

[Patrick on Paron and Guelfi, 'A NewsHound's Guide to Student Journalism'](#)

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Katina Paron, Javier Guelfi. *A NewsHound's Guide to Student Journalism*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2018. 206 pp. \$19.99 (paper), ISBN 978-1-4766-7591-6.

Reviewed by Justin Patrick (University of Toronto) **Published on** Jhistory (June, 2019)
Commissioned by Robert A. Rabe

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Katina Paron and Javier Güelfi's *A NewsHound's Guide to Student Journalism* is a comprehensive instruction manual for student journalists at secondary and postsecondary education institutions. Paron and Güelfi combine informative lessons on contemporary journalism strategies and lists of resources with fictional and real-world examples to apply lessons to practical situations. Perhaps the most innovative element is the incorporation of graphic novel-style stories for each chapter that follow a group of students who run a high school student newspaper, *The Hallway Monitor*. These relatable and at times humorous depictions cover a series of issues that student journalists in the United States could realistically face, including political corruption surrounding student government elections, unnecessary violence by school security, the intersection of education with various businesses, and censorship. The engaging content has the potential to draw in student readers and empower them to conduct quality student journalism, which can help affirm the importance of student journalism and the student voice as watchdog elements in education systems.

The first chapter outlines the fundamentals of investigative journalism, and uses a story of a student journalist digging into allegations of a rigged student council election to offer guidelines on conducting interviews, compiling notes, and ethically managing sources. At the end of the chapter, the Watergate scandal is used as a real-life case study. Chapter 2 delves into conflicts of interest, including an overview of news reporting and when to use various news frames. Chapter 3 provides insights on how to conduct journalism in the twenty-first century, with tips on using social media effectively and the potential of crowdsourcing methods like polls to gather information about a topic. Chapter 4 focuses on solution-based journalism, which includes a story about student journalists addressing the issue of unappetizing cafeteria food by publishing a piece about recipes for healthy dishes students eat at home to provide feasible alternatives to the established menu. Paron and Güelfi illustrate that *The Hallway Monitor's* positive approach of offering solutions as opposed to merely expressing students' negative feedback leads to menu changes and affects school board policymaking. Chapter 5 introduces current realities surrounding copyright laws and recommends strategies to avoid copyright infringement while informing readers of a number of databases with public domain or Creative Commons content that student journalists can use. Chapter 6 warns of the dangers of plagiarism and stresses the importance of proper fact checking. Chapter 7 includes strategies on approaching enterprise and feature reporting to help student journalists cover topics like sports, student clubs, or issues relevant to student life that may not be breaking news. Chapter 8 walks readers through group reporting while offering tips on running editorial board meetings and

designing newspaper layouts. Chapter 9 covers student journalists' First Amendment rights and analyzes key legal precedents involving student newspapers, while in addition providing strategies and resources to resist censorship. Chapter 10 concludes with some additional resources to supplement the previous chapters, including relevant databases, ethical guidelines, and a pre-publication checklist.

The book is in many ways a pedagogical masterpiece. The use of not only stories, but creative comics with believable, diverse characters in realistic situations makes the learning experience considerably more engaging. The fact that the stories in each chapter are within the same universe shows how the implications of one chapter's story, like a principal resigning after student journalists unearth a scandal, affects the school community later on in the academic year and impacts the student newspaper's coverage of subsequent topics. The exercises at the end of each chapter allow readers to practice their journalism skills through tasks such as improving headlines or writing draft articles, which are designed a way that is constructive but not unnecessarily tedious. Furthermore, the inclusion of resources and legal precedents equips student journalists to speak truth to power and make effective use of their rights, regardless of how powerful individuals or entities may be. Such empowerment reveals another key takeaway that is valuable to not only students, but policymakers and academics as well: student journalism is valid and has the potential to enact positive change. By reporting on events in school communities, student journalists help draw legitimacy to the social impact of the student experience and the political impact of student governments, showing that just because a topic has a smaller scale does not mean it is any less relevant. Without student journalism, there is therefore less potential for student mobilization and the long-term preservation of institutional knowledge within school communities. A minor suggestion I would make to build off of this further would be for chapter 1, which deals with covering a student government election, to include tips on various types of information student journalists should keep track of in order to develop the data necessary to identify long-term historical trends for important elements like voter turnout and debates that may otherwise not be recorded.

The book has one unfortunate drawback, but it is one that can be easily remedied: there are a number of grammatical and mechanical mistakes throughout that at times distract from the quality of the content. While a few mistakes would be understandable, their number is significant enough to merit another round of copyediting. For example, in chapters 1 and 2, I noticed ten mistakes, which equates to about a mistake for every three-and-a-half pages. Notable instances include "wrap up your interview with questions these questions" (p. 5), "Your pencil break" (p. 11), "eight new exercise machine" (p. 31), and "There was an inherent conflict ESPN producing League of Denial" (p. 33). In a textbook for student journalists that stresses the importance of effective writing and editing, it is vital that its own standards be up to those that it advocates for students to uphold. However, despite these errors, the content of the book remains phenomenal, and if it can be thoroughly copyedited and republished as a second edition, I would recommend that a copy be sent to every middle school, high school, college, and university in the United States.

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