

North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA)

Session #1

Editorial Basic

Handout

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“[News is] a first rough draft of history.” -- Philip L. Graham, American publisher, 1915-1963

Why good reporting is important for street paper survival?

- Charity only lasts so long
- Half of the mission of street papers is to inform the public about homeless issues
- No one will believe what's in the paper if the writing is bad or inaccurate
- Customers will keep coming back – for the news – to find out more

What is News?

- Who (Prominence or Consequence): Something new that happened to an important person or something new that affects majority of readers
- What (Oddity): Something new that is out of the ordinary (man bites dog)
- When (Timeliness): Something new that happened recently
- Where (Proximity): Something new that happened in your community

Where to Find News?

- Other news sources
 - Give a national story a homeless/poverty spin
 - Borrow story idea from other street paper and put a local spin on it
 - Look towards grassroots news source: alt weeklies, local blogs
- Notes from meetings – council hearings, homeless coalition meetings, etc
- Sources on the ground – vendors, leaders of other nonprofits
- Studies from poverty/housing related organizations
- Press releases from local non-profits, government, etc.

Reporting 101

- Research, Numbers:
 - Studies, Reports
 - General Statistics: Census, Homeless Counts
 - Websites, Other Articles
- Interviews
 - Those affected by situation
 - Those who caused the situation

- Experts with knowledge of situation (trade groups, professors, gadflies)
- On Site Coverage
 - Take descriptive notes of the scene
 - Talk to observers

Article Writing Basics

- Inverse Pyramid Structure
 - Put the most important information up top
 - End with extra details, forward looking information
- Lede
 - Anecdotal
 - Quote
 - Shocking fact
 - Straight hard news info
- Nut Graph
 - Tell reads why they should care to read further, how this could affect them
- Quotes
 - Use a variety of source
 - Space them out, no stacking quotes
 - Don't be afraid to paraphrase – just not too much
- Transitions
- Wrapping it Up
- Editorializing
- Fact Checking

“Put it before them briefly so they will read it, clearly so they will appreciate it, picturesquely so they will remember it and, above all, accurately so they will be guided by its light.”

-- Joseph Pulitzer, American publisher, 1847-1911