

Council report

Felix Editor - Philippa Skett

Handover

Initially I was never granted a handover. It was proposed that I would start in September, and Joe Letts (Felix Editor 2013/2014) was to finish his role in July.

Upon taking it upon myself to ask for a handover, I was offered one week paid in July to learn from Joe. This was wholly inadequate.

The handover was not monitored or organised by the Union in any way (unlike the other sabbs), and I was given a "handover wiki" which lacked the knowledge I subsequently needed to produce a newspaper. The Union staff said they would ensure that I get a handover document, which never materialised.

I do not blame my predecessor at all for this; it was not within his remit to ensure I was properly prepared, especially given the lack of handover time scheduled in the first place and the short notice in which my week was hastily organised.

My suggestion for my successor is to ensure a total of at least three weeks of overlap (at least) is granted to both myself and them between us to ensure they do not face the issues I had to, in basically learning to make a paper almost from scratch. Writing articles and setting out a section is one thing, but the step between that and sending a newspaper to print every week is an entirely different challenge.

Notwithstanding the handover with Joe, I feel there is a lack of training in place for the *Felix* Editor. Considering the funds the Union put in to my salary and the costs of printing, some investment in the Editor's training would go a long way. We are after all printing 2,000 newspapers every week.

Other student newspapers work around this by recruiting law students to work for the newspaper and help check the law. I have had no formal training in defamation or libel laws, so really it is only a matter of time before we are sued, to be honest.

Producing the first issue

Previous Editors before myself this year have had at least a month with their predecessors, during which they both produce the first issue of the year. I had to make mine without any supervision or aid from my predecessor, and only as the deadline approached (when time was limited) did the holes in my knowledge show.

This was further severely hindered by the delayed West Basement launch: we had only one computer which had the software needed to produce the newspaper. The first issue was sent to print after the deadline and came out on campus three days later than planned. (College staff thought this was intentional, though, so no harm done.)

Because it was a case of simply not knowing what I didn't know (if you follow), I was unable to prepare myself to produce the first issue adequately as the deadline approached. I spent 80 hours in the office in the week leading up to that deadline, and was ill and sleep deprived for the following fortnight because of this. I hope to

learn from this and ensure my successor does not go through the same, very steep, learning curve.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the marketing team, especially Rob Osborne and Shakira Hylton for their continued support and patience during these first few issues and during the month I was working in the Union on level 2.

They went above and beyond their remit to ensure any questions I had were answered and solve any issues I had with the design software we use.

The West Basement Redevelopment

It was proposed that more student volunteers would set up the basement and all of the technological facets without any professional aid. This was, to my knowledge, to cut down on costs, allow students to gain experience and understand how the system operates, and also to do the job in a shorter time frame. Such set up requirements spanned from a setting up a custom media hub network for the computers, imaging them, through to soldering wires and manual labour.

This may have worked, were it not for a delayed handover from the builders to the students. The stress it has placed on student volunteers has heavily outweighed these benefits. Students had to set up computers for my office, using technical abilities I do not have or was not elected to have, thus rendering me entirely dependant on their exceptional good will.

This lead to heightened stress levels and tension within the west basement student cohort, mostly due to time demands and poor communications.

We initially decided to miss out an issue due to these technological deficiencies with the West Basement redevelopment. However, fearing that missing an issue entirely would badly harm the reputation of the paper mine as a paid sabbatical, I decided to persevere.

This unintentionally added to the stress and pressure on these student volunteers who were too good natured to say no when asked if the set up could be done in time. I can only apologise for unknowingly asking so much of them. I do feel strongly however that someone else has to take responsibility for not managing the project adequately.

These issues have been rectified somewhat now, and relationships are no longer strained. However the technical set up still presents issues, and still is demanding time from student volunteers who now should be enjoying the basement instead of actively avoiding it because of the work that still needs to be done.

We are grateful for the new equipment we have been given, however the delay the basement redevelopment has suffered has made it difficult to not only enjoy my job, but to actually do it properly.

The Felix Team

Recruitment has gone very positively considering the issues we have faced. The rebranding has proved popular, as has the redesign of the paper. We have a mailing list of writers that is hundreds of names long, half of our section editor team are new recruits that are now adequately trained and I meet with them fortnightly to discuss the paper and any concerns we have.

I am planning to run workshops on editing, spelling and grammar and also investigative journalism skills to broaden their skillset, which will only be positive for the paper on a whole.

We still have gaps in our committee that need to be filled. This is on my long list of things to do.

Wednesday afternoons are our busiest, and the office is more akin to feeding time at the zoo as opposed to students making a paper as there is not enough computers, even with the media hub being used as an overflow room as not enough computers are set up in there.

Also, our prioritisation for using the media hub on a Wednesday still needs to be sanctified, although I can see this regrettably being an issue as ICTV and ICRadio are also most busy during that half-day everyone has off. Why this predictable issue wasn't addressed during this initial planning of the basement I cannot fathom.

Plans for the rest of the term

Produce six more issues without wanting to kill myself.

Acknowledgements

Big, amazing, thanks go to Luke Granger-Brown, Thomas Lim, Philip Kent, James Murphy and Cem Hurrell for going above and beyond their remit as volunteers and indeed as friends to help me produce the first few issues under such stressful conditions.

Despite being paid to make a paper myself, there would be no paper whatsoever without them and the countless other volunteers that have pulled together to get the basement sorted and the technical hitches smoothed out to ensure I can still manage to get 35 hours of sleep a week, despite still working 60 hours or more.

I may be on council as a voting member by the time this meeting takes place

But I forgot to do a manifesto or upload a photo, so delete as applicable:

I am now a voting member of council/ I still come to council just to live tweet about Chris Kaye