

Postal Newsletter

Press

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION

NATIONAL POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

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Examining the rules of responsible journalism

By Tony Carobine, President

At one time or another, most of us have probably said things we later wished we hadn't. As much as we'd like, there isn't any way to turn back the clock and take those words back. On occasion, we also may have fluffed up the details of a story.

These situations bring to mind a tale about a man who called his dentist for an appointment. "I've got a tremendous cavity," he told the dentist. When the man got into the dentist's chair, the dentist peered into his mouth. "Oh, that doesn't seem too big. We can take care of that with a small filling." "Really?" said the man. "When I stick my tongue into it, it's huge." The dentist smiled, "Sometimes it's natural for the tongue to exaggerate."

While we can control what we say by thinking before we speak, we should also be on guard when we publish a newsletter for our members. The responsibilities and demands placed upon an editor are many indeed. Editors are the caretakers of the union publication, a valuable piece of property that belongs to the membership we serve. Whether elected or appointed, editors have been given a sacred trust that must be protected and upheld.

There is no other piece of property that is owned by the membership which has the potential to affect the union and its members more than a union publication. The union newsletter is a mighty powerful vehicle as it reaches each and every member.

A lot of important work the union does may "not be visible," so most people will form an opinion about the union by the visible products the union has to offer, such as the union publication. Taking all of this into consideration, the editor not only has an awesome responsibility, but also has control of the "voice of the union" so to speak. Given this power, we must never forget that

the paper belongs to all members and not certain individuals.

As mentioned earlier, the editor is the caretaker of the union newsletter. The caretaker's duties include the responsibility of being impartial and serving all members, regardless of the editor's personal feelings or opinions.

Responsible journalism

Following are what I call the rules of responsible journalism that editors should

3. **Do not misstate or overstate.** Again, an editor must make sure that information submitted for publication, or articles that he or she writes are factual. To view facts in a manner that suits personal views not only violates the sacred trust of the office, but also destroys the integrity of the editor, paper, and the union.

4. **Never print an article to punish someone.** Many of us (member and officer alike) have been involved in a conflict with another member at one time or another. Edi-

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consider in order to produce a union publication of the highest ethical quality:

1. **Verify information for accuracy.** Material submitted by others or written by the editor needs to be checked to make sure that all facts and statements are accurate and truthful. Anything less and the publication, union, and editor will lose credibility. Once lost, credibility is extremely difficult to regain.

2. **Be fair and objective.** When dealing with disagreements or differences of opinion pertaining to a specific issue (between members, not management) all sides deserve to be heard regardless of the editor's personal feelings on the subject. The union newsletter should present both sides so readers can form their own opinions. (A disagreement or difference of opinion in this sense is not the same as personal attacks, which do not belong in a newsletter.) The editor should always be fair, objective, impartial and not allow personal views to interfere or influence decisions regarding the content of the publication.

tors need to be especially cautious in this area. It's awful tempting to try to use the newsletter to "get even."

Common sense must prevail. Editors must not let their personal feelings or anyone else's interfere with the obligation to uphold the integrity of the publication and the responsibility to be objective, fair, and impartial.

5. **Never use a publication to further personal agendas.** We should never lose sight of the fact that the publication is not the personal property of any individual. The members are the owners; it's the duty of the editor to ensure the publication serves their needs and not self-interests. Erroneous statements, puff pieces, ignoring election laws during internal union elections, among other things, are not only shameful and wrong, but also a recipe for disaster. A union publication should be used to educate, inform, and further the goals and objectives of the union.

6. **Give proper credit.** When reprinting
Please see Responsible journalism page 2

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Responsible journalism

Continued from page 1

an article from another APWU publication, always give credit to the publication that originally published the article. The credit can either be placed at the beginning or at the end. If an article is reprinted from a newsletter that reprinted this material from another publication, credit should be given only to the paper that originally published the article.

7. Do not use copyrighted material without permission. Most material from commercial sources is protected by the copyright law. Therefore, always obtain permission from the author (copyright owner) before reprinting material from a commercial source.

8. Avoid the use of foul or abusive language. Dealing with postal management is not usually an easy task. Frustration over such encounters sometimes spills over into our publications in the form of profanity

when describing dealings with these individuals. While we should publicize our dealings with management and be aggressive when confronting them in our newsletters, foul language should be avoided.

Facts, figures and examples are much more effective while four letter words tend to demean the writer, the union, and may turn the reader off to the message the writer is attempting to convey.

Rewards

Following the rules of responsible journalism may not always be easy, but it has its rewards. In doing so, the union and the editor will not only earn the respect of the members the publication serves, but others who may read the paper as well. Consequently, this will build support for the union, its goals, and objectives. We should always be striving to serve the members as best we can. After all, isn't that what it's all about?

Ensuring readership

Whatever editors may do, they must above all else communicate...and communication is not simply issuing information. Communication implies someone on the receiving end as well as the sending.

This means that editors must make sure their newsletters are read, and, being read, that they have said what they meant them to say!

There are various devices to ensure readership. If one device doesn't work, perhaps another will.

What made you reach for a particular magazine the last time you were in the doctor's office? Why that special one? It could have been a pleasing cover, of course, which made you feel this was your kind of magazine, or it could have been a headline that piqued your interest.

Appearance is important. An attractive-looking publication invites readership.

A headline tells enough – but not too much – to snare the reader into pursuing the matter further. Think back to the last time your eye strayed over a newspaper page. You looked at the headlines, didn't you, to decide what you were going to read?

Or perhaps a reader will select reading material according to the by line, or name of the writer who did the piece. Local union editors, it is true, will have a limited field from which to garner names that make their readers want to read the newsletter, but they must never overlook possibilities.

Write nonstop to get yourself started

For your first draft of any writing, don't worry about spelling, punctuation, grammar, or even matters of fact. Forget all the rules. Just sit down and write nonstop. The idea is to keep putting words down on paper, even if you write nothing but "I don't know what to write" over and over again.

Since it's only a rough draft, it doesn't matter if you know exactly where your writing is headed. Novelist E.L. Doctorow says: "Writing a book is like driving a car at night. You can only see as far as your headlights go, but you can make the whole trip that way."

Writer's block?

By Jenny Gust, Editor-at-Large

In a recent *Reader's Digest* there was an article titled *Very Superstitious*. One of the people it listed was Charles Dickens. The article said he carried a navigational compass with him at all times and always faced north when he slept. He did this because he believed it improved his creativity and writing! Well I checked how my bed faced and I now have an excuse for why I can't come up with an article!!! Short of moving your bed around, here are a few ideas to try.

Always read every newsletter that you get from fellow PPA members. You never know when you might find the perfect article or filler item for your paper. Just make sure to give proper credit to the paper you are taking the article from. Also be sure to check out the national magazine and the APWU website. You can usually find something of interest to use in your publication.

One of the best sources of material comes from our own PPA website. It is loaded with great content. Labor history, graphics, cartoons, lots of fillers, profiles – if you have space to fill, here is the place to go. Every holiday offers an opportunity for a little artwork here and there.

Check with your fellow members. You never know who might be interested in writing an article or starting a new column. A little encouragement might be all that is needed. Articles on upcoming legislation,



sports, movie/book/music reviews, recipes, jokes, etc. It is always nice to have something in each issue about weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, birth announcements of children or grandchildren. Illness or

surgeries, retirements or sympathy on the loss of family are other items to report on. Of course you always should put notices of upcoming meetings, picnics, parties, pick-ets or whatever is going on in your paper.

Another item to consider for your paper is information on retirement. Every member hopes to get there someday and needs to know what to expect. It would even be helpful to have a retiree give some hints and tips of what to do and not do when you retire.

Another item to possibly include would be a thank you – thank them for being a member of the APWU! They don't have to be a member, they don't have to pay dues but thank goodness they do!

Well this article wasn't exactly an award winner but I hope it gave you a few ideas. As for me, I am going to see about moving my bedroom furniture around. Couldn't hurt, might work! Charles Dickens thought so!

2019 dues notice mailed

A dues notice letter and membership application for 2019 was mailed to PPA members on October 19. Occasionally, we find that dues notices are laid aside which then requires additional notices or phone calls as reminders. Your help in making sure your dues for the coming year are paid in a timely fashion would be appreciated.

Upon receipt of your dues, a 2019 PPA Membership/Press Identification Card will be prepared and sent to you provided your digital photo is already on file with the PPA. If your digital photo is not on file (or you would like to submit an updated photo), please email the photo to ppa@apwupostalpress.org.

Thank you for your membership in the PPA!

By Diane North, Editor-at-Large

There is so much to learn. Just when I think I can't fit any more into this pea brain head of mine, I learn something else. Years ago I was forced by the executive board to learn my own typesetting. Now that was a huge challenge. I knew a little about operating a computer, but was not sure I could teach myself how to typeset a newsletter. Well, I did; BUT—then I took a class at the Postal Press Conference teaching dos and don'ts of setting up a newsletter. That was an eye-opener.

Did you know that when you take photos you can just walk up to where you need to be to take them? I mean you don't have to take them from your seat. I thought it was rude to walk in front of the podium to take someone's picture. I took a photography class at the PPA seminar and learned that and a whole lot more.

In my *Postal Press Newsletter* I found out about the *Federal Elections*, *Union Publications* and the *Internet* booklet and some of the facts pertaining to that subject. These newsletters have more information than you would expect. READ THEM!

Then there is the Postal Press website. This is a whole other ball game. What do you want to know about editing a newsletter? There it is on the website. And if we don't find what we need to know, we can email or call Tony Carobine our PPA president.

The point is there is so much information within our own organization that we don't even need to search any further. Although, that surely wouldn't hurt either.



Do we know how to hold a rally?



October 8th rally in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

By Cathy Hanson, Editor-at-Large

As directed by our national union, Minneapolis held a rally on October 8 on the sidewalk outside the main post office. We were joined by Steve Simon, Minnesota Secretary of State and Bill McCarthy, President of the Minnesota AFL-CIO, as well as St. Paul members, letter carriers, nurses and many more.

Rallies are important in that the pub-

lic sees us. Sure, they see us as postal employees throughout the week, but as landscape. You know, we're supposed to be there. When we gather on the sidewalk all wearing the same T-shirt we attract attention. Where ever we stand together we attract attention. When we stand together our message has more weight. That's the message the union wants to portray – we stand together.

Did you, as editor of your publication, join any of these rallies? Did you take pictures of your members to put in your publications? Did you remember to send out a press release to your local news stations so you get covered by the local news? It encourages members to get involved and stay involved when they see what they did has been recorded. Let's do all we can to keep everyone involved!



Attend the 2019 Biennial PPA Conference!

**Thursday, August 1 – Saturday, August 3
(Pre-conference session Wednesday, July 31)**

**The Meadows Events & Conference Center
at Prairie Meadows Hotel, Racetrack & Casino
Altoona, Iowa**

A guestroom rate of \$129.00 per day for king or double queen occupancy will be in effect throughout the conference, in addition to three days before and three days after the actual meeting dates. Current tax rate is 12%. Prairie Meadows will provide free shuttle service from Des Moines International Airport, complimentary Internet access and no charge for parking a vehicle. To make room reservations, please visit their website, www.prairiemeadows.com using group code **07292019APW** or call **1-800-325-9015**.

This intensive four-day event will help you and your organization:

- Better inform and educate members and their families.
- Create a communications system that will stimulate membership participation and build a stronger union.
 - Conquer the challenges of public speaking.
- Learn how to establish a working relationship with the media & methods for generating public support.
 - Develop highly effective internal & external communication strategies.
 - Map out ideas for developing an editorial policy.
- Explore the subject of social media and how it can complement a print publication.
- Avoid costly lawsuits by studying the subjects of libel, copyright and internal union elections.
- Infuse the union's publication with style and personality so members will read every issue.
 - Harness the tools for conducting interviews that get noticed.
- Become skilled at writing news stories, eye-catching headlines and high-interest feature stories.
 - Discover how labor history can be used to improve union involvement.
 - Master techniques for reporting on issues affecting the membership.
 - Inspire union loyalty through the art of photojournalism.
 - Use communication as a means to stamp out membership apathy.
- Meet others who perform similar work and share experiences, problems and ideas.
- Get recharged and eager to put dozens of new communication ideas to work!

All of this and much, much more!

Editor's toolbox: Helpful ideas for APWU communicators

Review your listening skills with this checklist

One-on-one communication is a two-way process, and the part most often neglected is listening. Following are eight poor listening habits. Are you guilty of any of them?

Editing. You hear only what you want to hear, selectively blocking out the rest of what the person is trying to communicate:

Rehearsing. As the person speaks, you are preoccupied formulating what you will say next.

Delving. Instead of listening, you focus on trying to discover a hidden message.

Daydreaming. Failing to concentrate, you allow your mind to wander which often leads to an embarrassing request for the person to repeat what he or she just said.

Personalizing. You relate what is being said to your own experience and allow your thoughts to go off on a tangent. What the person is saying becomes about you, not the speaker.

Switching. You are too quick to change the subject, sending the message that you are not interested in what the other person has to say.

Arguing. You are quick to disparage or ridicule what was just said. You are more interested in verbal sparring than communicating.

Agreeing. You nod and mumble agreement to everything that is said, just to avoid conflict.

Tips for proofreading

If you're proofreading publications, you might want to:

- Reread all headlines and subheads.
- Reread all sentences following headlines and font changes.
- Cross-check the table of contents against the text.
- Proof corrections and also the area surrounding corrections.
- Check pages where stories are continued to be sure the story "restarted" at the right place.

How to prune your prose

Here are some ways to tighten your writing:

- **Look for** sentences that begin with "There is or There are."

Wordy: There are five people who are working on the project." (ten words)

Tighter: Five people are working on that project." (seven words)

- Avoid using "in the process of."

Wordy: "He is in the process of adding names to the committee." (eleven words)

Tighter: "He is adding names to the committee." (seven words)

Color tips

Don't overlook the effect of color in your printed pieces. Color can add both interest and appeal. It reduces errors and increases motivation. In fact, studies show that people are 35 percent more likely to be interested in a piece with color than one without it. Just adding one color to your piece can give it a new dimension. Some tips include:

- Use color to direct the reader's eye or make an element stand out.
- Use color for contrast – and stay away from using color-on-color designs.
- Color printed on a smooth, glossy surface appears purer and more brilliant than the same ink on a rough surface.
- Full-color photos will capture a reader's attention immediately.

Top tips from Mark Twain

Mark Twain helped to shape the American language. Here are some quotes worth noting from this great writer:

- On style (to a 12-year-old boy): "I notice that you use plain, simple language, short words and brief sentences. That is the way to write English – it is the modern way and the best way. Stick to it and don't let fluff and flowers and verbosity creep in."
- On using short words: "I never write 'metropolis' for 7 cents when I can get the same for 'city'."
- On being concise: "With a hundred words to do it with, the literary artisan could catch that airy thought and tie it down and reduce it to a . . . cabbage but the artist does it with 20 – and the result is a flower."
- On word choice: "The difference between the almost-right word and the right word is really a large matter – 'tis the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning."

ference between the lightning bug and the lightning."

Write clearer, more readable paragraphs

Paragraphs should make reading easy. Put the topic sentence first; follow with supporting material, held together with conjunctions; and finish with a summary.

Here are some tips:

Think of paragraphs as units of thought. Give each main idea its own paragraph.

Keep paragraphs fairly short. The breaks between paragraphs are stopping points for readers; don't stretch their patience by making paragraphs more than 4-5 sentences long.

Vary paragraph length. This will help maintain your readers' attention. Use single-sentence paragraphs sparingly to emphasize important ideas.

Can't solve the problem?

If you've tried everything else to solve a problem, give standing a try. Researchers at the University of California say you can improve your chances of solving the problem by 20 percent if you're standing instead of sitting.

Reason: Standing boosts your heart rate by about 10 beats a minute. And the increase in blood flow stimulates your brain.

Performance quiz

Is your publication doing its job? Nine basic questions to ask yourself:

1. Who are my readers?
2. Are they getting the publication regularly and on schedule?
3. Why do they want to read my publication?
4. What do I want to tell them?
5. What does my organization want me to tell them?
6. What do they want to read?
7. Is my message unique? Is it unavailable from any other source?
8. Am I delivering what I promise?
9. Do my graphics, art and layout suit editorial content, publication purpose and reader expectations?

Editors: plan now for 2019 PPA Awards Program

Editors should plan now on entering the 2019 PPA Awards Program by being on the lookout for material to enter from their newsletters published since June 2017. The 2019 program will be developed soon, after which editors will be notified of the timeframe to submit entries. The award categories are expected to be the same as in 2017.

First place and honorable mention awards in the following categories were included in the 2017 program: editorial, news story, feature story, headline, cartoon, photo, community service, creative writing, non-postal labor story, new editor, three overall excellence and two website awards.

To assist with selecting material to enter, following are guidelines used as part of the judging process.

BEST EDITORIAL:

1. Does the editorial present the case through effective argument?
2. Is the editorial clearly understood?
3. Is there a clear indication of honesty and sincerity?
4. Is there a balance in the presentation?
5. Is the editorial constructive; does it offer an alternative?

Note: An editorial is an article of comment or opinion.

BEST NEWS STORY:

1. Does the news story clearly report an event or events of a timely or current nature?
2. Does the headline capture your attention and accurately reflect the story?
3. Does the lead sentence accurately reflect the subject of the story?
4. Does the writer cover the subject without editorializing?
5. Does the news story hold your attention and interest?
6. Are the 5 W's covered?
7. Is the information accurate?

Note: A news story tells news and includes who, what, where, when, why and how. It is written in the "third person"—therefore, the word "I" is not used. There is no editorializing in the article, although the article might have a clear "point of view." Any opinions are included in quotes, with the person having said those words getting credit for having said them.

BEST FEATURE STORY:

1. Is the feature story an original story?
2. Does the feature story cover the subject in depth?
3. Is the headline effective and attention-getting and accurately reflect the story?
4. Is the story written without editorializing?

Note: A feature story is an in-depth article exploring background issues, personalities or activities of individuals, emphasizing the human or entertaining aspects of a situation.

BEST HEADLINE:

1. Does the headline capture your attention?
2. Does the headline show originality?
3. Does the headline accurately reflect the content of the article?

Note: Judge only the headline, not the article.

BEST CARTOON:

1. Does the cartoon display originality?
2. Does the cartoon capture your attention?
3. Is the cartoon effective in conveying a message?

BEST PHOTO:

1. Does the photo display originality?
2. Does the photo capture your attention?
3. How is the quality of the photo?
4. Has the photo been adequately cropped, if necessary?
5. Is the photo effective in conveying a message?

BEST COMMUNITY SERVICE:

1. Does the story adequately describe the member(s) or organization's contribution to the community?
2. Does the story cover the subject in depth?
3. Does the story hold your attention and interest?

BEST CREATIVE WRITING:

1. This category covers fiction, poetry, humor or any form of serious writing with a distinctively creative touch.
2. Does it have meaning? Is there a point or is it rambling words and letters?
3. Does it have relevance to postal or union life or related issues?

BEST NON-POSTAL LABOR STORY:

1. This category includes stories about non-postal labor union activity or non-postal

labor-oriented topics. (The story need not be a first-hand account.)

2. Is the subject of significance?
3. Is the article clearly written?
4. Is it clear why postal workers should be interested in the story?

HANK GREENBERG AWARD FOR BEST NEW EDITOR:

(Two Different Issues)

Besides the physical makeup and content, this award recognizes a new editor striving to produce a union publication that exemplifies dedication, sincerity and professionalism.

Named in honor of past PPA President Hank Greenberg, this award signifies the type of spirit, determination and leadership that Brother Greenberg displayed as president for over 17 years.

BEST WEBSITE:

1. Look for appealing design.
2. Quality of content and appropriateness of subject matter.
3. Ease of navigation.

OVERALL EXCELLENCE:

(Single Issue)

Best Professional and Non-Professional.

1. Look for planning, layout and overall design.
2. Adequate use of photos and/or graphics.
3. Quality of reproduction.
4. Good use of headlines.
5. Quality of proofreading.
6. Balance of content and appropriateness of subject matter.

Entries required

Consideration for awards is only given to the entries submitted to the Awards Committee. Publications that do not submit entries are not considered.

Dues must be paid

In accordance with the PPA Constitution, current editor members must pay their 2019 dues by February 1, 2019 in order to be eligible to participate in the Awards Program, while new editors have until May 1.

Awards Program material

Awards Program rules and entry forms will be made available upon completion of the Award Committee's work on the program.

Flashback 1973 . . .

For many years, member publications of the APWU National Postal Press Association have fulfilled their mission of communicating with their union brothers & sisters through the written word. In this issue we take a look at 1973 featuring a random selection of clips from a few of the hundreds of PPA affiliated local and state publications.

The Organizer, Poughkeepsie, New York: "If we don't start becoming a union as we should, then our purpose is senseless. We are a union; let's act like we belong to one. Try to get involved no matter how slight and a good way to start is by coming to the union meetings. If you have questions, ask them at the meetings, where others may hear and possibly benefit from them."

The Post Office Worker, Oshkosh, Wisconsin: "Is it legal for a supervisor to rent a post office box for the purpose of surveillance? May he go into the lobby while on the clock and peer thru the rented box to observe clerks working in the outgoing letter section?"

DMI News, Des Moines, Iowa: "What do you do when you have the flu? Working for the Des Moines, Iowa postal installation you face one of two choices: drop dead or report to work (probably for a ten hour day). Should you be burdened with adverse health and be on the Restricted Sick List, you bring an excuse from a doctor, like some little kid suspected of playing hooky from school, at

a cost to you of from five to fifteen dollars plus prescription costs, not to mention the embarrassment of requesting your attending physician to sign your 3971."

Ohio Postal Worker: "There can be no doubt as to what course of action is needed. If the APWU is to project its image as the true champion of postal worker injustices we must initiate and develop a strong bond of UNITY, beginning at the grass roots level and tenaciously working our way to the top; and when we arrive, we shall stand united and our voices shall ring out in unison and with authority; and the USPS will get the message."

Bison Bulletin, Buffalo, New York: "Try this on for size: when you find a circular from the corner supermarket hanging on your doorknob in a plastic bag, take it to the store and tell the manager, 'when you use the post office, I'll patronize your store'."

The Outlook, New Haven, Connecticut: "So you pay union dues. DO you type, or DO lettering, DO you march, DO you get involved, DO you write articles for our paper, DO you get involved with one of our many committees, DO you wear a steward badge, DO you attend the meetings, DO you serve as an officer? You see, we all pay union dues but we all don't DO."

The Omaha Post Script, Omaha, Nebraska: "It seems as if every day I get an order from management telling of new bosses

being detailed to new positions. Then, when they get into these new positions, it seems as if most of them feel like there has to be a lot of changes made or they are not doing the new jobs right. Many of these new bosses don't know what the contract even looks like, and yet, try to enforce new programs."

Indy Info, Indianapolis, Indiana: "I wish to call your attention to the fact that many employees disapprove of the treatment they are receiving from line foreman, but they hesitate to take the matter up with their foreman and the steward. I wish to advise you to always get a steward if you are not sure of what you are doing when you are grieved. Wise people normally get a lawyer because it is not wise to represent yourself."

Silver Notes, Reno, Nevada: "Some of you have very definite ideas about what should or should not be done within the union but are not willing to make the effort to do anything about them yourselves. If some of you feel you aren't being fairly represented or can do a better job why not consider running for an office and at least trying? As I have said quite often, I think most of you have much more potential than you are aware of or ever use. Many, through self-doubt, fear of failure, apathy or just plain laziness, never reach this full potential and so, short-change themselves. But I feel the only limits you have are the ones you put upon yourself. Idealistic? Maybe, but think about it."