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Edition 1.1 of Katina Paron and Javier Güelfi’s *A NewsHound's Guide to Student Journalism* is a valuable resource that can support student journalists in speaking truth to power, be it in the wake of student government scandals or taking the form of advocacy to improve school and campus communities. The book is built as a graphic novel with a plotline that exemplifies its pedagogic aims. Relevant to both secondary and postsecondary students looking to take up student journalism’s noble cause, the new edition of the book is timely as student government in the United States continues to decline, with the collapse of the United States Student Association around the end of the 2010s being a stark indicator of how severe the erosion of US student voice mechanisms have become. This review is unique in that I had the pleasure of reviewing the first edition of the book in 2019, and I had recommended that a subsequent edition of the book be published with some small but important corrections. I was over-joyed to learn that the authors have seemed to take my advice and put forward the best version yet of this informative guide.

Overall, the new version has the same progression as the original. Chapter 1 dives into the basics of conducting an investigation for a news story, putting readers into the shoes of a high school freshman student reporter who quickly discovers evidence to suggest that the student government elections have been rigged. The freshman gains experience interviewing those involved in the elections, takes notes, and learns how to appropriately deal with an anonymous tip. Chapter 2 follows the story of two student journalists who each have a story about a topic they have a personal stake in and learns a valuable lesson about what conflict of interest is and how to avoid it, with the editor reassigning them each to the other’s story. Chapter 3 involves a story about a student assaulted by a police officer and accused of
getting violent, leading to student journalists to crowdsource testimonies and evidence via social media from students who witnessed the altercation. The resulting article helped initiate an internal police investigation and culminated in the officer being put on administrative leave. Chapter 4 teaches ways journalism can be used to advocate for change through a story by offering solutions instead of just reporting on issues. Chapter 5 covers the importance of independent sources and provides tips for avoiding libel and copyright infringement. Chapter 6 cautions against plagiarism and provides a guide for how a student newspaper should respond if one of their journalists plagiarizes. Chapter 7 situates enterprise reporting, a type of reporting that consults existing sources to provide more information about a topic as opposed to drawing from recent news events, and features reporting as ways to provide additional context on topics of interest to the readership, including but not limited to background to supplement news, how-to guides, more creative pieces that do not fit the traditional news template, et cetera. Chapter 8 covers instances where multiple student journalists work together to report on a story and includes some guidance for team and group meeting management. Chapter 9 explores key US court cases pertaining to student journalism to educate readers about how the First Amendment applies in student journalism contexts. Chapter 10 provides resources on journalism history, additional writing tips, an editing checklist, and external resources for further learning.

In my 2019 review, I mentioned that one area in need of improvement was the book’s litany of grammar errors that had somehow made it past the copyediting phase.[1] I am pleased to report that these errors are largely corrected in the new edition, allowing for seamless immersion into the story and its vital lessons. Another improvement consists of some touch-ups to images to make them cleaner and more consistent, attention to detail that is greatly appreciated. Upon comparing both versions, I did not find any other notable changes. It would have been interesting to explore the potential impacts that substantial changes in the world since 2019 may have had on student journalism, including but not limited to artificial intelligence, newer social media platforms that are more video-based, and increasing political polarization.

At this point, I have one main question for Paron and Güelfi: What comes next? Student journalism, and good journalism in general, is needed more than ever. While being relevant to postsecondary student journalists, there would likely be a market for a more postsecondary-focused companion resource that guides readers through the nuances at this more advanced level. Some aspects to consider for such a resource would be restrictions imposed upon campus media by education institutions and governments; the need for coordinated efforts across campuses or supra-campus student journalism outlets to report on student governments at state, national, and international levels; effective ways to cover large student protests and other collective actions; tips on considering a career in professional journalism; and the potential for postsecondary student journalists, as legal adults, to have to oversee the administration and management of a student journalism outlet that is also a formal nonprofit organization. There may even be potential to bring along some of the recurring characters as they continue to learn key journalism skills. In any case, I stand by what I expressed at the end of my 2019 review if a new edition were published: a copy of this book should be available at every education institution in the United States.

Note


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