

Bridging the Gap Between New-to-Journalism and Experienced Students:
The Creation of Interactive AP Style Writing Resources

Submitted by
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Abstract

This Honors College creative project explores the knowledge gap between journalism students who entered the major with prior knowledge of journalistic writing and Associated Press (AP) Style and students with no prior knowledge. The project aims to find out what new-to-journalism students are struggling with by speaking to Oakland University professors and then creating worksheets, style guides, and more to supplement journalism coursework. This thesis consists of creating a set of resources for journalism students that can be accessible to anyone online and through the Department of Communication, Journalism, and Public Relations, and the Oakland University Writing Center (OUWC). Interactive resources do not currently exist, and no one has extensively explored which writing components struggling journalism students may be missing. “Interactive” means that students will receive worksheet-styled guides for journalistic writing, digest them, react to them, and then *interact* with them, a process that engages students more by going one step further than a “stand and present” teaching model (DePietro 27). The expected benefit is that new-to-journalism students will be better equipped to write in the field, and the resources could serve as a reference that journalists can interact with worldwide.

Bridging the Gap Between New-to-Journalism and Experienced Students:
The Creation of Interactive AP Style Writing Resources

When students begin their college journeys, many start at different levels of competence in their field. Concerning journalism specifically, students are not all at the same level of familiarity when beginning introductory journalism classes. Students are classified into two categories of understanding: new-to-journalism students, meaning those who enter the college major with little to no understanding of the writing style, and students with prior experience. Because JRN 2000: Introduction to Journalism classes have various curricula, all students do not spend the same amount of time learning Associated Press (AP) Style, the writing style used by journalists, public relations specialists, and some communication workers to quickly communicate. To assist students who struggle with journalistic writing and experienced students who sometimes need refreshers, I created comprehensive resources that aim to make users more comfortable with the writing style to assist writers in journalism, public relations, communications, and similar classes, along with others in the journalism field. This paper will highlight the process of creating one of the first interactive sets of journalistic writing resources, and a critical discussion will assert that these resources will help improve student satisfaction with AP Style writing and effectively strive to close the gap between new-to-journalism and experienced students.

Literature Review

AP Style is defined as the writing style used by journalists, PR specialists, and others in the journalism field. In journalism, it is widely understood that the best way to learn AP Style is by practicing it; however, this idea does not often translate to teaching college courses. A 2017 study by Lane and Johnston supported this claim. They found that in class section titles that

included the word “writing,” only 13% of journalism writing courses stated they would be teaching writing during the class (317). However, 58% of the journalism courses, along with 75% of the public relations classes, emphasized that writing is important to the discipline (317). The low percentages in this study demonstrated that many college journalism classes are not teaching the writing basics, even though they say writing is important for students to know.

Various writing resources exist for journalism students, such as organizations, blogs, writing support websites, and more. Some examples of these are compiled lists of journalism-based organizations that students can join to gain more writing experience and reference for help (“Resources for Students”), or blogs such as the Society of Professional Journalists’ website, the “Journalist’s Toolbox.” Students with specific AP Style questions also consult search engines to find lists that offer answers. Style entries from the *AP Stylebook* are easily accessible via the stylebook, Purdue University's Online Writing Lab website (OWL), the Oxford University Press, and other style guides. Along with the AP Style entries, the Purdue OWL offers an introduction to journalistic writing that explains why principles apply, how to organize stories, and how to write leads (“Journalism and Journalistic Writing”). These resources are helpful for those who are new to journalistic writing, but they, at many points, do not address collegiate, new-to-journalism writers.

Currently, the materials that are most like the interactive resources created with this project are AP Style quizzes and exercises. The Oxford University Press, as a companion to its textbook *Reporting for the Media*, 10th edition, offers AP Style quizzes on abbreviations, capitalization, numerals, punctuation, etc.; includes two non-interactive style quizzes; and has additional readings for students (“AP Style Resources”). There are, of course, also textbooks for students taking introductory journalism classes, such as Tim Harrower's *Inside Reporting*. Unlike

the previously mentioned resources, this project will provide more interactive and immersive ways to learn how to write journalistically than those offered online, especially for new-to-journalism students. Interactive learning exercises have been shown to be most effective when combining reaction and interaction, meaning content is “both informative and experiential” (DePietro 28-29). Worksheets that allow AP Style learners to digest writing principles and then interact with them will match this finding by offering more support than what an online quiz or information on a website can provide.

Teaching writing interactively can be compared to helping collegiate writers develop new writing skills. In a journal article about learning to write through interactive instruction, Cheri Williams states, “The purpose of interactive writing is to mediate students’ understanding of what it means to write” (523). By making students write and teaching in a how-to way, students gradually become more comfortable with the instruction and the teacher can gradually reduce their support. At first, instruction done for the study on the in-class writing support offered by an experienced primary-grade teacher to her 18 students was mostly completed by the teacher, and over time student engagement and the complexity of the work increased (Williams 524). At the end of each lesson Williams studied, teachers used specific statements to ensure students knew how to apply the lessons to their writing (528). The students engaged in evidenced-based practices and learned beginner to higher level writing skills, with the teacher supporting “their appropriation of the self-regulatory behaviors that can promote independent writing and higher quality writing” (Williams 530). This study pertained to young, developing writers, but the same practice can apply to writers learning new genres. By starting AP Style writing resources at a beginner level with lessons on the foundational elements like lead writing, story organization, and quoting from sources, coupled with examples to get users doing their own writing, learners

can slowly move toward more advanced exercises. They can become more comfortable with the writing style and less reliant on instruction.

Writing center theory provides evidence that interactive writing resources for specific genres will be effective and well-received by students. It can be argued that writing centers exist to teach students writing or improve their skillsets, thus, the pedagogy can translate to creating genre-based resources on writing. In what is considered the most widespread journal article on writing center pedagogy, Stephen North defines the purpose of a writing center and how they can best serve students' needs. He defines writing as a process but says that the "writing-as-a-process" definition is not always the most effective explanation because students all have their own processes and it can't be defined in one singular way (North 438). The difference among types of writers come down to timing and motivation. As North says, "[N]ot everyone's interest in writing, their need or desire to write or learn to write, coincides with the fifteen or thirty weeks they spend in writing courses — especially when, as is currently the case at so many institutions, those weeks are required" (442). In short, students' needs do not always coincide with the writing courses they take, so if a student takes JRN 2000 as a required class for the journalism major, they will be required to learn to write journalistically. However, once that course ends, a journalism major is not finished with the genre. North contextualizes this point (though not specific to journalism) by saying that writing centers can serve as a resource in a different way than course instruction when writing becomes important to students. Consequently, having writing resources that can be utilized outside of the introductory course will provide the most substantial support for developing writers.

New-to-journalism students who are seeking to learn how to write journalistically do not have access to many interactive resources where they can actively employ AP Style rules. This

material would be well-received because it fits the learning components outlined by DePietro in his claim that writing support that is both informative and experiential will greatly benefit learners, Williams in her study on teaching writing to primary school students, and North in his work defining the purpose of writing centers. Student engagement in the resources will render them the most effective for users, as proven by Ellis in his pedagogical study on writing to learn in an interactive learning environment. Teachers of writing can utilize writing to learn as a strategy to “encourage student engagement in learning” (Ellis 155-156). In the strategy, students come into knowledge of a subject at their own pace by writing and therefore are more engaged and reach a higher level of understanding. As dictated by the current research, establishing additional support for journalism students could get learners much more involved than solely using quizzes and readings.

Methods

The first step toward the creation of these journalism resources was interviewing five journalism professors employed by Oakland University who teach Introduction to Journalism to address where the gap in knowledge lies and access what resources professors would like to see the most. The professor interviews took place and the resources were being developed during the fall 2019 semester, where there were seven JRN 2000 class sections with five professors. One professor was teaching the class for the first time. Three out of the five professors taught AP Style in their JRN 2000 classes, but two of the classes focus more on journalism theory and ethics, thus putting less emphasis on writing. Not all JRN 2000 professors have backgrounds in journalism, and the department gives professors freedom to adjust the course content because the classes typically do not have many journalism majors. Writing has differing importance

depending on the professor, so students receive various levels of style-based instruction. The same questions were asked of each professor:

1. What do you teach in your JRN 2000 classes?
2. What do you feel works best with the students?
3. How often do students struggle?
4. What writing issues do new-to-journalism students face?
5. What resources would you like to see created to provide support to new-to-journalism students?
6. What writing resources would be the most beneficial to all journalism students? Which ones might not be so helpful?

Then, I created original worksheets from the professor feedback, using the *AP Stylebook*, Harrower's *Inside Reporting*, and other resources for the formatting. I also pulled knowledge from my own writing and experience to create worksheet examples. The worksheet materials were determined by the content gathered in the interviews with professors. As the resources were compiled, the first three exercises — lead writing, the inverted pyramid, and story organization — were tested on 32 students in two Oakland University Introduction to Journalism classes in the winter 2020 semester to gauge what works best for students taking introductory journalism classes. During this semester, there were only four class sections with three professors, limiting access to a wide range of students. Of the 32 students surveyed, five of these students (15.6%) are majoring in journalism, 11 are communication majors (34%), three are public relations majors (9%), and two either intend to become journalism majors or earn a journalism minor (6%). The remaining 11 students (34%) were most likely taking the class for elective credit (Valley). I spent around an hour-and-a-half in the first classroom, and the

three sections took students about an hour to complete. The second class visit was shorter, with students getting around 35 minutes to complete the worksheets. Students answered a Google Forms survey asking them if the resources made them feel more comfortable with AP Style. The Google Form consisted of eight main questions, ranking each resource on a five-point scale from “not effective” to “extremely effective,” along with an optional “further thoughts” column. The questions were as follows:

1. How would you rank the overall effectiveness of these resources?
2. How effective was the lead writing guide?
3. How effective was the inverted pyramid guide?
4. How effective was the story organization exercise?
5. Which materials did you find the most relevant? (ranking questions two-four as “not relevant,” “relevant” or “very relevant”)
6. How likely will these resources impact your future work in this class or in your major?
(answer options ranged from not likely to extremely likely)
7. Optional follow-up: If you are a journalism, communication, PR, or advertising major, how likely will these resources impact your future work?
8. If these resources were available online for you to refer to as needed, how likely would you be to use them?

Optional last question: If you think any of these resources were not effective or beneficial, please feel free to state what did not work or how they could better serve students’ needs.

Following this was also a section for any additional comments.

After this data was collected, results were processed to determine the effectiveness of the resources. Those resources were compiled and uploaded to an open, online resource database, and paper resource binders were provided to the journalism department and the OUWC.

To create the style guides, I also consulted Harrower's *Inside Reporting* and other online resources for information and definitions for concepts. The first resource concerns lead writing, which stemmed from my own experience, and the definitions in the "Types of Leads" subsection comes from Harrower. When planning the project, it was decided that explanation and exercises would be interwoven so students do not feel overwhelmed with information before completing exercises. Figure 1 provides an example of the types of exercises included in each section. The exercises include identifying the five W's in leads (who, what, when, where, and why/how), writing leads based on provided information, and adapting those leads to fit different genres.

Figure 1

Excerpt from AP Style writing resources

Lead Writing Practice

Practice is the best way to write better leads. To get accustomed to identifying the five W's, identify them in the lead for this story:

The Oakland University Board of Trustees (BOT) approved construction of campus arts and athletics facilities, following a \$78 million general revenue bond issuance approval at the June 10 Board meeting.

Who:

What:

When:

Where:

Why/How:

...

Use the information below to write an example lead. Try to include as many of the W's as possible, but make sure your writing stays concise — meaning avoid extra words.

Who: Oakland University Office for Student Involvement

What: Hosting an open forum with Oakland University President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz

When: Friday, Jan. 25 from 1-2 p.m.

Where: The Oakland Center Ballrooms

Why/How: to give students the chance to ask questions about the coming school year

Write your lead here:

Resources concerning organization and story structuring were crafted from an earlier version of an AP Style quick guide I created for my writing center colleagues. The organization exercise aims to show learners that although organization is subjective when stories are being written, an order should be followed to make the most sense and deliver content appropriately. The inverted pyramid practice has users work on establishing themes for an existing story, which aims to heighten skills with recognizing the most important elements of their own stories. Other exercises like quoting and punctuation, grammar, and avoiding bias address common issues in students' writing, as seen by the researcher and the professors interviewed before the resources were created. The worksheets also include an answer guide, although the answers to writing exercises will vary.

Results

The completed resources include more than 30 pages of written information coupled with original examples, exercises, and AP Style recommendations. This results section will be divided into two subsections: one focusing on the original professor feedback, the other focusing on student survey feedback.

Professor Recommendations about Most Beneficial Resources. All five journalism professors were interviewed before the creation of the resources emphasized the importance of interactivity when learning writing, noting that students should be engaged during the process to retain the most material. Professor 3, who has been teaching journalism for around 8 years, said, "I think the best way for students to get comfortable with that is to do it. ... I think that it's great to have resources that explain stuff ... but what's more important is that they have to go out and then

demonstrate that they can — or practice doing those things.” Professor 4 taught JRN 2000 for the first time in the fall 2019 semester and emphasized the importance of student immersion in class activities: “They really love interactive activities, like they love the think-pair-share type activities.” The professors expressed enthusiasm for the creation of writing resources to supplement JRN 2000 students’ coursework, and all professors offered valuable input about students’ struggles to address. After analyzing the interviews, professor feedback centered around three major themes: student issues with the use of AP Style adherence, grammar, and avoiding bias.

AP Style Adherence

According to the five professors, students struggle most with general AP Style adherence. This is, in part, because JRN 2000 classes are offered as elective credit, so many of the students taking the class are not journalism majors and may not be as interested in learning AP Style writing. Professor 2 spearheaded the discussion of a resource for students to understand how to navigate and find entries in the *AP Stylebook*, as teaching it can be difficult because it reads like a dictionary. The other professors expressed interest in a similar resource, emphasizing the importance of an updated AP Style “cheat sheet” for students. Another element that students struggle with is conciseness, or following newswriting form. Professor 5 said students use excessive words when they could write more concisely. Other times, “It’s just way too conversational. You know, it’s like as if they are having a conversation with me. They will be written like an analysis paper, they will be like, ‘You see what I’m saying here’...So, it’s the tone and manner that is off” (Professor 5). Creating a set of resources to address these struggles could help professors who may not go as in-depth with AP Style during course instruction, and students could get a better understanding of the writing form.

Grammar

Professors expressed that students have issues with use of mechanics like grammar and struggle with foundational writing skills that may not have been adequately taught to them in high school. According to Professor 3, “There are basic rules of grammar that get missed, and I don't think it's that people are working too quickly or not paying attention, I think it's that they don't have the base knowledge.” The other interview subjects each recommended some form of grammar-based instruction in the resources, such as punctuation, proper quote attribution, proper comma use, and sentence structure. Doing so would, according to the professors, help students build foundational skills to make them better writers, even outside of the journalism field. Other professor concerns centered around sentence structure.

Avoiding Bias

Avoiding bias, otherwise called maintaining objectivity/ reporting all aspects of the truth, was another issue addressed by all five professors. Professor 1 said, “What I see it all the time in intro to journalism is they don't understand the rules of attribution — that statements of fact must be attributed to someone. Otherwise, it just comes across as the opinion of the writer.” To address this, the professors create assignments that are aimed toward keeping student opinion out of stories, but Professor 1 said many students still struggle with being able to use information without the addition of their opinion. This conversation sparked the idea of creating an “avoiding bias/removing opinion” section of the writing resources, which includes clear-cut definitions of bias, unconscious bias, and objectivity and asks students to complete exercises where they must remove opinioned statements from sentences.

Student Feedback. After the creation of many of the resources, 32 students in two JRN 2000 classes were asked to complete the first three worksheets – lead writing, the inverted pyramid,

and story organization – and fill out a Google Forms survey based on a five-point effectiveness scale to provide their thoughts. Student feedback between the two classes was consistent, thus, the survey results were combined. Out of the 32 students, 43% ranked the resources’ overall effectiveness as a 4 (out of 5 points), and 40.6% ranked them a 5 (see table 1; Valley). Students determined the lead writing guide to be the most relevant, followed by the story organization exercise and the inverted pyramid guide (see figure 2). Many students (65.6%) said the resources would likely impact their future work in this class or in their major. In the pool of students who are majoring in a field that uses AP Style, 64% said the resources would impact their future work, but 8% ranked their impact as a 1 on the five-point scale, or “not likely.” Most students (68.7%) ranked their likeliness to use the resources as a 4 or 5 (see table 1; Valley).

Table 1

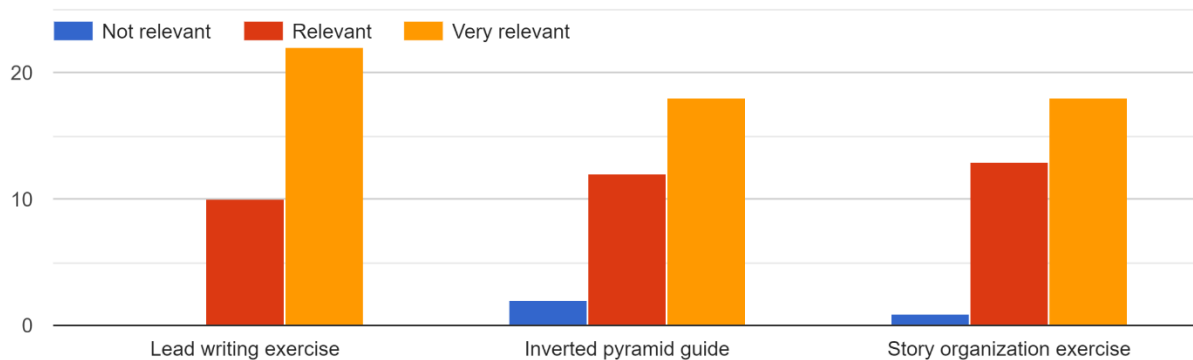
Effectiveness of AP Style Writing Resources and Likelihood of Future Use

	1	2	3	4	5
Effectiveness Ranking (not effective-extremely effective)					
Overall effectiveness	0%	0%	15.6%	43.8%	40.6%
Lead writing guide	0%	0%	15.6%	37.5%	46.9%
Inv. pyramid guide	0%	0%	12.5%	40.6%	46.9%
Organization exercise	0%	3.1%	15.6%	34.4%	46.9%
Likelihood of Future Use (not likely-extremely likely)					
Overall likeliness	3.1%	3.1%	25%	40.6%	28.1%
Future work in class/major	0%	6.3%	28.1%	40.6%	25%
Future work, majors only*	8%	0%	28%	32%	32%

*Note: This question had 25 responses, indicating four students who are not journalism, communication, public relations, or advertising majors answered the question, potentially skewing the numbers.

Figure 1

Results to question “Which materials did you find most relevant?” y-axis=number of students



Feedback while in the classroom concerned ease of use and formatting. Students were also encouraged to comment on elements of the resources that may not have worked or how they could overall better serve students’ needs. One anonymous comment stated using the worksheets via Google Docs did not work well, and a step-by-step workbook may be better. Another commented that they have access to similar resources. Additional comments said the resources were accessible to people outside of journalism and put names to unfamiliar concepts in an accessible way. One participant commented on the effectiveness of the resources: “I think that these resources are very beneficial especially to those who are not journalism majors. I like how it was the explanation first then the exercises, which was very helpful as well. It was very well put so that anyone could understand it.” Another said, “All JRN 2000 classes should have resources similar to this breaking down the curriculum for students” (Valley). Overall, students were very receptive to the resources, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Some changes were made to the resources after students' feedback to better ensure their effectiveness. The style guides were improved to alleviate issues with spacing and to add further contrast to the text. I looked deeper into the formatting and updated the text to include more coherent use of bolding and italics. The resources were uploaded via Google Docs containing all the resources is also available on the website. Users can make their own copy of the document for easy access to everything at once. The resources will soon be uploaded to the website in a more accessible manner. In addition, paper copies will be available at the OUWC, which students who come in for writing consultations can use both in-session and at home.

Critical Discussion

These writing resources were created after working with several journalism students at the OUWC and at *The Oakland Post*, which helped me best understand the main issues faced by journalism students. During these sessions a significant gap in understanding was revealed between students who take JRN 2000 with no prior experience with the writing style, and those who have an understanding before beginning the class. Many of the new-to-journalism students felt they were not grasping the writing style, nor progressing as much as their peers, which may have impacted their willingness and encouragement to stay in the major or seek journalism majors or minors. Because most students who take Introduction to Journalism are not journalism majors, the curriculum for JRN 2000 varies depending on the needs of students and the professors' areas of expertise. I aimed to speak to professors who taught various versions of the class to create resources that would address as many students' needs as possible. Worksheets were created to ensure the highest level of learning, matching DePietro's claim that "[w]hen using interactive learning, the pedagogic objective is to engage students with instructional content that is both informative and experiential" (28). By coupling explanations of writing

concepts with real examples, students can both react to and interact with the resources to ensure both areas of learning are stimulated. This also can be linked with course materials to strengthen the “reactive” element – the teaching – which enhances the interactive experience – the learning (DePietro 28-29). The resources will support continued growth for learners, thus meeting Williams’ study conclusion that completing interactive writing exercises produces more independent and higher quality writing in students (530). Students will then have the ability to access the resources when needed, so they can reengage their skills in certain aspects of AP Style writing.

The goal for creating these resources is for students taking journalism classes to feel more knowledgeable about AP Style and to better prepare them for future classes. Interactive resources are now uploaded to an online database and were given to the Oakland University Department of Communication, Journalism, and Public Relations and the Oakland University Writing Center. This project serves to lessen the difference in understanding between new-to-journalism students and experienced students, which could in turn increase retention rates in the journalism program and help students feel more confident in their writing skills. I hypothesized that resources that address common issues in new-to-journalism students would help them supplement classwork and feel caught up with their peers who may have entered college with prior journalism experience. Students who take the introduction class for elective credit may also be encouraged to major or minor in journalism with access to exercises to help them gain a deeper understanding of the writing style. The online resources will serve as a hub for AP Style knowledge that students, freelancers, and other journalists can use and interact with worldwide.

Much of the resources were planned before their creation. The planning stage for this project took around a year, with unintended setbacks extending the timeline further than

intended. I received much support from the journalism department, and professors offered valuable guidance during the planning process. Professors expressed concerns with students' understanding of the fundamentals of writing, meaning further support with writing outside of the journalism realm could help strengthen their knowledge of mechanics. With pre-collegiate schooling lacking emphasis on writing mechanics, such as grammar, sentence structure, diction, and punctuation, including support with those aspects of writing would take these resources to the next level. Professors expressed the need for more students to be engaged in Introduction to Journalism classes, which likely depends on the type of student and the type of introductory class they find themselves in. To address this, the resources aim to provide supplemental writing support alongside classroom assignments, work with journalism theory-based JRN 2000 classes, or accompany any learned AP Style specifics. Journalism students then will move into JRN 3000: Advanced News Writing and Editing, where those writing skills will be further developed, hopefully after having been strengthened beforehand from working with these writing resources.

The 32 students who reviewed the worksheets provided brilliant insight on what worked well — lead writing, in particular — and what issues arose (e.g. formatting). It was rewarding to see students navigating the resources without issues. Students seemed to be engaged and were able to correctly fill out the three test exercises. The participants were overwhelmingly supportive of my work and were eager to have access to the resources upon their completion. If students did not show as much interest in the exercises as they did, the methods for this project would have had to be adjusted to create more effective writing support. It was essential for students to be engaged when completing the exercises because the learning has to be achieved at the students' pace. As Ellis claimed in his study, “By drawing on the potential benefits for learning from this strategy [writing to learn], it is possible to design an interactive learning

environment which can provide domain-specific, student-centered learning processes. These processes provide valuable support to students as they construct their own understanding of the knowledge domain as they write” (Ellis 165). Students in the first class showed more interest in the resources, asking more questions and providing their input. This was the class that had about an hour to navigate the resources; thus, it could be argued that more time with the resources produces more student engagement and more accurate feedback. A student commented on the accessibility of the resources, saying, “The progression of the lesson was done well, so it was not overwhelming and allowed for a mature and structured way of learning while each topic felt like it was being utilized” (Valley). This comment affirmed that the exercises present information in a clear way while still maintaining student engagement. Another comment stated, “I could understand everything that was being presented and know what I was doing during the exercises” (Valley). For students who may feel left behind their peers with prior knowledge, it’s essential to know that the resources are understandable and accessible. A few students expressed issues with the formatting, so to alleviate any frustration caused by odd page breaks or improper space to complete exercises, the resources were split into separate links on the website.

I have always had an affinity for helping others. Seeing students struggle with understanding AP Style and feeling left behind by their classmates made me realize that there is a large gap in understanding, and I wanted to address it. The Oakland University journalism program is smaller than other, larger universities and, as such, lacks certain resources. Thus, I felt that putting together writing help as a student would support the department and well-address student needs, as the resources come from someone who experienced the issues firsthand. These resources can also translate to work with newspapers, such as Oakland University's student newspaper, *The Oakland Post*, where staff writers frequently struggle with foundational AP Style

skills. I was uniquely situated to compile these resources due to my capacity as a student, as well as my employment as content editor for *The Oakland Post* and a writing consultant at the OUWC. At *The Oakland Post*, I help our staff writers develop their writing skills, and lack of knowledge in AP Style specifics, such as writing transitions, punctuation, quoting, and adhering to the style guide, are the staff's main struggles. At the OUWC, I have been the only writing consultant who is a journalism major for the last three years. The lack of access to journalism writing resources truly made it difficult for writers to get the help they need. The aims of this project were to create and implement the resources, along with establishing a connection with the OUWC and the larger journalism field. Creating the resources will allow me to leave a lasting impact on the journalism community.

Limitations

This project centered on the creation of the writing resources and collaboration with professors and students served as the research components to ensure maximum benefit. Some limitations should be noted. Professors addressed their concerns about writing, but due to the scope of this project and for the sake of accessibility to students, not every concern could be effectively addressed. Specific writing components could not be included in the project, which leaves room for further development of the resources. Speaking to students from additional professors' classrooms would have enabled more effective feedback on whether the AP Style guides helped students who have gotten little to no writing support. There also was a slight discrepancy in the amount of time students from each class had to review the resources. The first class, which had 16 students, was able to navigate the resources for almost an hour. The second class, however, only had about 35 minutes with the resources, meaning their feedback might not be as accurate as the first group of students. Overall, a few limitations kept me from confirming

this project would benefit struggling students as much as possible, but the students who reviewed them found them to be an effective form of writing support.

Implications

As the Associated Press updates its rules each year, these resources will need to be further developed based on additions and newfound student needs. The *AP Stylebook* implements small changes annually, but significant changes are made every few years. Since the 2019 *AP Stylebook* included many new changes, these resources will likely not need to be updated for the next few years, giving students at Oakland University a chance to become acclimated with them and allowing professors time to choose whether to directly implement them into classroom practice. Having a book of resources available at the OUWC can also establish a liaison between the journalism department and the writing center, which will allow students to have supplemental in-person support that will push them to become better writers and be more prepared for when they leave Oakland University. The creation of this set of resources could also serve as an influence that others could build upon to establish their own forms of interactive journalistic style help. Access to the resources will be given to the Oakland University journalism department, where they can be further developed by other members of the department or students to fit the updated AP Style standards of future years.

This paper described the process of creating journalistic writing resources with the goal of closing the gap in understanding between new-to-journalism students and those who have experience. The resources effectively address issues with lead writing, the inverted pyramid of journalism, avoiding bias in writing, grammar specifics such as punctuation and sentence structure, and more. Students were eager to use the resources and their feedback was positive. Hopefully, with this project, journalism students will be more encouraged to stay in their

programs, and other students can be more apt to earn degrees in journalism, public relations, communication, or advertising. The future of this project consists of developing a 1-2-hour crash course seminar/workshop to teach students AP Style skills firsthand, which could be held at Oakland University through the journalism department, *The Oakland Post*, and/or the OUWC. A projective workshop could also be developed to take on the road to other university or places of learning for maximum benefit across the journalism community.

Appendix A

Determination of non-research letter from the Institutional Review Board, July 11, 2019



Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

DATE: July 11, 2019
TO: Katelyn Valley
FROM: Oakland University IRB
PROJECT TITLE: Bridging the Gap Between New-to-Journalism and Experienced Students:
The Creation of Interactive Journalism Resources
REFERENCE #: 1461939-1
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: DETERMINATION OF NOT RESEARCH
DECISION DATE: July 11, 2019

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Oakland University IRB has determined this project does not meet the definition of research under the purview of the IRB according to federal regulations.

More specifically, you are collecting information and creating worksheets, style guides and more to supplement journalism coursework. You will then evaluate the created resources. The intent is to improve the journalism program, not to contribute to generalizable knowledge

Please retain a copy of this correspondence for your records.

If you have any questions, please contact Kate Wydeven M.S. at (248) 370-4306 or kwydeven@oakland.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Oakland University IRB's records.

Works Cited (MLA 8)

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