

The business of making a Batt

By LIZ NEWLIN
Battalion Managing Editor

The Batt does it daily—publishes, that is.

Each issue involves about eight hours of work, a paid staff, a computer system, at least one professor and a printing press.

And money. For the fiscal year ending in August, the Battalion spent \$419,785. It received \$75,000 from student service fees and \$300,613 from advertisers. That makes a net loss of \$44,172.

But the Battalion is not operated to make a profit. Instead, its func-

tion is to inform people and train journalists.

Students run the 22,000 circulation newspaper without interference from faculty or administrators. Editors sometimes consult their professors, but even the head of the Department of Communications cannot control what goes into the newspaper.

The Battalion staff works Sunday through Thursday, and the routine goes like this:

2:30 p.m.—The news editor comes into the office and begins to select stories from the United Press

International wire service. She uses one of eight video display terminals (VDT) that is directly connected to a computer. A telephone line brings the UPI "feed" from Dallas into the computer.

3:30 p.m.—The news editor updates the calendar, "What's up," and estimates how much copy and how many pictures will be needed to fill the paper.

4 p.m.—The managing editor (M.E.) comes in and looks over the day's news from the wire. She is responsible for day-to-day operation of the Battalion. She also checks stories coming from the Journalism 204 class, which is the main source of Battalion reporters. Staff writers also contribute to the paper. Some articles are from beginning or advanced journalism classes, but most of those articles are features.

4:30 p.m.—The managing editor gets a list of incoming stories from the campus editor, who is responsible for coordinating coverage for the University. The city budget is also prepared for the M.E. by the city editor. The city editor is responsible for seeing that city stories and pictures are being taken care of. He makes staff and 204 assignments, and edits copy. The assistant managing editor is in charge of daily editing, as well as some 204 story assignments. He assists the M.E. in story selection and helps with night-time production. He also edits stories from the University public relations department, the Office of Public Information.

5 p.m.—The M.E., news editor and campus editor decide which stories and photographs will appear on the inside pages of the newspaper and which will appear on the front page. The news editor begins to "lay-out" the inside, decides how big the headlines will be and where the photographs will appear. Dummies with ad layouts already have been prepared by the advertising department.

7 p.m.—The news editor is finished, and Journalism 310 students come in. They edit stories and write headlines for them, usually using a VDT. A professor manages the class and checks what they do. The M.E. comes in after the class and gives copy a final check. J-310

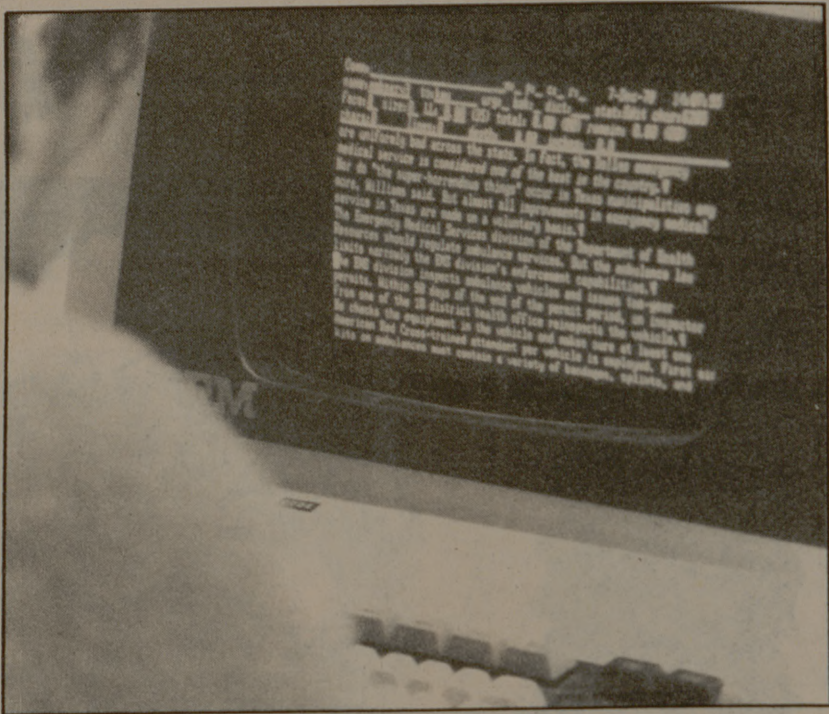
students also condense news stories for the "Top of the News" column.

10 p.m.—The 310 class is over and usually the inside of the newspaper is finished, except for late-breaking stories and changes. The other news editor is usually in by this time and working on the front page lay-out. She checks the wire for late stories and decides with the M.E. where stories should be placed on the front page. She also edits front page copy and writes front page headlines.

10-midnight—The sports editor is the only editor who lays out his own pages. He gets most of his copy from two staff writers and the wire. He is responsible for all sports pages—makes story assignments, edits copy, designs the sports page and writes some of the sports stories. He also supervises production of the sports pages. The editor, by this time, has completed lay out of the editorial page, selecting "Letters to the Editor" and syndicated features. She also writes most of the local editorials.

Midnight-bedtime—VDT operators put articles and headlines into the computer system and convert the information to 6-level computer tape with a punch machine. These tapes are taken to the University Printing Center, and are run through a typesetting machine by professional printers. This usually begins about 6 a.m. the day of publication.

Bedtime—The M.E. checks over page one, reading all stories, head-



Staff reporter Scott Pendleton types a story into a video display terminal (VDT).

Batt jobs pay, but not much

Newspaper editors are pictured with green visors to keep the ink out of their eyes and garters on their sleeves to keep the ink off their cuffs.

Editors and reporters at the Battalion generally wear blue jeans and tennis shoes.

They are students like the other Aggies, struggling with deadlines and exams — and deadlines.

The editor is elected by the student Publications Board. The board consists of three students, two faculty members and two administrators.

There is no requirement that the editor be a communications major, but most of them are. Qualifications are a 2.0 GPA, overall and in the candidate's major; at least one year of experience in a responsible editorial position in The Battalion or other student newspaper; or one year of experience on a professional newspaper or 12 hours in journalism courses J-203 and J-204 or equivalent. The 12 hours must include Journalism 402, a course on communication law.

The new editor, selected in the spring, chooses the rest of the staff. This year's staff includes a managing editor, campus and city editor, sports editor, Focus editor, and editors, reporters and photographers.

Staff wages total \$182 each. The Batt is published — five days a week during the school year.

The editor is responsible for budgeting and policy on the newspaper.

The managing editor oversees coverage of the campus and the production of the Batt.

Salaries are computed on a per-issue basis. For example, the managing editor makes \$17 per issue. Other staff are managing and sports editor, \$16; assistant managing editor, \$15; campus, city and Focus editor, \$11-12; full-time reporter, \$7; photographer, \$4.

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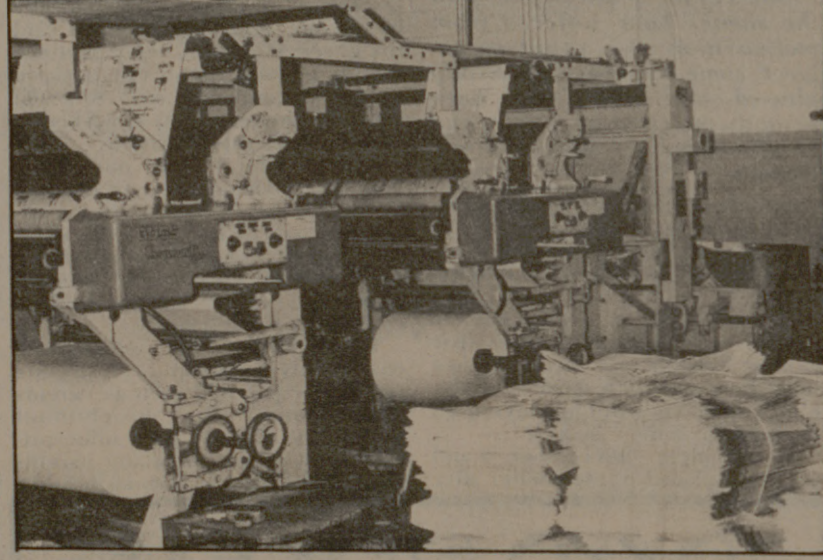
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lines and captions. She also writes the promo box for the top of the page. This semester, the M.E. has "put the paper to bed" (that's newspaper talk) usually about 2 a.m. Front-end production of the paper is complete.

7:45 a.m.—The computer tapes have been converted photographically into print that is pasted onto a full-size page. The editor



The Batt goes to press between 11 a.m. and noon. The paper usually is on the stands by noon. Circulation is 22,000.

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supervises paste-up and makes one last check on headlines and stories for mistakes. Proofreaders also check the copy.

10 a.m.—The paper due to be complete and ready to be "shot" and made into the metal plates for the presses. This deadline frequently is not met.

Presstime—The 22,000-copy press run usually takes between two and three hours. First copies of the Battalion usually are on the stands by noon.

It is hard to fit staffers easily into an hour-by-hour job description. The time they spend on the job is squeezed around class, study, sleeping and, occasionally, a social life.

All of the staffers are communications majors, but they are not required to be.

The Batt editor acts as a liaison for the newspaper, answering calls about policy, as well as supervising over all make up of the newspaper.

The editor is responsible for staff organization, hiring and firing staff members and starting new programs like "Focus."

And specifically, the editor is responsible for the daily editorial page and supervising morning production.

The "Focus" editor assigns stories and pictures for his section. He also writes, edits and lays out the weekly tabloid. In addition, he supervises paste-up and overall production for the section.



The Batt is pasted up in the composing room every day except Saturday and Sunday. About 20 percent bigger than it was last year, it averages 12 pages a day. The Focus section was added this semester as a special weekly feature magazine. Lowell Hodges and Margie Wisniewski "build" the pages each morning of publication.

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