts of the class.

From one student: “I felt that I’d lost my voice from writing so many news stories. Now I’m beginning to sing again—or at least chirp.”

From another: “Wow! Now I notice things I never paid attention to before.”

**Example of freewriting**

**Nightfall**
*By Alissa Schmidt*
*November 5, 2002*

I don’t know exactly how long I wandered around campus before I sat down here on the chilled cement bench. I was too numb. The cold seems to be penetrating my bones, right down to my very soul. I would be lying if I said that was the reason why my eyes are emptied of warmth tonight. I know my heart grew cold long before November came.

The sky is fading from a dirty robin’s eggshell color into gentle night.

I can hardly see the page that I am furiously trying to empty my heart onto. I run my index finger over the rash behind my knee and take a deep breath. The smell of freshly tilled dirt fills my lungs. As I heave my overstuffed bookbag over my shoulder to head into the warm building nearby, I say the words out loud. “I am going to miss you, John.”
ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM in American Media

Dane Claussen’s new book illuminates how print media portray higher education

By Graham Barnfield, University of East London

Editor’s note: This review was first published by Jhhistory@h-net.msu.edu in August 2004. It is reprinted with permission of the author.


Media researcher and newspaper management consultant Dane S. Claussen is rightly concerned about how popular publishing portrays higher education. In terms of its sheer scale, the magazine industry could be a force for raising the level of debate in society. Unfortunately, according to Claussen, it appears that the predominant trend over the past 60 years has been to belittle educational institutions and the individuals passing through them, whether as students or as employees. An important (and self-appointed role) performed by some middlebrow periodicals has been to undermine the serious purpose of the university. Long before the movie National Lampoon’s Animal House, photograph spreads and reports, more or less coinciding with its scenes, appeared with hackneyed frequency.

In order to demonstrate such trends, Claussen has worked through a carefully constructed sample of popular news and lifestyle magazines, primarily Reader’s Digest, Ladies’ Home Journal, Time, and Life. Working across an even chronological spread from 1944 to 1998, with the addition of key years in which events such as the Sputnik launch brought the issue of higher education to the fore, he assembles sufficient evidence from actual publications to begin testing and confirming his suspicions rather than asserting that “the press is against us,” as academicians are prone to do.

Claussen shows the various ways in which news magazines do not seem to understand what it is we are trying to do (to put it as charitably as I can). Sure enough, his content analysis makes it clear that college is mainly portrayed as a place where students go to date, drink, play sports, and build their careers. Finding a space to think, write, and debate is seldom a priority in the U.S. print media’s interpretation of college life. A chapter-by-chapter synopsis of Anti-Intellectualism in American Media would show the particular forms that anti-intellectualism takes, as each section summarizes the contents of numerous magazine articles in order to elucidate their predominant themes. According to much popular journalism, universities are either institutions to replenish the ranks of the professions or places where hedonism reigns supreme (and sometimes both at once). Few of the articles cited in Claussen’s study consider what universities are for, let alone explaining why we should celebrate their provision of services once the preserve of training centers or nightclubs. Since the G.I. Bill of 1944, the notion that one would become an undergraduate in order to develop intellectually has receded into the distance, at least from the perspective of feature writers and their readers.

By rounding up this data, Claussen has provided a useful service to the academic community. Journalists often ask senior figures from universities to justify an expenditure or degree course content. This book shows that such questioning retracts the route of a 60-year discourse of ignorance and philistinism.

Taking Claussen as a starting point makes it easier to demonstrate that some of the present rhetorical pressures are not new. In fact, many of the media’s unreasonable demands of higher education are on a continuum of instrumentalist readings of the latter’s purpose. Journalistic predictions regarding the future of higher education have a timeless feel to them, to the point that one suspects someone is crying wolf. Anti-Intellectualism in American Media is a timely reminder of how, with at least some aspects of the higher education debate, we have been here before.

Claussen is able to set these diffuse press treatments of higher education in a wider theoretical context by drawing on the work of Richard Hofstadter, notably Anti-Intellectualism in American Life (1963), and Daniel Rigney. Rigney’s 1991 article “Three kinds of anti-intellectualism: Rethinking Hofstadter” (Sociological Inquiry 61: 434-51) built up a typology of different kinds of anti-intellectualism, from “religious anti-rationalism” to “unreflective instrumentalism.” These categories figure strongly as sources of appropriate descriptions for recurring themes in the press coverage. Negative portrayals of intellectuals, a punitive form of representation tied to perceptions of them as “bearers of bad news” come about when research findings or student protests conflict with the consensus view.

The choice of 1944 as a starting point is an obvious one, given the enactment of the G.I. Bill and the widening of university admissions in the postwar period. This new social democratic compromise increased the opportunities for college attendance by a broader section of the American public, perhaps obliging their reading materials to focus more precisely on... (Continued on page 12)
CALL FOR NOMINEES

The Magazine Division will honor a magazine educator with its Educator of the Year Award at the AEJMC convention in San Antonio next August.

The Award Committee, headed by Carol Zuegnern of Creighton, will take nominations for the award through March 1. The main criteria are a combination of significant contributions to magazine scholarship and research, service to the Magazine Division, and evidence of outstanding classroom instruction. The person selected for the award must be present in San Antonio to accept the award and make a short speech on magazine education.

To nominate a magazine educator, please include, if possible, contact information and a short explanation of why you’ve nominated this educator for the award.

Send the nominations to Carol Zuegnern, Associate Professor of Journalism, Creighton University, 2500 California Plaza, Omaha, NE 68178, or e-mail her at <czuegnern@creighton.edu>.

A complete list of Educator of the Year winners since 1980 is now available at <http://aejmcnewsletter.kenyon.edu>.

N.Y. MAGAZINE TOUR

David Sumner, the Magazine Division’s webmaster, has created a link to Gerald Grow’s pictorial tour of New York magazines at our division website <http://aejmc-magazine.bsu.edu>. You’ll see pictures of editors from Time Inc., Life, Newsweek, Budget Living, ASME, and more. You can also go directly to Gerald Grow’s site: <http://www.longleaf.net/ggrow/NY04/ >.

Many thanks to Gerald Grow and Barbara Reed for their leadership with these tours over the past few years. If you’d like to participate next summer, contact Barbara <reed@scils.rutgers.edu>.

LEPRE Moves to Tenn.

Carolyn LePre, our membership chair for 2004-05, has taken the magazine position at the University of Tennessee that was advertised on the division list-serv last year. She moves to Knoxville from Chico State.
STRONG ANGLES Have Unity, Action, and Specificity

Three ways to help your students create original, well-focused story ideas

By David E. Sumner, Ball State

Focus, focus, focus. It’s always a challenge to get our students to create original, well-focused ideas. It’s the most frequent criticism I make about idea proposals and first drafts. “So you want to write about ______. What do you want to say about ______?” is a statement we frequently make.

Some students come up with topics they want to write about, such as alcohol abuse or weight loss, but they don’t create story ideas that will work. For example, one student wanted to write an article about eating disorders. Her teacher challenged her to come up with a tighter angle on this broad topic. After some conversations with the professor, she decided to focus on treatment and build her story around the experiences of a young woman who had acknowledged her problem and gone for help.

Meg Grant, the West Coast editor for the Reader’s Digest, explained to me how the magazine’s editors narrowed a proposed feature article on foster care for children: “We didn’t want to do the same piece everybody is reading in their local papers about how broken the foster care system is. We picked a section of the foster care issue that was a smaller piece to chew on, which was about those kids who spend their whole lives in foster care and never get out of the system. We decided to look at one of the programs, and then we found one kid and told his story.”

A limited tale told clearly has more impact than a sweeping story that lacks depth and insight. The more frequently that magazines and newspapers cover a topic, the sharper and fresher the angle must be.

William Blundell, a former Wall Street Journal editor, put it this way:

“Most of us think too big. We try to embrace the circus fat lady, and only well into the effort do we find there is too much of her and not enough of us. The result is a piece impossibly long, or superficial, the reporter frantically skipping from point to point without dwelling on any of them long enough to illuminate and convince.”

A focused angle has three characteristics: unity, action, and specificity. Let’s look at each characteristic.

Unity

Think about the best movies you’ve ever seen. The Titanic, for example, was the highest-grossing movie of the 20th century. This movie describes how the famous luxury liner crashed into an iceberg and sunk while one young couple made futile efforts to survive. The 23 words you just read in the previous sentence sum up this three-hour movie with its three action verbs. It has a simple plot.

If you can’t explain your article idea in one sentence, you don’t have a workable idea. Dozens of editors and authors we have interviewed echo this “one-sentence” rule. Why is it so important?

Unity means that everything “hangs together” around a central idea. This central idea creates an organizing principle that helps you determine whom you interview, what you include, what you omit, and what you look for in your research. If you have a sharply focused angle before you begin research, then you’ll save dozens of hours in fruitless, unnecessary research that leads you down the wrong path. A good, clear focus means that the title and introduction let the readers know exactly what they’re getting into and a chance to get off if they don’t want to go there.

Unity means unity in content, style, voice, and approach. Gary Provost says in Beyond Style: Mastering the Finer Points of Writing: “Unity, that quality of oneness in your writing, means that everything you write should look as if it were written at one time, by one person, with one purpose, using one language.”

Action

Strong, creative articles contain action. They describe people doing things, having fun, suffering injustice, or making things happen. A strong action verb in the title or magazine’s cover line helps attract the attention of the editor and the reader. Go to a newstand and look at the teasers that are placed above the newspaper’s nameplate. Both cover lines and teasers are

(Continued on page 14)
meant to attract readers, which is why they often contain action verbs.

You aren’t writing about a person or an organization simply because they exist. For example, suppose you made a trip to Nashville and propose to write an article about the Grand Ole Opry. What about it? Since thousands of articles have been written about this American music phenomenon, what has happened recently at the Opry that will be news to fans of country music?

Most stories originate with an idea about an interesting person or phenomenon or trend, and the trick is to think of a particular way to tell the story. Remember that a story should be a verb, not a noun. It shouldn’t just be about a place or an institution. Something should be happening.

Specificity

Finally, the things that happen include specific dates and places in which they occur. If you can’t cite specific dates and places in an article, then it isn’t sufficiently anchored. Unanchored articles are vague and make it difficult for the reader to visualize its concepts. Even if your story is on some broad “evergreen” topic like tax-saving tips, you have to anchor it with people saying and doing things in specific places at specific times.

Our colleague, Professor Gerald Grow at Florida A&M, has a Funnel of Focus exercise that I have explained and cited in our book Feature and Magazine Writing. I have used it in many classes. Professor Grow also has other helpful articles on teaching magazine writing at his personal website: <http://www.long leaf.net/ ggrow/>.

In summary, an angle takes a specific approach to its subject matter. A strong angle can be summarized in one sentence and displays unity, action, and specificity. The cover lines on magazines provide examples of focused angles. You can use Grow’s step-by-step Funnel of Focus to narrow your topic from one that could fill a library to one that for a specific magazine, newspaper, or website. You can narrow your topic by asking yourself what you want to know, what sources you have access to, and finding a news peg that ties your topic to a current event.

The more narrow your angle, the more likely you will write a creative, original article. The more narrow your angle, the more likely you can find a scoop that no one else has written about before. Finally, the narrower your angle, the more likely you will get published. Finding a good angle isn’t easy, but the more your students read what’s already been published on the topic, the easier it will become.

David E. Sumner is a professor of journalism and head of the magazine sequence at Ball State University. This article is adapted from the textbook Feature and Magazine Writing: Action, Angle and Anecdotes by David E. Sumner and Holly G. Miller (Blackwell Professional, 2005).

CALL US NUTS


Chip taught himself to write nut graphs by studying examples, mostly from the Wall Street Journal. He copied them word for word, which was even more useful than just reading them because it helped him understand what went into them and how they were crafted. He describes this approach—modeling lessons—at <http://poynter.org/column.asp?id=52&aid=45863>.

The drill Chip uses with journalists is to have them answer David Von Drehle’s four focusing questions. They’re listed at <http://poynter.org/column.asp?id=52&aid=11375>. The journalists then use the raw material to fashion a nut graph.

CINDERELLA MAN

Yes, that’s really melting snow on the streets of Toronto in August.

David Sumner happened upon this street scene near the Sheraton during the annual AEJMC convention. Universal Studios had just finished shooting a scene for the movie Cinderella Man, directed by Ron Howard and starring Russell Crowe and Renée Zellweger.

The movie tells the tale of a 1930s boxer. Russell Crowe dislocated his shoulder while training for the boxing sequences, which delayed the filming by two months.

Watch for the U.S. release of Cinderella Man in March 2005.

2005 SOUTHEAST COLLOQUIUM

Make plans now to attend the 2005 Southeast Colloquium, which will be held March 3-5 in beautiful Athens, Georgia.

The deadline for paper submission is November 28, 2004. For complete information about submission, go to <http://www.grady.uga.edu/service/Colloquium/Call4Papers.asp>.

Judges are also needed. For more information and division chair contacts, go to <http://www.grady.uga.edu/service/Colloquium/Call4Judges.asp>.

For the latest details about the colloquium and registration information, visit <http://www.grady.uga.edu/southeast/>.
Casting the CURSE
A prize-winning article for Jayplay vividly portrays a Midwestern metal band on tour

By Neil Mulka, University of Kansas

STUDENT CONTEST WINNER

Editor’s Note: This story won first place in the Consumer Magazine Article: People & Places category in the division’s 2004 Student Magazine Contest. The author’s adviser at the University of Kansas was Carol Holstead.

Judge Richard B. Stolley, senior editorial adviser for Time Inc., explains why this piece won: This story is a vivid look at a two-year-old rock band, named This Building Is Cursed or TBIC, on a quick tour through the Middle West. The portrayal is so intimate, so full of detail and sharp observations that the reader feels like an actual member of the band. It is told in rock idiom, yet is fully understandable to the uninitiated. The band’s life is played out in tiny clubs and karaoke bars, fueled by a little food and a lot of beer, booze, and dope. But the story is so sympathetic that the band never seems pitiful, or pitiable for that matter. It ends on a note of dramatic triumph, sort of: TBIC is getting known on the circuit, sort of.

Chris Miller, J.C. Cerise, and Matt Tobin, guitarists of Lawrence metal band This Building Is Cursed, are such rock stars they don’t have to play their own songs to attract groupies. They get them doing karaoke.

On its second tour in its two years together, TBIC is drinking at Boogies, the most banging place in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Because liquor stores are closed on Sunday, the boozy-hungry band goes to Boogies on the recommendation from locals for a good time in the boring boyhood home of Bill Clinton. Being a town in the middle of Nowhere, Arkansas, they did ever look out.

After a few rounds of dollar canned domestic beers, the boys in TBIC are singing Snoop Dogg’s “Gin and Juice,” Alan Jackson’s “Hoodie-Cootchie,” and Adam Sandler’s “At A Medium Pace” instead of its own songs for all 20 people who showed up for karaoke night. Out of the crowd, a woman smelling of spiced rum and cheap perfume rubs her thunder thighs all over Joe and Chris. As she shakes her flavor of milkshake, her hands move all over their bodies—up the shirt, down the pants, and into the no-no areas. Safely away from the stage, bassist Dylan Desmond and drummer Joe Noel accidentally douse themselves in beer from laughing uncontrollably at their bandmate’s misfortune.

When the songs are done, the trio sits down, the dancing woman, who refers to herself as “the Jewel of Arkansas” and her friend, Blaze, a chain-smoking, Bud Light-drinking pregnant woman, following. “Ya know,” Jewel says, in her phony voice, “just because I’m 38 years old and have five kids doesn’t mean I can’t be feisty with you twentiesomethings. Where y’all from? You ain’t from here.”

On that note, the TBIC members, who are all in their early 20s, finish their beers, say farewell, and high tail it out of Boogies.

“Man, J.C., you could have had a warm bed to sleep in tonight if you talked to Jewel some more,” Matt says as they go away from Boogies on the Short Bus, an old school bus complete with stop sign, swinging doors, and lights. Joe bought the bus from his old band, Short Bus Kids, for $1,250, and it’s now an icon of Lawrence music, used by bands like Salt the Earth, Getaway Driver, and Flattery Leads to Ruin.

“That woman probably has as many diseases as kids,” Joe interjects.

“Hey!” J.C. says, lighting up a cigarette, “what happens on tour—” A pause, a puff. Everyone expects him to say the cliché “stays on tour.” “—gets taken home and shared with the girlfriend.”

If everything has to be shared with the girlfriends back home, TBIC has to share more than just a booty-shaking rhinestone from Arkansas.

Day One: Saturday, March 17
Little Rock, Arkansas

“The heaviest bands and cheapest beers in town” is the motto of Downtown Music, TBIC’s first stop on its seven-day tour. It’s a motto that the venue lives up to: a can of Pabst Blue Ribbon is a dollar and all draws $1.50. The bar’s construction looks like a high school woodshop project, and the beer is in an old, beat-up family style fridge. The concert calendar is full of metal and Southern-style rock ’n’ roll bands like Little Rock group Crackfight and Lawrence’s own Filthy Jim.

TBIC plays second in tonight’s lineup after Oklahoma (Continued on page 16)
CURSE
(Continued from page 15)

Before the band takes off to a friend’s house to crash, a scrappy homeless man taps on a passenger window of the Short Bus. Through the open window he offers a dog leash for a lighter. After the transaction, the old man offers TBIC’s some advice. “Don’t go there, ever,” says the old man, pointing to the venue they just played. “They a bunch of rednecks in there.”

Day three: Monday, March 19
Shreveport, Louisiana

Joe is refueling the Short Bus at a gas station in the small town of Hope, Arkansas. A rusted-out gray Cadillac pulls up to the fuel pump next to the Short Bus. A middle-aged African-American woman comes out of the car and looks at Joe. “Ain’t you the singer for the Atari’s?” she asks.

For a second Joe doesn’t know what to say. Being tattooed and wearing an AFI T-shirt, tattered dark blue jeans, and sunglasses, Joe could be a rock star, but it’s doubtful that Kris Roe (vocalist for the Atari’s) would be pumping gas for his own tour bus with a couple of gold records to his credit. Joe nods and tells the woman that the band is on its way to play a show at Shreveport that night. After fueling her car, the woman wishes him good luck and drives off.

Living in the Midwest can shelter people from the finer things in life, for example, the drive-through daiquiri stand. A few blocks down the street from tonight’s venue, ‘Lil Joe’s Tavern, a small building resembling Burrito King sits between a Chinese restaurant and a drugstore. A giant sign with bright pink letters glows the words “Cajun Cocktails” on a dark blue background, beckoning passing cars to pull up to the drive-through window and purchase its frozen alcoholic goodies, ranging from margaritas to the Cajun Curse—a concoction made of Bacardi 151, Everclear, margarita mix, and crawdad juice. Inside the roadside shack, two attendants work busily, filling up 16-ounce cups from Slurpee machines for drivers to take home and drink, tapping down the straw to make it a legally unopened container. The asking price of $2.50 is a little steep for a band on the road trying to save money, but luckily it’s the 2-for-1 happy hour special.

In the hours leading up to tonight’s show, Chris calls his parents and updates them on the tour. His parents worry about him if he doesn’t call to reassure them he is still alive and isn’t in jail. Matt doesn’t have to worry about letting his parents know what’s going on. His older brother toured regularly with his band, Stick. “He went on tour for six months once,” Matt says, “and when he came back, my mother about flipped the fuck out because he was really skinny. He lived off of mostly pizza and Rolling Rock.”

“You’re in This Building Is Christ, right?” a bartender wearing khakis and a Hawaiian shirt asks Chris as he fills him a pitcher of free band beer. Chris corrects him, and the bartender apologizes, saying that’s the name someone else told him, despite a flier with the correct name inches from his face. But what can one expect from a bar with the slogan “Drink to get drunk, or not at all?” The mis-spelling of TBIC’s name occurs often. Names such as This Place is Haunted or This Body Is For Christ pop up on fliers while on tour.

The band got its name after reading a High Times article on a French cathedral dedicated to Mary Magdalene. Unlike other cathedrals, this church has dark underpinnings: Non-biblical portrayals of the stations of the cross are painted on the walls, and a bird’s-eye view of the buildings around the church makes the form of a pentagram. On the doorway of the main building, the words “This place is cursed” appear.

Unlike all the other shows on this tour, ‘Lil Joe’s Tavern does not have a PA system or a sound guy to make the music clearer, but that isn’t a problem. A 40-person crowd fills the floor in this tiny club, and all eyes are on TBIC.

“You guys are shaking my bones!” yells a drunken man from the bar after the third song. “If I was a chick, I’d give y’all blow jobs.”

A woman from elsewhere in the room yells to him that (Continued on page 17)
CURSE (Continued from page 16)

he doesn’t need to be a female to give fellatio if he likes the music. “I know, but I ain’t a fag, er, gay or whatever. Imagine I might bite it off.” The man moves closer to the stage and cheers. Along with another half-dozen people, he buys a $6 CD. Much needed gas money to get to the next destination: New Orleans.

Day four: Wednesday, March 20
New Orleans

Somewhere between god-awful and atrocious is the gutter punk rock band The Simple Fucks, the kind of band that wears eponymous T-shirts and sports Flock of Seagulls-style reverse mohawks. Playing to a crowd of about 10 people in the Dixie Tavern, a venue where Chuck Berry played in the '50s, the four-piece band cranks out distorted, sloppy, three-chord punk rock that only a loaded methhead could love. More than a half-century later, the Dixie Tavern smells vaguely of urine, and the hack-and-white checkered linoleum floor looks as if it hasn’t been mopped since legendary punk pioneer Johnny Thunders died in New Orleans 13 years ago.

After SF’s short set, TBIC tries to load its equipment during what could be a taping of Cops. The guitarist for The Simple Fucks attacks the singer of his own band because he “doesn’t want to play second fiddle to his drunken stand-up routine.” After a few swings and some grappling on the sidewalk, a cop car rolls up, and two giant cops peel feeding punks off each other. “Oh, Mr. Officer,” says a skinny woman in torn clothes and spiked hair, “don’t arrest them. They do this because they love each other. They’re roommates, too.”

Hours before the show, Chris, Joe, and Matt are at Big Daddy’s Bottomless & Topless sipping on hurricanes and watching Cat, a full-figured stripper whose talent is sliding dollar bills in and out of one of her orifices without her hands. While all the other patrons—overweight, sweaty, and middle-aged men—hoot and holler, the trio is disappointed. It’s hard to enjoy a stripper when you have girlfriends at home who are hotter than she is. They duck out of the bar for the dollar beer stands, the occasional flashing breasts, a hash-dealing hippie couple at the Canal and Bourbon Streets bus stop, and drunken gambling until sunrise. Reeking of booze and barely conscious, Chris and Joe ride the Canal Street bus back to the house where they are couch surfing, sharing seats with people waking up to face the workday.

Day five: Thursday, March 21
Houston

“Excuse me, but are you on that Jackass show?” a woman in a Wendy’s uniform asks TBIC as they munch down Subway sandwiches. “I couldn’t help but notice that school bus in the parking lot.”

Another day, another mistaken identity, this time at a truck stop featuring a Subway/Wendy’s hybrid. The band members chortle and tell the lady they are a touring band heading to Houston to play Mary Jane’s Fat Cat.

Mary Jane’s Fat Cat can be mistaken for the bigger brother of the Dixie Tavern: dirty linoleum floor with the same pattern and the same faint smell of pee lingering in the air. This venue shares a building with a liquor store where Chris buys a bottle of Thunderbird, one of the infamous “bum” wines that is 18 percent alcohol. This “wine” is the color of urine and smells like rubbing alcohol, but at $3.30 it’s the perfect choice for a man who blew it all at a late-night visit to the casino. Chris isn’t the only one running low on cash: Dylan’s dinner consists of bean-and-salsa tacos made with ingredients from a grocery store a block down the street. He ate about six tacos for $2.50.

While personal finances are their nadir, band money is keeping up with the price of putting fuel into the gas-guzzling Short Bus. Making at least $50 a night keeps the bus full and moving from town to town. Tonight TBIC shares the bill with a local favorite, Pretty Little Flower, a band it met in Lawrence. Here TBIC scores its biggest show payoff: $120, with an extra $50 from merchandise. The band needs it for gas for the 589-mile trip from Houston to Oklahoma City.

Day six: Friday, March 22
Oklahoma City

Joe and Matt sit in the Short Bus parked behind tonight’s venue, the Conservatory, one of Oklahoma City’s biggest rock clubs. They are staring blankly into space, eyes dull. Today was a long eight-hour drive at the end of a long week, and tonight they face a long drive home in the middle of a thunderstorm.

Despite weariness from not showering, eating crappy food, and the boredom of driving, a part of them wants to stay on the road, play more shows, and not go back to Lawrence, where responsibilities such as school and work loom. Still, something calls them home—sleeping in their own beds. After seven days of sleeping on floors, couches, and the bus in positions only a toy soldier would find comfortable, nothing sounds sweeter.

TBIC has played Oklahoma City three times, and it looks forward to tonight’s show. In its last tour in August, the band played in front of dozens of naked Okies at a makeshift music festival. Gracing the stage with TBIC tonight is Oklahoma City favorite the Roustabouts, a band that has played Lawrence several times and shared line-ups with TBIC before. It’s a Fridag and TBIC knows a big crowd is coming tonight, perhaps the biggest all week.

The doors to the Conservatory open at 9 p.m., and a crowd slowly filters into the club. TBIC mingles with people it knew from the previous Oklahoma City shows and swaps stories of the road with Sea of Thousand, an Austin band whose van’s brakes gave out earlier while cruising down the highway. Thankfully, the van coasted into the safety of a gas station parking lot. This story sounds hauntingly like TBIC’s situation the past couple of days—the brake pads of the Short Bus are wearing, making it harder to stop.

After the second band, TBIC plays its set one last time in front of 100 people. The band plays flawlessly to a moving and impressed audience. “This band is bad-ass!” a woman
EDITORS and PUBLISHERS

Judge 172 Contest Entries

Student winners hail from Canada and United States

By Carol Holstead, University of Kansas

1. Start-up Magazine Project: Team (17 entries)
   - Judge: Roger Tremblay, Publicitas North America
   - First place: Sim, Loyola College in Maryland—Genia Basile, student; Andrew Ciofalo, adviser
   - Second place: Destination X, Boston University—Gina Radovanov, student; Safoura Rafeizadeh, adviser
   - Third place: Fuel, Northwestern University—Maegan Carberry, student; Abe Peck, adviser
   - Honorable mention: Chases, University of Missouri—Angela Hayes, Julia Steiner, and Megan Stock, staff; Danita Allen, adviser
   - Honorable mention: Invite, Northwestern University—David Bernstein, student; Patti Wolter, adviser

2. Start-up Magazine Project: Individual (11 entries)
   - Judges: Dale Conour, deputy editor, and Paul Donald, creative director, Sunset magazine
   - First place: Real to Reel, University of Mississippi—Allen Thigpen; Samir Husni, adviser
   - Second place: Fusion, University of Mississippi—Julie Pui Wong; Samir Husni, adviser
   - Third place: Healthy Alternatives, University of Kansas—Julie Jones, student; Sharon Bass and Carol Holstead, advisers

3. Consumer Magazine Article: First Person (22 entries)
   - First place: “On the road, again,” by Joe Watson, Arizona State University; Carol Schwalbe, adviser
   - Second place: “Beyond the Body,” by Kathryn Monroe, Northwestern University; David Abrahamson, adviser
   - Third place: “Caught in the Middle,” by Kristine Frye, Ball State University; David Sumner, adviser

4. Consumer Magazine Article: People & Places (31 entries)
   - Judge: Richard B. Stolley, founding managing editor of People, longtime editor of Life, currently with Time Inc.
   - First place: “Casting the Curse,” by Neil Mulka, University of Kansas; Carol Holstead, adviser
   - Second place: “To Hell and Back,” by Jennifer Allen, Ryerson University; Bill Reynolds, adviser
   - Third place: “Rhonda’s Story,” by Derigan Silver, Arizona State University; Carol Schwalbe, adviser
   - Honorable mention: “Heart in a Cheap Red Rock,” by Rachel Rosmarin, Northwestern University; David Abrahamson, adviser
   - Honorable mention: “Naked Ambition,” by Gwyneth Gibby, University of Missouri; Jennifer Moeller, adviser

5. Consumer Magazine Article: Service & Information (27 entries)
   - Judge: Kristen Godsey, editor, Writer’s Digest
   - First place: “Dumb and Dumber,” by Amanda Factor, Ryerson University; Bill Reynolds, adviser
   - Second place: “Battles Fit for Warriors,” by Neil Mulka, University of Kansas; Carol Holstead, adviser
   - Third place: “No Wires Attached,” by Kimberly Longo, Hofstra University; Carol Fletcher, adviser

6. Consumer Magazine Article: Investigation and Analysis (19 entries)
   - Judge: John McManus, editor, American Demographics
   - First place: “Always Under Surveillance,” by Ilan Brat, Arizona State University; Carol Schwalbe, adviser
   - Second place: “The Music Industry Bites Back,” by Emmy Thomas, University of Missouri; Jennifer Moeller, adviser
   - Third place: “State of the Union,” by Carolyn Szczepanski, University of Missouri; Jennifer Moeller, adviser

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Tips for Teaching a Course in **HUMOR WRITING**

*Students master techniques to write 700- to 900-word narratives for identifiable markets*

By F. Dennis Hale, Bowling Green State

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**TEACHING TIPS**

For more than a decade I have taught a course in humor writing. The course has been taught as a traditional class for seniors and graduate students and as a one-week workshop with 40 contact hours. The course has been titled both Humor Writing and Journalistic Satire. The course emphasizes the mastery of humor techniques to write 700- to 900-word narratives for identifiable markets.

The class is similar to other journalism writing courses, such as feature writing. Students learn how to find story ideas, discover raw material for stories, organize stories, and market stories. The following are tips for teaching a humor writing class.

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**Launching the humor class**

- **Background of teacher.** The instructor should have published some humor. The teacher doesn’t have to be a comedy veteran but should appreciate a variety of humor styles and should have toiled at publishing humor. The teacher should have experienced the helplessness of having pieces rejected by distant editors.
- **Sharing experiences.** The teacher should share personal humor writing experiences with the students. Don’t be coy. Share successes and disappointments.
- **Background of students.** Students share their background in journalism, humor writing, and mass media as well as experiences that provide material for humor, such as family, friends, hobbies, jobs, classes taken, and favorite columnists, comedy movies, TV shows, writers, websites, and magazines.
- **Focus on short humor.** Teach how to write short pieces for newspapers, magazines, or the Internet. The length of humor pieces has shrunk along with the attention span of readers and the length of newspaper and magazine articles.
- **Explore specific outlets.** Students should write for a specific market and submit class assignments to publications. Students need to evaluate regional outlets. Introduce students to the basics of freelancing. Their objective should be to publish; the size of the payment is secondary. Students should search for unusual outlets in public radio, neighborhood newspapers, regional magazines, local specialized magazines, and local radio. And don’t overlook campus publications.

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**WINNERS**  
(Continued from page 18)

7. Online Magazine (4 entries)
   - **Judge:** Laura Bronson, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia
   - **First place:** Devil’s Tale  
     <http://cronkitezine.asu.edu/> Arizona State University—Adam Gonzales, editor; Carol Schwalbe, adviser
   - **Second place:** The CyBurr  
     <http://www.burr.kent.edu> Kent State University—Jamie Carracher, editor; Meranda Watling, webmaster; Ann Schierhorn, adviser
   - **Third place:** 515 Magazine  
     <http://www.515magazine.com> Drake University—Emily Bida, editor; Patricia Prijatel, adviser

   (13 entries)
   - **Judge:** Arcie Press, editor in chief of *The American Lawyer*
   - **First place:** The Burr, Spring 2004, Kent State University—Steven Harbaugh, editor; Ann Schierhorn, adviser
   - **Second place:** 515, Spring 2004, Drake University—Emily Bida, editor; Patricia Prijatel, adviser
   - **Third place:** Echo, Spring 2004, Columbia College—Sharon Floyd-Peshkin and David Fish, advisers

   (14 entries)
   - **Judge:** Marcella Spanagle Hawley, art director, *Mary Engelbreit’s Home Companion*
   - **First place:** Drake Magazine, Spring 2004, Drake University—Rebecca Lysen and Julie Collins, editors; Patricia Prijatel and Angela Renkoski, advisers
   - **Second place:** Echo, Spring 2004, Columbia College—Sharon Floyd-Peshkin and David Fish, advisers
   - **Third place:** Expo, Winter 2004, Ball State University—Expo staff; David Sumner, adviser

10. Single Issue of an Ongoing Print Magazine: General Excellence  
    (14 entries)
    - **First place:** The Burr, Spring 2004, Kent State University—Steven Harbaugh, editor; Ann Schierhorn, adviser
    - **Second place:** Spectrum, Winter & Spring 2004, Bloomsburg University—Christine M. Varner, executive editor; Walter M. Brasch, adviser
    - **Third place:** Echo, Spring 2004, Columbia College—Sharon Floyd-Peshkin and David Fish, advisers

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**CURSE**  
(Continued from page 17)

holding a can of Lost Lake beer yells to a friend nearby. He can’t hear her; the man is pumping his fist, worrying only about the music. For band and music lovers, bills, jobs, or school will have to wait until tomorrow.

“Hey, didn’t you used to be in the Short Bus Kids?” a tattooed woman on a vintage pink-and-blue Schwinn bicycle asks Joe as he pushes a guitar cabinet across a street after a show in Lafayette, Louisiana. With a quick smile, he tells her that SBK is his old band and tells her about TBIC. “Oh, cool,” she replies “I saw Short Bus Kids a couple years ago when I was living in Detroit.” She sees a friend and rides away.

Finally, recognition, even if it is from his first band that doesn’t play any more. Maybe on its next tour, people will know who This Building Is Cursed really is. ♦
HUMOR

(Continued from page 19)

■ Journalism basics. Include a review of journalism basics, such as short sentences and paragraphs, reliance on past tense, active verbs, conciseness, proper grammar, specificity, and AP style. Using standard journalistic style will improve the probability of publication.

■ Introduce exaggeration. Early in the course, discuss exaggeration as the most frequently used device for humor writing. With this one technique a person can write a humorous piece.

■ That first person. Introduce the concept of first person and its advantages and limitations. It’s permissible to use first person when writing humor, but it’s also possible to write about personal misadventures without using first person.

■ Writing about yourself. Humor is one field in journalism where it’s acceptable to write about yourself. Some of the best advice about finding humor in your own life is offered by Jeanne Robertson, a professional speaker, in her 1990 book Humor: The Magic of Genie. Her little book highlights seven “potions”:

1. Laugh at yourself.
2. Look for humor in everyday situations.
3. Create your own humor.
4. Associate with people who are funny.
5. Influence others to develop a sense of humor.
6. See the humor in unpleasant situations.
7. Take humor breaks and collect humor cues.

■ First writing assignment. Once students are introduced to journalism basics, exaggeration, first person, and finding humor in their own lives, require them to write their first humor piece. Suggest that they use exaggeration to write about themselves, friends, or family.

■ Other writing assignments. For a one-week workshop I require students to write three pieces. For a regular class, four to six would work.

Discovering humorous material

■ Importance of finding ideas. Discovering targets for humor is just as important as mastering techniques of humor. Often articles will write themselves after a fruitful topic is discovered. Humor writers need to emulate serious journalists who never take a break from searching for original story ideas.

■ Traditional research. Sources of humor are similar to those of traditional reporting: family and friends, today’s news, secondary sources, the Internet, and interviews (particularly with colorful people). Humor writers also may create ideas in their heads, but often these creations of the mind are related to traditional sources, such as daily experiences. Humor writers may need to conduct traditional research to clarify the facts of an event they are satirizing. If you are spoofing President Bush and his daughters, start with accurate information about the relationships.

■ Group discussions. A few times a semester the class should brainstorm about a humorous concept, such as grade inflation.

■ Stranger than fiction. There’s no need to fabricate humorous ideas—just consult a newspaper. A productive exercise for 90 minutes is for everyone to read the same issue of a newspaper and then compare ideas for humor columns. This can be done multiple times.

■ Observation. Just watching people in public places can generate material. Require students to sit for an hour in a restaurant, mall, or beauty shop and eavesdrop on individuals. Then compare the material the students have gathered. Students should learn for colorful dialogue. You’re more likely to hear such quotes from ordinary people than from judges and mayors.

■ Participant observation. The reporter fabricates a situation to generate comedy material, similar to the old TV show Candid Camera. As an example, a Dallas reporter once drove a round town in an old Toyota and then traded the same route in a chauffeur-driven limousine, and compared reactions.

■ Personal journal. Require students to keep a journal with observations about their family, other people, media content, and personal brainstorming.

Techniques of humor writing

■ Three methods. There are three methods for learning to write humor:

1. Sit down at the computer and fill the screen with your thoughts.
2. Read humor writers and emulate their techniques.
3. Read how-to books and articles about humor.

■ National writers. Learn by example by reading national humor writers, such as Woody Allen, Dave Barry, Russell Baker, Roy Blount, Jr., Tom Bodet, Erma Bombeck, Joe Bob Briggs, Stephanie Brush, Art Buchwald, Christopher Buckley, Bill Geist, Bob Greene, Lewis Grizzard, Molly Ivans, Dan Jenkins, Garrison Keillor, Patrick McManus, P.J. O’Rourke, Anna Quindlen, Andy Rooney, Mark Russell, D.L. Stewart, and Calvin Trillin.

■ Two typologies. Humorists range from highbrow and cultured to lowbrow and earthy. Calvin Trillin and Christopher Buckley are highbrow; Lewis Grizzard and Dave Barry are lowbrow. The British novelist Kingsley Ames is highbrow; American comic novelist Dan Jenkins is more lowbrow. There are other dimensions to humor. One is real event versus the embellished. Someone like Dave Barry lapses into a form of free association that emphasizes embellished ideas. Bob Greene, however, sometimes writes humor by focusing on humorous people and simply quoting their actual words.

■ Humorists from the past. Analyze humorists from earlier eras, such as Mark Twain, H. Allen Smith, and James Thurber. Students can note the changing nature of what is amusing. I once skimmed a collection of Thurber and was unimpressed. Then a student read a Thurber essay about the names of dogs that I found hilarious even though I don’t own a dog.

■ Regional writers. Also study regional writers, such as Bill Hall of Lewiston, Idaho; Tedey Allen of Shreveport, Louisiana; Sam Venable of Knoxville, Tennessee; and Dennis Rogers of Raleigh, North Carolina. Many of these regional authors have published anthologies. Some 76 local columnists from 41 states are highlighted in Sam G. Riley’s 1993 book The Best of the Best: Non-Syndicated Newspaper Columnists Select Their Best Work.

■ Comic novelists. Have students report on the techniques used by comic novelists, such as Dan Jenkins, Kingsley Ames, Peter Devries, and Carl Hiaasen. Some of Joseph Wambaugh’s books qualify as comic novels. Most of the novels by mystery writer Tony Hillerman are serious, but The Great Taois Bank Robbery is amusing.

(Continued on page 21)
HUMOR (Continued from page 20)

Tapes and CD’s. Listen to recordings of classic comedians, such as George Carlin, Bob Newhart, Bill Cosby, Bob and Ray, and Jonathan Winters. This is one way to break up a long class. Play recordings of stand-up comedians or material from the comedy cable channel.


The scholarly perspective. Arthur Asa Berger’s The Art of Comedy Writing (1997) offers another perspective. Berger uses examples from classic drama, such as Shakespeare and Ionesco, to derive 45 categories of humor, including absurdity, bombast, disappointment, grotesque, irony, mimicry, parody, puns, sarcasm, slapstick, and unmasking.

How-to articles. Writer’s Digest, Quill, Editor & Publisher, and journalism magazines publish articles about humor writing. Examples include a Paula LaRocque piece in the October 1997 issue of Quill and a Jack Hart column in the June 7, 1997, issue of Editor & Publisher.

My own how-to approach. After examining 20 modern humor writers, from Woody Allen, Russell Baker and Dave Barry to Mike Royko, D. L. Stewart, and Calvin Trillin, I came up with 13 techniques: exaggeration, understatement, voice, long lists, short lists or the rule of three, surprise, life’s little problems, humor in the news, constructing a comic reality, beginnings and endings, puns and wordplay, comic dialogues, and parodies.

Adding variety to the class

Humor specialists. Bring guests to class who make a living devoting some of their professional time to writing humor. Included are local columnists and freelance, PR and speech writers, and radio personalities.

Funny people. Bring someone to class who is naturally funny. Let the students and guest brainstorm on a humor skit.

Joke lists. Hand out a collection of jokes and have students discuss a favorite. Or have each student turn to a different joke site on the Internet and select favorite jokes.

Internet sources. There are hundreds of humor websites. Most are collections of jokes. An excellent site is the National Society of Newspaper Columnists <Columnists.com>. Examples of satire from The Onion may be found at <onion.com>. Typing humor columnist on Google will produce results.

Cartoon captions. A stimulating, one-hour exercise is to pass out four pages of New Yorker cartoons with the captions covered and require the students to write their own captions.

Talk show material. For additional proof that there is humorous material in the news, play the monologues from any of the the evening talk shows, such as David Letterman or Jay Leno.

Biographies of humorists. Just what kind of background leads to success in humor? Clues are provided in the biographies of humorists. Students can research these and share the results.

Issues of taste. Every course in humor needs a discussion of taste. To what extent may family members be targets? How much embellishment of facts is permissible? What profanities and crudities are allowed? Stand-up comedy is one of the most bawdy forms of humor. Newspaper columns are tame when it comes to sexual references. The tastefulness of a piece limits where it may be published. Sometimes crudity enhances publication possibilities.

Freedom of the press. Every course in humor must cover the legal protection that is afforded satire: the libel defense of fair comment and opinion, invasion of privacy and the publication of private and embarrassing facts, and the right to parody songs and copyrighted works.

Diverse sources. There are diverse styles of humor. There are people who specialize in Christian humor. Liz Curtis Higgs, columnist for Today’s Christian Woman, has published six humorous books. There is material devoted to humor and medicine. Ron Berk at the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing published Professors Are from Mars, Students Are from Snickers: How to Write and Deliver Humor in the Classroom and in Professional Presentations (2003). The International Center for Humor and Health has a website at <humorandhealth.com>. There are homosexual magazines with humor as well as gay and lesbian comedians.

Word games. These can refine the ability to write humor. Give students a list of nouns and ask them to write specific examples in one column and more specific examples in another column. Another exercise is to ask students to list examples of people, places, things, events, phrases, or clichés. Then ask them to list things that are similar and opposite.

Culminating event. I conclude the class with student reports on their favorite humor writer. This often includes the sharing of a sample piece. Some humor classes conclude with a public performance in which the students read original material. This can be done in a coffee house, classroom, or bar. Humor teachers Mel Heltzer of Ohio University and Chris Lamb of Charleston, South Carolina, have used such assignments.

Some humor classes conclude with a public performance in which the students read original material.

An earlier version of this article was presented as part of a panel on humor writing at the August 1999 AEJMC convention in New Orleans, co-sponsored by the Magazine Division. The author is a professor of journalism at Bowling Green State University.

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