

	<h1>BULLETIN</h1>			
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Our 300th Issue!

by
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Three hundred issues!! And I've written all of them! Good grief! That got me started on the process of producing a bulletin.

Did you ever think about becoming a hobby editor? Clubs are often desperate to find someone willing to take the job. And the job...is writing the club bulletin, which often results in the editor being the focal point for contacting the club and fielding club-related questions. (Why is that so? Simply because it's the editor more than any other club officer that is constantly reaching out to people in the hobby, looking for info, verifying information, looking for bulletin contributions, etc.)

An editor, to my way of thinking, isn't simply a person who formats the bulletin...that's a typist. An editor reports, comments, and fills in whatever leftover spaces there are in the bulletin before it finally goes out. It's the editor who determines bulletin content, and, in reality, (because so few members produce any input), it's the editor who *produces* most of that content.

In any event, I can't speak for other editors, of course; most probably develop their own systems of routinely cranking out bulletins, but I can give you an idea of what's involved.

First, equipment! When I first started writing bulletins in 1983, computers hadn't taken hold yet, of course, so most bulletins were done with typewriters...And if you wanted to include pictures, you'd have to figure out somewhere to get the originals photocopied, and then you literally had to cut and paste. Of course, it's all done with desktop publishing now, so an editor would need 1) a computer, 2) a scanner, and 3) internet access. Today's technology allows me to formlessly merge everything I have to deal with into a neat, attractive package.

Second, organization! Most club bulletins still average 8 pages an issue, I believe. That means, by hook or crook, the editor has to fill 8 pages every issue. Editors are always crying for input from members, but for the most part...it ain't gonna happen! So, you're on your own! That's where organization and planning

become an absolute necessity. Believe me, you *don't* want to be sitting at your computer, in front of a blank page, on the night before the finished bulletin is supposed to go out!

An editor needs to plan ahead. I may take it to extremes, because I write for three clubs—that's 22 bulletins, with a total of 320 pages, a year—but the principles outlined here are the same. In my case, I basically have all the bulletins done ahead of time, usually a year out, just leaving blank spaces for things like club news, announcements, letters from readers, etc. that I wouldn't be aware of until the actual publishing time approaches. Occasionally, I'll have to bump a prewritten page when something unforeseen comes up, but that's nothing compared to wracking your brain on how to fill that blank page at the last minute.

Third, research! In the early days, I used to do the bulletins without the internet, of course, but there's no way I could possibly do that now. The bulletin is information, in various forms, and an editor has to access information and either pass it along or synthesize new information out of the old or existing facts. In the old days, if I couldn't find what I needed in my own reference materials (which, thank goodness, I'd started collecting early on), I'd actually have to run down to the local county library to find pictures, topics, etc. The internet has revolutionized research. Everything is there, at the touch of the keyboard.

Another invaluable resource I've found over the years is having a large cover collection, yourself. Whenever references to specific covers are needed, chances are the covers are right there in your own collection. You have the covers right there for graphics, comparisons, whatever.

Fourth, communication! Here's another way the internet has revolutionized the job of being an editor. E-mail gives me almost instantaneous access to collectors and collections around the world (Hans Everink in the Netherlands routinely e-mails me material for my "Around The World" series in the *RMS Bulletin*, for example). When I get stuck on an article, need a stat, a name, whatever, someone out there can help me without my having to rely on a long distance phone call or waiting several days for an answer by snail mail... which may or may not come.

Fifth, you can't be thin-skinned! Anytime you're in a situation where you're dealing with the 'public' or publicizing your own opinions, you're going to have people disagree with you—and an editor does *both!* So, you have to be prepared to take some flak. Occasionally, there may be a typo somewhere, or just a plain bonehead error, but as long as you're within reasonable parameters you should be able to smoothly deal with whatever is brought to your attention by your readers. In the past, there have been at least a couple of editors in the hobby that have strayed beyond those 'reasonable parameters', and they are no more.

Being the continuing focal point for all this information, by the way, has a great advantage for a club editor. It makes you a better, more informed collector...and a better club member and better club worker. You end up learning a lot about your own hobby, which, in turn, just increases your enjoyment in collecting. You establish stronger ties with other collectors. You're working with the other club officers, so you have a much better grasp on what's going on with the club and where it's heading...and you have a somewhat greater influence in what direction that's going to be.

Next time your club needs an editor, you might think about what you have to offer...and what the job has to offer you. It can be a very rewarding and personally satisfying experience. I think it's like any long-term volunteer work a person would take on—You have to be looking forward to the task rather than dreading it. Just look at any of the volunteers in the hobby.