

Editorial Manual of Style and Guidelines

Of The Reckoner of Marc Garneau CI

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Introduction

The Editorial Board of *The Reckoner* prides itself on the delivery of concise and well-developed opinions, relating to relevant issues that affect the student body of Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute. In doing so, standards and style must be maintained to ensure the quality and consistency of written pieces. This Style Manual aims to convey the expectations and fundamental components of the inception, construction, and publishing of Editorial Board pieces.

Contents

- Introduction
- Contents
- Creating an Editorial Piece
 - Identifying the Issue
 - Picking the Angle
 - Gathering the Support
 - Writing the Article
- Style and Grammar
- Op-Eds

Creating an Editorial Piece

The key attributes to a successful editorial article include a concise and clear opinion on a relevant issue, well-researched supporting details, and a smooth logical progression.

Identifying the Issue

A strong opinion that the writer firmly believes in is foundational to any piece of critical writing. The first step to developing an opinion is identifying the issue. The Editorial Board focuses on issues that affect the student body of MGCI. These include, but are not limited to: local school events, school board policies, events within Toronto, and notable world stage events. Board editorials convey the consensus opinion of the editorial board on a specific topic, and all members are expected to arrive at meetings with their own input on the issue. Members will be given notice of issues to be covered at the staff meeting ahead of time by email. However, op-eds give members the chance to communicate their personal opinion on a topic of their choice, at the approval and discretion of the Editorial Manager. Generally speaking, op-ed topics should be relevant to the student population, with few exceptions. In the past, *The Reckoner* has covered issues such as volunteer hours, rising university tuition costs, literacy and overcrowding at MGCI, Rob Ford, and the absence of chocolate milk from the snack program.

Picking the Angle

After an appropriate issue has been identified, it is necessary for the staff member to carefully consider all angles

of the issue before determining their own stance. While an editorial piece conveys the opinion of the writer, it is critical to also present the original issue in a manner that is transparent and unbiased. Remember, there are two sides to every story, sometimes more. Always be appropriately informed on the information behind an event before laying down judgment.

Gathering the Support

After an opinion and angle has been chosen, the staff member should think about the main details that support their point. Consider the questions: Why is this topic an issue worthy of an editorial piece? How does this issue affect the student body of MGCI in the writer's opinion? What are the alternate perspectives on this issue? If solid support cannot be found for the stance on a topic, perhaps the opinion should be reassessed from a different standpoint. Remember, the target audience is a high-school community, and it is neglectful to assume that they are already aware of the details of an event that warrants an editorial piece. Find out the details and communicate them in a concise and understandable manner.

Writing the Article

Once a skeleton of the piece may be assembled, consisting of a topic statement, logically progressive supporting points, and conclusion, the

writer is free to begin writing the editorial. Remember, opinions are flexible, and it is perfectly acceptable if the writer's opinion changes during the process of creating an editorial piece. In that case, they should reassess their stance and alter their points accordingly. After a first draft is completed, the writer then informs the Editorial Manager, who will view the draft on a platform such as Google Docs and make appropriate edits with suggestions that the writer should take into account. The process is repeated until an agreeable final draft is reached. **Submitted drafts are not guaranteed to be published.** An illustration is usually necessary, in which case the writer is expected to come up with an original illustration idea. Upon approval, a Media Board member will construct the illustration, which will be included in the online and paper publishing.

Style and Grammar

Maintaining standards and abiding by style guidelines are critical to a consistently successful newspaper. All staff members should consult the entirety of the MOSAC to familiarize themselves with the expectations of *The Reckoner*. The following is lifted directly from the MOSAC.

“Two themes that will inevitably recur in the description of the writing towards a high school audience are relevance and accessibility. All topics of

content, syntax, diction, and flow are centered about these two goals. The students of the school have easy online access to the very best professional news-reporting syndications around the world, and so the role of worldwide news reporting is beyond the scope of The Reckoner. Rather, we present all of our content, school-related or otherwise, in a manner that is specifically relevant to the MGCI audience.

In an editorial piece, you are expressing an opinion. Be direct and do not use conditional language or passive voice.

→ E.g. ~~The school's reputation would then be jeopardized by the decision.~~

The decision jeopardized the school's reputation.

The first thing you should do is to explain important concepts in an accessible way. Don't assume that your readers are experts on your topic. Then, make your points in a coherent, persuasive manner. If your editorial is addressing a problem, find out exactly what went wrong. Be very careful not to blame the wrong people. When addressing the shortcomings of people or organizations, do so in a respectful manner. Unless the problem is a result of clear neglect, be sure to criticize the decision and not the people responsible for it. Finally, if applicable, discuss possible alternatives or solutions or acknowledge the lack thereof."

Acronyms

Spell an acronym out in full on its first reference. If the acronym is well known, use it on the second reference and as desired beyond that. An exception to this rule is the acronym "TOPS", which should never be spelled out in full. When writing out acronyms, do not place periods between the letters.

Attribution

Use "said" almost all the time. Be aware that terms like "explained" or "noted" imply that the information is correct. When speaking about a person's opinion, do not say "he thinks" or "she believes". This places your voice as that of an omniscient narrator. Instead use "said she believes" and "said he thinks".

Capitalization

Capitalize official titles that appear before someone's name, but not those that appear afterwards. When in doubt, do not capitalize. When referring to a student's grade level, use the following format:

→ E.g. ~~The grade nine student was angry.~~

The Grade 9 student was angry.

Serial Comma

In a series of items, include a comma before the final term. This is also known as an Oxford comma.

Dates

Do not use superscripts on dates or abbreviate months. Always write the day of the month before the month's name:

→ E.g. ~~Nov. 5th~~

5 November

Do not use “yesterday”, “today”, or “tomorrow”, as these become incorrect after the day ends. If using these words will add greatly to the article, the Content Manager should remember to change them to the exact date the next day. This is especially important for the print edition. For dates within a one-week period, use the day of the week as follows: if today is Thursday, the Monday that just passed is “this past Monday” and the Monday that is directly approaching is “this coming Monday”. For dates more than one week in the future or one week in the past, indicate the exact date. Do not use “next” or “last” when referring to days of the week to avoid ambiguity between days in a one-week and a two-week radius.

Times

When referring to the time of an event, writers should specify the time based on their level of certainty. If a writer is certain about the exact time of an event, that time may be used. Otherwise, times must round to the nearest quarter-hour and include a quantifier such as “around” or “at about”. Do not capitalize or use periods for the ante meridiem and post meridiem acronyms.

→ E.g. The event took place at 1:43 pm.

The event took place around 1:15 pm.

The event took place at about 1 pm.

Numbers

Numerals are used for scientific or technical style. After three powers of ten, place a single space; never use commas within numerals.

→E.g. 2 000

In all other instances, numbers should be spelled out. If numbers between one thousand and ten thousand can be expressed in terms of hundreds, this is preferred.

→ E.g. About eleven hundred students showed up to yesterday's assembly.

Emphasis

When attempting to emphasize a particular word, only italics (and never all-caps) may be used.

→ E.g. ~~NEVER use all caps in a Reckoner article.~~

Never use all-caps in a Reckoner article.

Italics and Quotation Marks

Use italics only for book titles, album titles, and movie titles. Use quotation marks for television shows, song titles, and short stories.

Use italics for the names of other news organizations, but not for the names of companies. Capitalize the names of all organizations.

→ E.g. ~~The Toronto Star published an editorial criticizing "Facebook"'s privacy policies.~~

The Toronto Star published an editorial criticizing Facebook's privacy policies.

Hyphens

In most cases regarding hyphen use in words, consult a recent dictionary. When in doubt about whether or not two words can be joined together, join them with a hyphen.

→ E.g. ~~The students received first place titles at the track meet.~~

The students won first-place titles at the track meet.

Quotation Marks

Always place punctuation within quotations.

Apostrophes

When using an apostrophe to indicate possession, only omit the 's' when the word ends with 's'.

→ E.g. ~~Ms. Speirs's classes captivate her students' minds.~~

Ms. Speirs' classes captivate her students' minds.

In terms of issues specific to the Editorial Board,

- Never quote figures in an article as support for your opinion. The writer should be able to communicate his or her message, without aid from the externals.
- However, quotes may still be used to establish factual information. Non-biased statements are acceptable.
- Stated above, but always be assertive when stating the opinion. Opinions are not meant to be delivered with uncertainty or doubt.

Op-Eds

Op-Eds (Opinion Editorials) are a more liberal aspect of the Editorial Board. Op-Eds are editorial pieces where the writer has the freedom to select his or her own topic. While this liberty is given, it is still important to pick a topic that is generally relevant to the writer or the community.

When constructing Op-Eds, take a moment to consider the following questions.

- How does this issue affect me?
- What is the background of this issue?
- Am I truly reflecting on this issue, rather than simply pointing the finger?
- Do I have any solutions or extensions to propose?
- Are these solutions realistic?
- Have I dedicated enough discussion to the issue, rather than stating the issue itself?
- Is the factual information credible? Have I referenced my sources?
- What might other perspectives on this issue be?

What makes or breaks an Op-Ed comes down to the relevancy of the issue and the further steps taken when discussing the problem. It is not enough to merely point out an issue; a successful Op-Ed will extend and provide analytical solutions, or realistic suggestions on the topic. The standards

and expectations of an Op-Ed match those of Board pieces.

Op-Eds are ended with the following disclaimer:

“Op-eds are opinion articles that reflect the views of the author, but not necessarily those of the Editorial Board or of The Reckoner as a whole. Please note this important distinction when reading this article.”

Submitted Op-Ed drafts are not guaranteed to be published.