

天主教輔仁大學英國語文學系學士班畢業成果
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Reflection on Participating 2019 Department Magazine

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LOD- 2020 Department Magazine

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Reflection on Participating 2020 Department Magazine

The other day I was compiling my LinkedIn profile, and as I typed up my experience of the 2020 English Department Magazine project, I could not help but find myself, inevitably, reliving the moment.

I was in Dr. Tong's first class when it all started, where around a dozen of unfamiliar faces turned and stared at me and my friend Emily as we raised our fearless arms to the call for the chief editor role. It felt incredible, when you stood out heroically to take on the editorial position, shouldering on a great deal of potential responsibility that comes with the power. Funnily though, little did I know about the upcoming battles, since as far as I can recall, the decision was driven by a bewitching rush of frantically. The journey, like I have always known, would take more than just a heroic level of courage.

The editor in chief of 2020 FJCU Department Magazine was in charge of the management of the magazine production, the subjects of supervision range from articles to sales promotion--- quite too heavy a workload so this year there were two of us. Additionally, more roles were to be adopted due to the shortness of class members, so people ended up running their own "slash career." Aside from being a chief editor, I myself contributed to the project as a writer, copyeditor, and layout

designer. Although multi-roling did not seem to be necessary for chief editors given that we would have to less or more take part in every role so as to manage, I appreciate my experience from those positions because it takes putting yourself in others' shoes to see from their perspective.

Writing had been and remained to be one of the most challenging tasks throughout the production. Quite a few writers from the class struggled to produce articles in correct styles and formats, say their works often edged into personal commentaries when in fact journalistic style was the way to go. Such situation could be rather frustrating since participants had indeed familiarized themselves with various writing styles through several weeks of giving and receiving presentations regarding the matter. Fortunately, most problem articles had been supervised and refined by a group of determined section and copy editors before being passed on to finalization.

Another major setback, shamefully, was the substandard English writing proficiency shown by a number of writers. I remember how puzzled Dr. Tong seemed when addressing the issue during an after-class talk with us chief editors--- “Why are there so many basic grammatical errors still?” As a matter of fact, on being an upper division course, Department Magazine hosts students of a certain level, students who have completed 3 years of basic composition training, therefore, it is the least expectation that participants meet the decency to produce grammatically and syntactically error-free articles. For sure rounds of copyediting were conducted and writers took turns reviewing one another's drafts, the procedures failed eventually so Emily and I had to proofread the “finalized drafts” word by word 2 days before printing (and spotted a great deal of disappointing subject-verb agreement mistakes

along the way). Till this point online tools such as grammar checkers turned out to be the saving grace, which would later proved themselves efficient and reliable.

Although my writing process was rather smooth and untroubled, I was aware of the fact that language proficiency varies among individuals, and it is inevitable that some suffer in meeting the standard. By no means am I calling people out, and I believe everyone has equal rights and opportunities to join the production as well as expressing their opinions and emotions through words, accurate or not--- yet this is undoubtedly an issue that demands urgent attention, especially from those in editorial positions who aspire to launch a successful publication with quality consistency.

Layout and design, one the other hand, was off to a good start. Emily and my dual role as layout designers really put us in an advantage, that is, editors in chief not only got a say in the visual design progress but also physically controlled the aesthetics thanks to the validation of the title. As dictatorial as the power relation appeared to be, most decisions were made through common agreements. For every pitch we made a progress presentation, which would then be discussed and voted by the audience. Each member even created and demonstrated their own layout sample in a technical course taught by Ms. Chou, adding to the diversity in terms of style and creativity.

The art of typography, personally, is one of the most satisfying yet treacherous aspects of the experience. The accessibility to a variety of fonts provided dynamics for possibilities--- each font type conveys its very own aesthetic, may it be standard, artsy, vibrant, just to name a few. Even though font-picking was crucial on its own, as the production team took the matter seriously, the compatibility between fonts and other visual elements is not to be underestimated. Colors, pictures, and even layout

styles impact significantly on the legitimacy of font choices, so options are to be changed or compromised from time to time, either to sacrifice certain fonts for particular styles or vice versa. A good rule of thumb is to prioritize fonts over designs, since a set font not only sets tones for the work but also further secures the consistency of the established aesthetic. For sure it could be the other way around, but our lack of expertise and resources remained a limitation--- an entire collection of coherent pictorial elements demanded more than just some fonts handy.

Say writing and designing were the most technical aspects of the production, editorial management, on the other hand, was full of uncertainty. From time to time things fell out of control and we had to play it by ear. It was a heart wrenching experience hearing the unfortunate news about Joshua's condition--- Joshua Liu was a brilliant writer and photographer--- undoubtedly one of our strongest teammates. Losing such a talented figure was indeed a heavy blow, yet the adventure was ought to be completed despite the grieving that would not seem to end. In shouldering on the immense responsibility lied upon our shoulders, Emily and I decided to split tasks; while Emily took care of the coordination of the project, I made attempts to cover Joshua's image processing role. Fortunately, I had taken the same photo editing and photography courses with Joshua and thus happened to know one or two things regarding the matter. My responsibility, in retrospect, was inevitable since I was the only candidate (apart from Joshua) equipped with relevant skills (Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator); however, the fact also put me in a tough spot considering me being my own team. My eyes hurt from nights of spending hours making PNG files, so was my mind--- had I shown more care for Joshua, had I saved a spot and invited him to sit beside me in the Photoshop course, he could have made it to the group photo shoot, he would have had his story to tell, just like I have mine.

The journey, like I knew, took more than just a heroic level of courage. Changes come and so do challenges, thus we try to make our ways forward, conquering one mission after another; however, it was not bravery, or ambition, that kept us moving, but trust. We trust one another because we are aware of our own fragility, the fact that we all need a helping hand sometimes--- could be a writer, a layout designer, or an editor in chief, it is not a matter of who you are or what you can do, but the knowing that it is okay to be dependent from time to time and cooperate with your fellow adventurers. I was not the best leader. I have had regrets, regrets about not what I have done but what I have not done. Yet one thing I know for sure is that I enjoyed my time in Department Magazine, being enriched by the experience in the meantime. I truly appreciate everyone I have come across throughout the journey, and I wish the best for them--- since we published a magazine, because we wrote the book on the power of trust and collaboration.



- *Staff members of 2020 Department Magazine*