



Native Voice (Socastee HS) staff and adviser speak out about

 |-----> *newsmagazines*

“A newsmagazine is easier to carry around. It’s more compact.”

—**Spencer Broome**, sports editor

“People actually keep them.”

—**Shelby Dodson**, staff artist

“They don’t fall apart. But the disadvantage is that you can’t have a pull-out section.”

—**Alicia Burnette**, editor in chief

“You don’t have to fold the newspaper in half to stick it in your bookbag.”

—**Brandy Milner**, advertising editor

“Students want to make it into all entertainment/student life. I have to push for news.”

—**Patricia Deas**, adviser

Newsmagazine format: *Readers get more of what they want*

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So one day, with Rush’s cheeseburgers in hand and a printout of Ron Reason’s “The Newspaper Redesign” in hand (<http://www.garcia-media.com/resources/10questions.html>), we began to answer each of his “ten questions to ask before a redesign.”

We wanted an “edgy” look that would hold our audience’s attention while they ate their corn dogs or chicken rings (don’t even ask!). We also wanted content that would appeal to the PACT below basic audience as well as our AP European History classes.

Reason’s Question 1: “How do you know if your publication needs a redesign?”

The students said our paper did not reflect who we wanted to be. We asked ourselves:

Do kids read the real newspaper much anymore?

No.

Do they read magazines?

Yes.

So, the first thing we knew we wanted was a page-size like the Dutch Fork Renaissance, the first South Carolina newsmagazine. Their pages were 8 X 11, and we knew students were used to handling 8 X 11-inch paper every day. When the bell rang to end lunch, students could slip that size paper into their notebooks and complete their read at home.

Reason’s Question 2: Would a tune-up do the job?

No, a “tune-up” would not correct the problems we were trying to fix. We reasoned that the new size would be more teen-friendly and would take care of a major frustration for our staff: What does Ben, the page designer, do when Joe and Susie get their stories to him on time, but Sally’s is late, causing a big hole on the page?

We looked at Ben’s world. If we moved to the new size, then Ben could be responsible for his own page – his own story package, and so could Sally. Ben could do his reporting, writing and designing without having to worry about Sally’s procrastination. Because Sally’s zero deadline grade never fixed the hole on his page, Ben could now be happy and agree to stay on staff rather than be another math department casualty.

We looked at Reason’s questions 3-7 and knew we wanted help. While we could create a plan and execute it, we wanted to go beyond what we knew.

What to do?

First, we voted to try the new size with our last edition for May 2002. Second, to move beyond our own knowledge, we decided that three editors should attend the Carolina Journalism Institute in June.

What to do next?

Karen Flowers, SCSA director, gave us that answer. She had been busy setting up the summer redesign/design workshops with



a professional page designer. Oh boy! This plan was coming together, and I love it when a plan comes together, as Hannibal Smith of my wonderful A-team would say. The students jumped right on the redesign-with-a-pro wagon, deciding to attend the session at Carolina Forest High School in Myrtle Beach and stay right on the beach. I could live with that.

Bonding is always a good thing.

At Carolina Forest, Geoff Locicero, the professional who was helping with the SCSA summer design workshop, critiqued our first attempt at a newsmagazine, our May 2002 issue. He sat down with us to discuss changes and guided our steps to make the pages come together as a unit.

First things first. Pouring over magazines, we tore out clippings of design elements we wanted to try and ideas that we wanted for standing pages. We took a Dutch Fork Renaissance and pasted our ideas onto their pages. Before the workshop was over, we were ready to assign stories and produce the first good issue of our newsmagazine.

On distribution day, we saw an interest from our students like we had never seen before.

Reason’s article had said “that a good redesign can curb recent losses in readership, or retain at-risk readers.”

Appealing to at-risk readers was a major goal for us. Our new size and look was doing just that. At the close of the lunch periods on that first distribution day, we found no papers left behind.

Reason also says that redesign can “improve staff morale” and he is right about that. The editors and staff beamed forth a new pride and enthusiasm which has lasted all year long.

Our publication is not where we want it by a long shot. Just recently we’ve been studying magazines because we feel we don’t have a personality yet. We have read and are thinking about what Dean Hume, adviser of the newsmagazine Spark at East Lakota High School in Ohio, says about changing to an issue-driven publication. (C-JET, Winter 2001, pgs. 23-26). Flowers has helped us get copies of Hume’s Spark and another Ohio newsmagazine, the Lakewood Times, whose adviser, John Bowen, has also given us input about newsmagazines.

To help us work more on our format, we decided to scratch one of our issues this year to have more training time and work on our fine-tuning. So, that’s where we are and how we got there.

We will definitely be attending another SCSA summer design workshop to continue working on our new publication format. (Plus this workshop is a great time for bonding.)

Anyone planning a redesign should scour Garcia media’s web page, (<http://www.garcia-media.com/>). This is the guy who redesigned The Wallstreet Journal. Also, at (<http://www.garcia-media.com/resources/ronqa.html>),

check out Ron Reason’s “Design Advice for Small Newspapers.” And get in touch with the SCSA office about one of the summer workshops. We’ll be going back to the one at the beach for sure.

Tressie Hays, advises the creative arts magazine, Dithyramb, the newsmagazine, The Wildcat, and the yearbook, Cat’s Paw at Lexington HS. Hays began advising a newspaper at Goose Creek HS in 1989, resurrecting it after a two-year absence. In 1995 she moved to the Midlands and to Lexington HS to be yearbook adviser. At the time Lexington students were producing a newspaper during an extra-curricular, after-school club. Under Hays guidance, newspaper journalism became part of the curriculum, and they put out the first issue of The Wildcat, as a class, in November, 1996.

Reason’s FAQ about newspaper design

Why, How, Who? –The decision to redesign your newspaper is an important one. The process is complex and may be confusing to the uninitiated. Following are some of the tricky questions Reason says he is often asked via e-mail or phone inquiries or in person at conferences or seminars.

1. How do we know if our publication needs a redesign?
2. What if we just need a tune-up?
3. How do we know whether we should undertake a redesign in-house, or bring in an outsider?
4. OK, we want to consider a consultant. What should we look for?
5. What will the right consultant do for us?
6. How long does a redesign take?
7. How much does a redesign cost, anyway?
8. Will a redesign increase our circulation and profits?
9. How will a redesign improve our “branding?”
10. Finally, how does a redesign appeal to advertisers?

Source: <http://www.garcia-media.com/resources/10questions.html>
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