

An Essay about the Unexpected Obstacles of Creating a Journal

Over the past few years, student-led journals have been on the rise in both terms of quantity and popularity due to the unique perspective they provide as a learning tool. The newly created journal Cultural and Technology Studies (CTS) journal, CTRL+ALT+DH from the University of Guelph, gives the students the opportunity to get involved in multiple aspects of the journal creation process. To create this journal five different teams needed to be made: the editors, web design, design and branding, promo and marketing, and admin-communications. Students were able to pick two of these roles to fill and learn about, as well as specific tasks that they needed to get done throughout the semester to put the journal together. However, as with any program or project just starting out, there were many unexpected obstacles that popped up along the way. This brief essay will showcase some of these issues, as well as how the team was able to overcome them in some form or another. The main issues this essay will cover are the lack of submissions, the variety of backgrounds the different team members came from and completing an ISSN application.

Starting off with the most glaring issue of the bunch, this was the first time CTRL+ALT+DH was being published, meaning that most CTS students were unaware it even existed before the marketing for the journal began in mid September. Posters, Instagram posts, open houses and presentations in CTS classes were made and held to advertise a call for submissions. The theme for this issue of the journal was “Pop Culture in the 2000s”. Despite all the work put in by the promo and marketing team, the journal ended up with only one submission, which is not enough to run an issue of the journal. The team needed to come together and analyze what went wrong with the journal submissions as well as how to fix the

current issue the team had been preparing for all semester. Starting with what went wrong, there were a few possible contributing factors. The main issue that was brought up by the team was the theme for a few reasons. To start, the first issue of a journal having a theme at all, especially one as specific as “Pop Culture in the 2000s”, might have been a poor decision since it should have been broader so that students could get a chance to see what it would be like to submit to a journal. As well, the theme itself is fairly specific in its focus, meaning that it would be unlikely for higher year CTS students to have something relevant to the topic already created and ready for submission. This means that students would likely have to create a whole new project from scratch if they wanted to submit something to the journal. With how busy student life can be normally, asking possible submitters to create something new just to have a chance for it to be published is a lot to ask. Another contributor to the lack of submissions could have been the amount of time students were given to submit their work. As previously mentioned, advertising began in mid to late September, but the submissions were due in mid October. This left less than a month for students to submit their project, which does not even take into consideration how students have classes and other responsibilities to worry about that will take their time away from a possible submission. Because of this, the team concluded that the deadline was too close to when the advertising campaign began and thinks it should be a bigger timeframe for future volumes. The way the team went about remedying the lack of submissions is fairly simple. In this volume of the journal, the team all decided to create their own submissions and change the theme from pop culture in the 2000s to a how to write a journal. Some projects look at the process of writing the journal while others analyze some of the successes and failures the team had while making the journal. While unorthodox for a journal to be filled with submissions from

those who are making it, it makes sense with the newly selected theme and the limited options available for the students at the time.

Since this is one of the first times this class has run, as well as not being sure on what the requirements for registering in should be, the team working on the journal was very diverse in terms of what programs they were in and their level of experience with the CTS program. There were a few people in their fourth year of a CTS major, while some others were in completely unrelated programs like Music and Business Management or Creative Writing and had never taken a CTS course before. While this was not exclusively a setback, it did create some problems, especially early in the semester when things were just getting started. For instance, there was a general confusion on what needed to be known for this course in order to properly produce the journal by the end of the semester. This required a few classes for the professor to clear things up and ensure that everyone knew what was necessary, which could have been time spent on the journal or advertising for it. This could have led to a longer timeframe for projects to be submitted, meaning that the lack of submissions may not have been as big a problem as it was. However, there were also benefits to the diversity in majors for the project, such as many people being able to see one task from multiple angles and bringing their own individual talents to the project. The main case of this is how the class was split up into the different job groups and how they could uniquely contribute to each task. One person in the promo and marketing team could organize and plan for an open house while another could make advertising posts on Instagram to inform students about the call for submissions while another one still could go around to CTS classrooms and inform people in-person about the journal. As the course grows in the upcoming years, the requirements to enter the course could change greatly, but at least for

this semester the group was able to come together in a unique way that allowed everyone to share their talents and abilities in a meaningful manner.

One last issue to touch on for the journal that is a bit more specific is trying to acquire an ISSN number for the journal. An ISSN, or an International Standard Serial Number, is a number given to certain types of publications such as magazines, newspapers, or journals that is mandatory for them to be recognized in the legal deposit. To put it very simply, it is something that legitimizes the journal. Before starting this journal, several students were unaware of the ISSN even being something a journal would require, and those that were aware of it figured it would be a simple procedure. It started off simple enough, with the student who was responsible with acquiring it filling out an ISSN application form and then submitting it. This soon took a turn for the worse though, as the student had to email the team behind the application process for around a month trying to work around several difficulties that kept popping up. This persisted until the news that the original plan for the journal was not going to happen, and then the application was suspended from there. As for how the student faced the issue, ensuring that everything stayed organized and up to date in terms of both the discussion with the ISSN issues as well as their other duties to their teams was critical. It could be easy to get distracted by one thing or another and then forget to be on top of the ISSN and figure out the best course of action moving forward.

In conclusion, there can be many issues that arise when it comes to creating a journal, especially if it is a group's first time attempting anything like it. A lack of submissions, people not all having the same level of experience, or having trouble getting an ISSN number are just a few of the many issues a project like this can face. It is clear that a combination of planning and

flexibility is required for a project like this to work, and hopefully this essay outlined a few issues for any future teams working on a journal to look out for or avoid. Of course, this is a new course in general, so it is always possible that some of the logistical issues could be mitigated over time as everyone becomes more comfortable with the formula or new ones could pop up as it develops.