

## THE QUEEN'S JOURNAL ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

Monday, October 19, 2020

### **Motion #1 – Call for Chair nominees**

Names forward: Christine Mao, Sonya Patel

An election for the Chair will be held at the next J-Board meeting.

### **Motion #2 – Proposal to add a Queen's Journal Alumni representative to J-Board**

### **Motion #3 – Proposal to add Steve Serviss, Editor in Chief of the Kingston Whig-Standard, as a representative to J-Board**

Nensi informs Editor in Chief and Managing Editor that these motions should be discussed outside of the scope of Journal Board.

Motions #2 and 3 are not considered further in this meeting.

### **Journal Reports**

Huizinga: I'm going to start off by talking a bit about Campus Catchup, which is our newsletter. This was implemented in Volume 147, and we are continuing with it in Volume 148. We send it out once a week. We've gained quite a few subscribers since May 1, and this is largely because unlike last year, this year, we sent out a newsletter every week in the summer. The current number of subscribers that we have is 681. We gained 42 new subscribers in May, five in June, 23 in July, 19 in August, 26 in September, and so far this month, 39. That's a total of 154 subscribers since May. We've had 20 unsubscribes since May 1. Those are pretty good numbers, and we're really happy with them. Most of the unsubscribes were in May in June. This can be expected every year as students graduate and staff leave paper. The same can be expected in the reverse in terms of new staff signing up and their families and friends. We also noticed an uptick in subscribers following the release of the AMS newsletter, which had information in it about our newsletter. Our goal for the year is 800 subscribers, and we're pretty on track for that. We've also been able to sell a few ads in the newsletter, turning the digital product into an opportunity for revenue, which was discussed quite heavily in J-Board in Volume 147. We are hoping to make that more of a regular thing.

Moving on to *The Queen's Journal* website, we've made a few changes: we added a 'breaking news' banner to the top of the homepage. We were really excited to add this, it didn't cost any money. When we have a breaking story, it appears across the top of the homepage in a big red banner, and if you click on it, it'll take you to that story, which is improving our

pageviews. We added two sidebars for our two new podcasts, so *The Scramble* and *How To Be a Student* appear on the right side of the screen on the website. Further changes we're hoping to make is a link at the top left of the site that says 'anonymous tip form,' and a pop-up box to subscribe to the newsletter when you go onto the website. A couple of our competitors have, this *The Fulcrum* and *The Ubysey*, so we're helping to add those to our website.

Marketing: we tried boosting one post on Facebook from August 8 to 10. It was our story about Stolen by Smith. We were able to reach 5392 people with 511 link clicks, the total cost was \$20 and paid for by the Editor in Chief. The engagement increase was about threefold, so in transitioning next year, we'd like to have like a specific budget set aside for boosting social media posts and having a structure in place for that kind of fund, because we thought it was a nice improvement for pageviews. Also, ideally, down the line *The Journal* can have a Marketing Coordinator who can take care of these things.

Advancement: according to the QJ operating guidelines created by the AMS Board of Directors and agreed to by QJ staff in Volume 147, *The Journal's* required to raise \$10,000 for an endowment fund. On September 18, the Editor in Chief, Managing Editor, and Business Manager met with two representatives from Queen's Advancement. This meeting was originally intended to discuss the year ahead and different fundraising ideas we had. During the meeting, however, the Advancement representatives informed us that an endowment fund had never been approved to assist for *The Journal*, resulting in serious complications for both fundraising for Volume 148 as well as any funds that were raised in Volume 147. According to Advancement, receiving donor funds for the endowment fund is a violation of Advancement policy, because the fund is not advertised on our giving page and does not qualify as fulfilling the mandate of the advancement office.

Advancement asked us, myself, Matt, and Chris, to allow them to communicate with the Board of Directors about the endowment fund in the year ahead. We informed them that we are required to raise \$10,000 this year, so they are aware. We followed up with Advancement in an email on September 30 to ask how things are going, as we are naturally becoming very anxious about meeting fundraising goals for the year. Because of the error with the endowment fund last year, we are still not approved to start raising funds this year. Advancement did not respond to that email. However, they did respond to another email we sent them on October 5 looking for an update, stressing the importance of finding a resolution. They confirmed they had been in contact with the AMS Board of Directors, and they asked that we let them navigate this with the AMS and promised to inform us when they had an updates. Advancement added it did not perceive this year's management team being held accountable for any delay in fundraising. We are invested in *The Journal* beyond our one year as management team and are very concerned about the implications of the situation on *The Journal's* ability to fundraise both this year and in the future. We were hoping to set a precedent this year for fundraising during the pandemic. As it stands, we've not heard from either Queen's Advancement or the AMS Board of Directors about the status of QJ fundraising and the endowment fund. While Advancement said it doesn't foresee any consequences for this year's QJ management team, we are struggling to take that as confirmation considering the operating guidelines are imposed on us by the Board of Directors, not Advancement, and should we fail to meet them we could be put back on financial probation.

Long story short, we have no updates, although we just received a message from Lynn Perry saying she has an update for us.

Parry: [Issues with Zoom connection]

Nensi: Rachel and Matt, Lynn informed me, so I can bring you up to speed on where she is at. So, Queen's Advancement reached out to Lynn McFarland, and the whole issue is that the purpose is just muddled. But there's an easy internal fix to it. I'd also just reiterate to you guys that the agreement that we put in place with Meredith and Ian, was, yes, that Queen's Advancement will assist you guys, but you will also be doing your own advancement and your own planning and your own events. In fact, I believe that we actually approved an individual to hire on your staff for that purpose. So we're not going to be punitive. There's obviously been a processed error, but we are going to be realistic in that it is mid-October, we have significant runway room throughout the rest of the year, and if consistently, we're not able to meet the \$10,000 target, all we're going to expect is that your team and Queen's Advancement is continually working to the end of your term through the end of April. And as long as we're seeing that, but you just can't meet the \$10,000, you know, it's a pandemic, we're reasonable. But I just want to stress that the work effort is from both sides, it is not just on Advancement. That makes sense?

Huizinga: When we met with Queen's Advancement, they made it really clear that we needed their approval to start raising funds. Are you saying that we don't need that approval?

Nensi: Well you need their approval to raise the funds because the funds go through their portal, obviously. So if you need them to set it up, but what I'm getting at here is that you can go out and start to engage your own alumni in your own way, prepping them for the fact that this donation request is going to come once this is all sorted. It isn't that we have to wait and we're just oiling five months at this point.

Parry: I've arrived back.

Nensi: Lynn, I just took Rachel through the fact that there was just a mixup in terms of purpose, and that between yourself, Lynn M., and Advancement, we were going to sort it out, and it wasn't on the QJ team to go sort that specific issue.

Parry: So that's been done, and we're correcting for last year, because they were quite concerned that the purpose was different than what had gone out to the donors and represented. So they're okay with our methodology for correcting that. And then we've got what we're going to do this year. The Advancement team will be reaching out to you, the Editors, and we'll continue with your application to make sure you are approved to go forward. And at the same time, Lynn and I will be preparing something that will go to the Board on your behalf so that the purpose of what we're trying to do this year to raise money can go to a restricted fund. Because otherwise it must be used in the course of the operations. I won't waste any of your time right now, but I was going

to reach out to each of you and explain this. It just took place this afternoon. They will be reaching out so you can get a lot of your programming done.

Huizinga: Our Fundraising Rep., Sonya, has been connecting with alumni and doing all that kind of groundwork. So it's not too bad. We were just very concerned about being able to go ahead and start acting on that because when we did meet with Advancement, they seemed very upset about the situation. So that's good to hear. Good News. Thanks for updating us on that. If anyone else has questions or comments about that, we'll save it for the question period. Otherwise, we will move on to the Managing Editor's report.

Scace: I'm going to start off with the podcast. For anybody who's unfamiliar, we released two podcasts in September: *The Scramble* and *How To Be a Student*. *The Scramble* has come out almost weekly since we started the semester. We've been viewing this as a good supplement for weekly print, as we've been biweekly for the second year in a row now. It's given us more time on off-weeks to record in the middle of the week, our two video editors have been splitting up the two podcasts. And they've been really impressive, they've been keeping their workload under control and producing a really professional-sounding podcast; we've been really happy with that. In terms of numbers, *The Scramble* had four episodes come out so far, the most recent one we had 57 views last time I checked. It was only published a few days ago. We're starting to see a trend that the more we publish, the more engagement we get. That's been really encouraging. *How To Be a Student* has three episodes, we had our third one come out yesterday. It's been less regular, we're planning to do it bi-weekly, so it's been a little slower to grow, but it's been a really good opportunity for people to contribute on staff. The idea is that this year will lay the foundation so we actually have a good listenership, and then hopefully in the coming years, we'll be able to build off of this really strong foundation.

Moving on to website analytics, it's been a really good year for us in terms of numbers since May 1. This is from this morning: we have 694,923 pageviews, which is 63.45% better than this time last year. At this time, last year, we had around 425,000 views. We attribute most of that to our summer; traditionally, we usually just have three issues come out, and we get a big bump on those three weekends, but after that things really quiet down. But our New Editor, Claudia, she was absolutely incredible. This summer, she was publishing pretty much at least three times a week. So from May 1 August 31, we had almost 416,000 pageviews compared to the 213,000 they had the year before, so that was 95% better than the previous summer. Just for comparison's sake, we don't know exactly what our competitors average, but we've been on *The Varsity's* website and their business page says they average around 100,000 a month. So we're keeping steady and doing really well in that regard. I think every news outlet has seen a bump since COVID hit, we can definitely credit that. We're reporting more engagement, despite unfortunately not seeing as much pickup from the business side, because of how the local economy is shaking out. What we found this summer was that just by having stories posted once every two or three days, you just have people coming to the website naturally. That's what got us above that high watermark where we were consistently getting 2000 people on the site a day, and now the school year has started, and that number is a lot higher because people are actually engaged with Queen's, so we're getting served more than 3,000 a day.

In terms of social media, this is relevant considering everything has been removed this year due to COVID. Facebook is still far and away our most effective way of reaching students. Most of our page views still come from organic searches and directly from the website, but under that, the social media circle comes third. Facebook accounts for 80% of our page views in terms of social media, and next is Twitter, which is around 10%. I think we've been doing a really strong job of keeping our Instagram account consistent this year, publishing consistently has been really helpful for us. We've had people come to us for story tips, ideas for the paper, through sending us DMs on Instagram, which didn't happen before, a lot more dialogue between us and our readers. We added a link to our Instagram bio, which has been visited nearly 2000 times. And then lastly, we've been running a TikTok. It's hard to tell exactly how much traffic that gets us because it doesn't directly go to our website, but we've had really, really strong numbers on the TikTok from the ones we've done on dining halls in residence at the beginning of the year, I think 24,000 plays.

In terms of the paper, we continued print from last year, we're doing bi-weekly issues. We've been placing most of them in residences, and in most of the residences we go into, there are no leftovers. The ARC and CoGro spots have been pretty light in terms of traffic, so we haven't been seeing as much pickup from there, though I think we still need to keep those up because that's where non-residence students go the most on campus. Juniper Cafe, they let us leave the papers there, and they've also been gone by the end of two weeks, which is really encouraging. I think that's something that we need to think about going forward, we've been trying to get into local shops more consistently over this past year, but a lot of them aren't taking us because they don't want to have a bunch of touch points [due to COVID]. We reached out to Balzac's and they said ordinarily they would have let leave the paper, but they're throwing out their *Whig-Standards*. So it's when it's safer, I think that's something that future editors should consider, because I think I think there's a really large local appetite for *The Journal* that we haven't really explored before. Last thing, in terms of the paper itself and its visual identity, we've been going for visual-heavy front pages, so big illustrations or large photos, and that's been doing well. Last year, they saw the Climate Issue do really well in terms of pickup rate, and this year, we had another climate issue come out, and it did really well too. That's been our brand identity this year, bigger front pages less using less words. That is it for me, we can move on to our Business Manager.

Mao: In regard to sales, as previously mentioned by Raechel and Matt it's been slowing down for print, but print is still a huge chunk of our revenue, it's two-thirds of our revenue. So far, we've made about \$1500 for web advertising sales, and the newsletter has picked up to \$100 for September, which is on track with our budget, a little below what we budgeted for the month. Print accounts for \$4500. The decrease in print as sales is a bit concerning because we make most of our revenue from print. Web sales are ticking up for the past few months. With winter term coming up, and how everything is moving online, I'm still a bit concerned about how students are going to be moving back home or businesses are still wary about advertising with us. In regard to operating expenses, we're still on track with our budget for the past month, we've spent about \$8700 but we budgeted for \$11,000, so we're \$2000 below our operating expense budget. In total for our sales we made about \$6200 prior to tax the past month and a half so far.

## **AMS Reports**

Samoyloff: Hi, everyone. Very exciting to be in our first J-Board meeting of the year. Quick forward. So far *The Journal* has done such an incredible job in improving the service and reaching new levels of engagement. Big congratulations to the current team. I'll keep my report pretty brief today, one major thing to report is just an update to the QJ budget this year. This year, we were able to secure a mandatory fee for the publication which is really fantastic news for the service. In the budgeting process this year, we estimated enrollment of 16,610 undergraduate students and about 4500 SGPS, I believe, and this assumption was based on uncertainty of students continuing their education this year under a pandemic environmental context. So with that enrollment number in the summer, we budgeted around \$152,000 in Student Activity fees just for AMS numbers, and I think 15,000 for SGPS students. So already pretty significantly higher than the actual from the last year as well which is very exciting. A formal budgeting update is going to be taking place over the next few weeks, where we'll reassess the student numbers. We received an updated count of how many students are actually enrolled in classes this year, an updated enrollment number of 19,284 students, and I'm waiting on the confirmation of SGPS students, but I think that number is going to be relatively close to our estimated number. The math here is about \$176,000, about \$24,000 more than we were expecting from AMS students alone. Hopefully in the next monthly meeting, I'll be able to kind of report a better understanding of the funding. I think that's all for me on a more operational lens, but happy to take any questions during the question period.

## **Statements by Members/Discussion Period**

Huizinga: One of the major things we want to do this year is update Journal Policy specifically concerning our coverage of and relationships with BIPOC students. We've had a few meetings with our Features Editor, Aysha, who has a number of ideas about how *The Journal* can change in this regard. We think one of the ways we can formalize that change is in our policy so that it's actually there for future editors to go to, because we can't just always count on certain staff members coming forward every year and asking for change.

Scace: There are a few minor things we need to do, like address Section 12, Summer Internships, and Contracts and Agreements has some pretty outdated information. But that's more to do with what positions there used to be, and ones that aren't still around. One thing we'd like to have in this new policy, and something we can chat about, is a clear policy on interviewee rights and abilities. Right now, as it stands on our website, we don't really have much that we can use to communicate with interviewees about rules of interviews. We've seen that a few times this year, people having misunderstandings about what they're expected to be given and what is supposed to happen in the interview process, like if we're required to provide questions to them in advance. I think one thing we can do is have a guideline, just in terms of what *The Journal* is required to do for interviews, and that sort of will take the weight off both the interviewee and the reporter, because everyone comes in with different levels of experience. There can be gaps,

miscommunications, and if we just had some written note, I think this would be something that we could all fall back on and provide to anyone who wants to interview.

Huizinga: One of the other major policy changes we're hoping to make, like in the actual policy on our website, not the Board bylaws, is the criteria for anonymity. We have a very traditional journalistic criteria for anonymity on our website that we've been using, but I think criteria for anonymity has sort of changed over the past decade or so. Current criteria will account for physical danger, we want our policy to account for social dangers. An example that was used was an Opinion published about racism in the Smith School of Business. Apparently, after the publication of this article, the author was harassed, ostracized, just completely targeted to be frank. And it's because, at that time, currently, we don't have anonymity criteria which accounts for that kind of social danger. We think more BIPOC students would be willing to engage with *The Journal* and write these opinion pieces if they had that safety added. But as it stands, it's not in policy. While this is something we've been doing this year, we want it to be in policy so future editors can fall back on that. Does anyone have any feedback on ideas? We know that any changes to general policy have to go through the Journal Editorial Board. What I'm thinking is we'll have these actually written out and prepared for the next J-Board meeting to get feedback at that point, and then we'll take it to Journal Editorial Board once it has J-Board approval. Then we'll have a Journal Editorial Board vote and then ideally, we can go and add any changes to the website. We have a lot of long term goals for *The Journal*, but this year specifically, we have seven specific goals: set up Equity Advisory Board, set up sustainable system for funding *Whig* internships (grants), policy changes, implement new positions for Volume 149, redesign *Journal* staff training so it is specifically structured for Volume 149, resolve fundraising issue so it is not a problem inherited by Vol. 149 editors, and continue growing our digital products. The first one is to set up a BIPOC Equity Advisory Board, which sounds like a lot, but it's one of the main goals we want to work on over the course of the year. This was a suggestion by our Features Editor.

Scace: We chatted about this last week, we also talked in the summer. I think just based on the budget, this is something we probably wouldn't be able to compensate people for this year, but something we could budget for in following years. And the feedback we got on that was that if we're transparent about the commitment, and was what we're asking people to do, meaning this would be volunteer work, and then meeting those expectations in practice, we see that as being better than not having anything at all. We recognize *The Journal* has been a very traditionally white space, and that means there are a lot of blind spots in the way we cover things. I think if we have an advisory board, this process is formalized instead of having people coming to us at random points. It's a strong foundation in terms of how we build *The Journal* year to year. And if we have an issue on staff, or like something happens, usually this ends up falling on one or two people because *The Journal* recently has not had many BIPOC staff. We'd like to set something up to make it more of a group process and have more internal accountability. Having better through-lines to the BIPOC community at Queen's, it doesn't require people to come to us, we're sort of extending the offer and then hopefully we have more people apply to *The Journal* in the first place. It's more of an institutional foundation we want to set up with this. We'd like to hear a

ton of feedback and ways we can set this up to make it kind of soundproof but yeah, that's what we're thinking,

Huizinga: If we're visualizing, it would be something like three BIPOC students at large who meet probably once a month to go over maybe something we're reporting on or want to report on, just to get like equitable advice on how to do that. Also, kind of an on-call for any issues that emerge throughout the year that concern BIPOC students that we're not aware of because, like Matt said, there's a lot of blind spots when you're not BIPOC and you're in charge of the Queen's journal. This is something we'd really like to see, again, volunteer this year, maybe in the future it can become an honorarium position. We know this has to go through a whole slew of formal processes and voting and approval and everything, but again, this is a discussion period, this is an idea, something like we would like to see happen in the future.

Nensi: As we go through all this, I'm starting to take some pause. The framework we had for the relationship between the Board and QJ that worked on with Meredith and Ian last year, this is your prerogative, but you guys are substantially changing that. And perhaps rightfully for the better. So all good, but this is gonna cause some headaches, and I think we can get away from it by requiring less Board approval. For example, the Board shouldn't need to approve who sits on J-Board because, to put it bluntly, I don't care because that's your job to care about. I think we might need to turn this into a bigger conversation about how we can support you to give you the autonomy to get some of this stuff done. That's where I want to take the conversation. I just want to make sure that we're really really tight on ensuring that items related to employees, pay, financial risk, anything insurance-related with *The Journal* has to come to the Board. I just want to make sure that we're delineating between them. But yeah, let's have those conversations.

Huizinga: You are right, we are restructuring J-Board. If you were on J-Board last year, you would probably notice that this is not how it went. But I do agree with you, Jordan, it would be really great if we could get J-Board to a place where it does need a little bit like less approval and has more autonomy towards creating these changes. I think that might have been one of the issues, preventing QJ from making such systemic changes in the past, because it does cause a lot of headaches and that can be a bit of a deterrent. Do you have any ideas on how we would go about getting more autonomy for *The Journal* in these cases?

*Nensi, Huizinga, and Scace are to set up a meeting to discuss this further.*

Huizinga: In that case, we don't need to go through every single thing on our discussion lists. In terms of making things sustainable for the *Whig* internship, we think applying for grants in February and March would be ideal, because what happened this year was, we could have applied for grants, but the *Whig* pulled their funding in April after the deadline to apply for grants. Once the new editors are elected in February, we can hopefully start working with them right off the bat to figure out what kind of grants are available for the internships. We talked to some other student journalists who have successfully used grants in situations like these, so we know it's possible. We have a couple new position ideas for next year for Volume 149, these would be honorarium positions: a Podcast Manager and a Social Media Coordinator, these are positions that you would find that pretty much any other student newspaper in Canada.



Depending on the state of our finances, if it just comes down to reallocating the budget that we already have for honorarium, then that's something we can do, we really think these positions should exist, especially if the mindset for QJ is improving its digital presence and digital abilities, we definitely need to have these two positions, if not next year, at least the year after. Those are the seven main things. We also have long term goals, but we can share all that with you in an email. Does anyone have any questions?

Samoyloff: I have a small thought on that earlier conversation about that new position of having people check in as BIPOC representations of the student body. My one initial concern is that role might become substantial for those students. Maybe I'm not the best person to speak on this either, but my worry is that they might get a lot of that pressure and a lot of the load, and maybe we should be considering other ways we can support them, just making sure that we're checking in on them and not overwhelming them, because to me, it reminds me of how the SIC within the AMS used to operate where in previous years, everyone would come to that one person and say, "Can you check this status that I made? Is this okay, does it have your approval on it?" That kind of thing. And it became a very exhausting role for that Commissioner. So maybe considering, I don't know, having a good outline of what that role is, or making sure that they're always going to be very supported within *The Journal*, that kind of thing, just something to consider.

Huizinga: That's a really good point, and that's actually one of the reasons why we really want this Equity Board, because that just individually falls on the BIPOC staff members that we have right now, which is pretty unsustainable. That's why we thought it'd be good to have more than one person on this board and eventually have it be an honorarium position. Something we've done with some of our staff, or one of our staff members, is we found her a BIPOC journalist mentor. That might be something we'd be able to explore, like can we find BOPIC alumni to kind of work with these people on this board, so it's just not just on them, have real grownups who are actually out there in the field experiencing these things. That's definitely a good point we will keep in mind as we try and structure this going forward.

## **Question Period**

Huizinga: Does anyone have any questions right now?

Nensi: I have one question for Christine. I was having a bit of trouble following your numbers, but that's okay. Our site shows that the budget for you guys for this year for revenue across all your advertising lines is just under \$41,000? I'm just honestly wondering, with COVID, everything going on, what's the outward projection? And is \$41,000 reasonable? Or is it not even reasonable now that we know what the year kind of looks like?

Mao: Yeah, with the winter coming, it just doesn't look feasible for \$41,000 projection, but if I keep up at like a \$6000, \$5000 rate per month, I may possibly reach it. But with winter coming, I feel like it might be cut in half. Since other cities are closing down, like Toronto and Ottawa, there may be a look at how people may be coming to Kingston, and maybe we may have a boom with businesses still open. I will try my best, but we have to discuss whether or not \$40,000 is

feasible or not. And if there's leeway, we can see how we may be able to continue our operations, even if we don't reach that target.

Nensi: Definitely wanted to get a sense of where you all were at, because I know that July was a very different way than where we're headed towards December. Let's just stay in touch on that issue. I know that donations is a separate issue, and, and there's gonna be a couple coming down the pipe as well, so let's stay in tune with all of them. I think we can be flexible, right? We all get that we're in a pandemic is what I'm trying to say. Don't take too much stress on, do your best, but it shouldn't be something you're up all night worrying about.

Huizinga: Does anyone have any other questions and comments at this time?

Huizinga: To summarize, we had Chris and Sonya come forward with their names for Board Chair, we will have a vote at the next board meeting to elect a Board Chair. And Jordan, we will schedule a meeting with you to talk about some of our other ideas that are kind of outside the scope of this Board. Thank you so much for coming. Our students at large who applied and are on the Board, we're very happy to have you, and if you ever have any ideas about anything that we're saying that you might not want to voice at the board, feel free to send us an email with any thoughts you might have about *The Journal*, or what we're saying in general, we'd be happy to hear your feedback and input.

Scace: Thanks, everyone.

**Adjournment of Journal Board**