Students keep readers always in mind after VTech shootings

By Kelly Furnas
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Two weeks after the deadliest shooting spree in U.S. history, Shaozhuo Cui, the Collegiate Times photo editor, walked into the doorway of my office. He placed a hand on the outside wall, ensuring that he wouldn’t completely enter the room. He was looking at the floor.

“How do you feel about the money situation?” he asked.

The day of the shootings, our organization had elected to allow an outside vendor to license all our related photos. From a practical standpoint, it was the only way to handle the barrage of phone calls we were receiving requesting content.

From a financial standpoint, it was also meant that our photo editor would receive a generous commission.

“I feel as if you earned it,” I told him.

“I just feel bad,” Shaozhuo said. “I’m making money because of this. It feels like I’m profiting from other people’s deaths.”

I urged him to come into my office, but he declined. Talking about his feelings seemed almost as bad as having them.

“You aren’t making money because people died,” I said. “You’re making money because you did your job.”

He sighed heavily. My words were ringing hollow. So I continued.

“Do you think the police officers or EMS workers who get overtime pay are profiting off of this?” I asked. “Do you think students are profiting because they don’t have to take finals?”

They were, perhaps, crass comparisons. But he understood the point I was trying to make.

It’s an unfortunate reality that journalists shine brightest amid tragedies. I seldom think of the Times-Picayune without remembering its work during Hurricane Katrina, nor can I discuss the Rocky Mountain News without recalling its photography during the shootings at Columbine High School.

Journalists provide touching narratives on cancer patients, informative graphics on tainted food, and insightful commentary on war. But it’s an inescapable fact that behind each of these amazing pieces of journalism lies the suffering of a victim, family, friend or community.

Of all the emotions I expected from students following the Virginia Tech shootings — fear, sadness, anger, relief, pride — the one I was least prepared to deal with was guilt.

A week earlier, Collegiate Times editor Amie Steele had called a staff meeting to discuss the coverage of the shootings and plan for an upcoming memorial edition. She had asked me to prepare a short training session on how to write obituaries, but I also took the opportunity to check in on everyone’s well-being.

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“Does anyone have anything they want to talk about?” I asked the room of about 50.

Now, as someone who teaches students, I’m certainly used to blank stares and unresponsiveness. But this mood was different. These students were exhausted. Physically and emotionally, they just seemed drained.

I applauded them for the work they had done so far. I told them to keep the focus of their efforts on serving their readers. I encouraged them to eat healthful food. I also suggested that each of them get counseling. Hoping it would remove any stigma attached with seeking help, I even disclosed that I had spoken with a counselor.

I also discussed journalist guilt. It’s OK, I explained, to feel proud of the work they had done, even if it was being done amid tragic circumstances.

Everyone deals with trauma in a different way: Some curl up and cry, some go to a movie to escape, and some head to a church and pray.

Still others put their grief on hold and go to work.

I’m not sure whether the message got through, but I tried to explain that no matter how someone responded to news of the shootings, it was understandable and justifiable.

Five p.m., April 16. Four top editors of the Collegiate Times were sitting around the desk in the editor’s office. Virginia Tech officials had just confirmed the death toll.

Thirty-three, including a gunman.

“I remember when I heard that one person had been killed,” a student said. “That was terrifying. But this — I can’t even comprehend this.”
The newspaper was supposed to be completed in seven hours (although the staff would miss that mark by an additional six hours), and editors began discussing production.

“What’s our best story?” a managing editor asked.

“Probably the story from the press conference,” another answered.

There seemed to be an uneasy, incomplete feeling about the discussion.

Everyone in the room knew that this story was going to be on the front page of every major newspaper in the country. Most would declare in a banner headline “Massacre at Virginia Tech,” or something equally macabre. The dominant photograph would likely be of law enforcement responding to the emergency.

But the students knew that in a world of 24-hour cable networks and online journalism, newspapers sometimes have to approach the story differently. A publication on the West Coast may be able to publish a straightforward news piece about the shootings, but the readers in Blacksburg, Va., would need something else.

No one was going to pick up tomorrow’s Collegiate Times and learn for the first time about the shootings.

It was a defining moment for the staff.

For nearly eight straight hours, staff members had been working on autopilot. They were gathering facts and disseminating information via the Collegiate Times Web site. Their journalistic training was serving them well as they refused to publish unverified information and asked tough questions.

(It was a Collegiate Times reporter, after all, who was the first to ask whether the university had considered canceling classes after the first two shootings in a residence hall.)

Now, however, something was different. The primary focus wasn’t the news. It wasn’t the investigation. It wasn’t the best photos or stories.

It was the readers.

The front page that evolved from this discussion was poignant, moving and, most importantly, helpful to the readers. Instead of focusing on the news with “massacre,” the banner headline focused on the readers with “heartache.”

Instead of leading with a story about the day’s events, the front-page article asked readers to look forward and “begin to reconstruct a semblance of what our world was before these events.”

Instead of a photo of police officers with guns drawn, the lead picture showed community members bonding and holding hands.

As for the design itself, instead of filling every pica with details of the shooting, the front page was stark and full of white space, attempting to show the emptiness and loss surrounding the event.

That’s not to say that the paper was without news. In addition to the narrative as it was known at the time, the April 17 edition also addressed the timing of e-mails sent from the university, the availability of counseling services, counseling services.

CSU Chico staffers discover more than a crime scene while covering Virginia Tech

By Dave Waddell
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The Orion, the student newspaper at California State University, Chico, sent three student-journalists more than 2,500 miles to cover the reopening of Virginia Tech after the April 16 killings there.

Reporters Ashley Gebb and Karen McIntyre and photographer David Flannery spent five exhausting days in Blacksburg, arriving about the same time that VT’s student government put out a call for the media to leave.

Their journalistic venture was made a great deal easier by the incomparable staff of the Collegiate Times, with whom the California kids bonded. Staffers of the VT paper made their newsroom and facilities available to The Orion, and, more importantly, made the visitors feel welcome and that what they were doing mattered.

I am proud to be adviser to student journalists who not only produced a tremendous amount of interesting—and often moving—content (both online and in print) but who conducted themselves with concern and sensitivity not always associated with journalism.

I’m sure I was much more interested in The Orion’s VT coverage than the average Chico State reader, but honestly I could barely contain my anticipation of the arrival of the next installments each evening.

Most particularly, this old, ink-stained wretch gained a heightened appreciation for blogs and their capacity for personalizing and illuminating a story beyond the boundaries of journalistic objectivity.

Ashley blogged about how, on their way to Blacksburg, a complete stranger tried to give them a $20 bill simply because the stranger thought they were VT students who needed money.

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Tom, an English professor, has agreed to take over as the adviser to the college newspaper.

He’s excited about the opportunity to help students learn more about journalism by sharing his knowledge as a professor of English who also teaches journalism. He has several years of experience in the industry, and is eager to demonstrate some of his knowledge to the students.

He believes it will be especially valuable, since the paper is often filled with typographical errors and layout problems, among other things. Like most new advisers, Tom looks forward to a different way of helping students explore, experience and perfect skills in something he himself loves to do.

Tom gets to his first staff meeting and is instantly greeted with indifference, maybe even a little bit of distrust.

“It’s OK,” he thinks. “Journalists are often distrustful and unsure of anything or anyone new.”

He remains quiet throughout the meeting, and none of the students makes an effort to include him in discussions or seek his opinion or advice. Tom leaves the meeting a little bit down but assumes that with time things will improve, and he refuses to let the first meeting affect him much.

Throughout the next few weeks, things continue to get worse.

As Tom attempts to become more involved, simply by being around the newsroom, the students seem to become more withdrawn. They become quiet when he nears them and don’t respond when he tries to interact. The feel of the newsroom is one of general resentment at his presence.

Desperate for a solution, Tom tries to get more involved by taking a copy of the last print edition and marking it up, a technique often used by advisers as a learning tool. He makes sure that his comments are more positive than negative and includes what he feels are only a handful of suggestions on how to improve the paper.

As he is posting the marked-up paper on the wall of the newsroom, he is approached by the editor-in-chief, who asks what he is doing. He explains.

The editor responds, “That’s not what our old adviser used to do.”

For a new adviser, establishing an identity and becoming part of the group can be a challenging task. Many new advisers have experience in their media, often a combination of teaching and professional.

Sadly, the first piece of becoming a new adviser has nothing to do with how skilled they are in their media, or how much knowledge or experience they have to share. The first piece of the puzzle for new advisers is usually finding their place in the organization.

Most often, students will immediately see a new adviser as the enemy, a hostile force who is going to come in and make sweeping changes to a paper they feel is functioning perfectly. Any attempt made to suggest improvements will be interpreted as a move to take over.

This is important to remember in dealing with students for the first year. Most advisers will start off their first meeting or introduction to the group by listing all their qualifications and experience and why they are interested in advising the group. This can be a dangerous initial mistake.

Instead of this, a new adviser should take the opportunity to create common ground with the students. Don’t discuss professional credentials. Discuss some personal interests instead. Attempt to find some common ground with students outside of journalism.

This can make a new adviser seem less like a threat and more like a friend to the group. It’s hard to know when to attempt to become more involved and how involved to try to become. Fight the urge to rush the process, even if you have the best of intentions.

If anything, make a mistake on the slow side, and become involved only when you are forced to. Quietly appear in the newsroom from time to time, hold office hours and respond to students who approach, but don’t force things.

Learn what to expect from the group. If it’s a newspaper, read it. If it’s a broadcast station, listen or watch regularly. Become familiar with the different personalities through their work. Prove trust by allowing them to function on their own. Be there for them when they request it. Let them do what they do.

Many times, the installation of a new adviser comes after a period of non-involvement by, or complete lack of, of an old adviser. In that case, the students know what needs to be done, so watch from afar and learn as much as possible. Even better: take an interest in the process and demonstrate to the students the willingness to let them be the teachers of the process.

When all else fails, remember that students come and go, and oftentimes becoming more involved is simply a matter of waiting for students to leave. Over time, a new adviser will be actively engaged by students. Slowly the adviser becomes an integral part of any college publication or broadcast, and hence a “seasoned veteran” who has been around for years.
I’ve offered these skills to the paper. No takers, though. What they really need is the police report.

So I’ve been learning a lot that I can bring back to the classroom, and I’m fortunate to work at a college that puts a premium on that. But I’m left with the question: What should I be doing in the classroom when I get back?

One thing I will be doing is a lot more field trips. We will be going to look at the crime reports and navigating the system together. We will be spending more time going to official meetings and trying to decipher the difference between an abatement and an amendment.

We will visit with any news organization that will let us in. My students need these entry-level skills, and I’m not sure that I have put enough emphasis on that.

However, I’m not ready to give up on more advanced skills. We want our students to grow in their careers and those skills help them to do that, and I’m going to do more to emphasize the accessible uses of CAR that can be worked into daily stories.

Students will still learn design because I still find that it gives them an edge in the market.

But what else will I do? I’m not entirely sure yet, but based on the responses I’ve received from recent grads who are reading about my adventures, I think I need to do more to prepare them for how hard the first years are and how to make the transition beyond that.

This is not to say that the first years shouldn’t be hard. Every profession has a tough start: think of first-year teachers, doctors, lawyers, professors. But those professions also have a clear path to what comes after. We don’t really do that in journalism.

But maybe we need to.
I’m about to wrap up another four years of service on the CMA Board of Directors, and I leave the board with somewhat mixed feelings.

Service to this organization is intensely rewarding. Spending time on the CMA list, visiting with attendees at conferences, helping troubled advisers through the Adviser Advocacy program and simply helping chart the organization’s future are very satisfying.

Worrying about a misstep or an opportunity not taken has been frustrating. Not having the time to devote to an issue needing attention is often a problem. But the rewards outweigh the downside by a long shot, and I encourage any of you with an inclination to get involved in the committees, working your way up to the board.

I first joined the CMA board in 1991 and served as vice president for member services under both Laura Widmer and Ron Johnson. I later moved to treasurer during part of Ron’s term and part of Jan Childress’ presidential term. I came back on the board in 2003 as president.

It’s amazing, but over that span of time much has changed, and much has stayed the same. There are political issues within any organization, and CMA is no exception. We are blessed with individual members who are incredible visionaries, and not all of those visions are the same. Occasionally, though thankfully not often, misunderstandings develop, and factions materialize.

By working through those issues, however, the organization emerges with new perspectives and with greater strength of purpose and commitment.

I’ve had an opportunity to be part of the organization during a time of change, not just in CMA but in the way we help our students prepare for the changing media environment. None of us knows, in CMA or in professional media, what that environment will look like in the coming years, but it is beginning to take shape.

We know, certainly, that it will involve a strong digital presence and that our students will be challenged to develop content that can be distributed across many media platforms.

We also know that funding issues are emerging and will continue to emerge. If online readership of publications erodes, how will our advertisers respond and how will we replace that revenue?

CMA also has seen crossroads of various kinds. When I first joined the organization in 1983, two teams managed the conventions in concert: one group from the convention city (or someplace nearby) that handled city-specific jobs, and another group made up of members nationwide who designed programming. When I was VP for member services, the convention director fell under my purview, and I spent many great days working with then convention Director John David Reed.

What we do now works very efficiently, but more change may be on the horizon as CMA works out a new relationship with our sister organization, Associated Collegiate Press, itself in the midst of great changes. We also are considering methods to strengthen our headquarters function.

Throughout all of this, I continue to be amazed at the quality we receive from Executive Director Ron Spielberger, who manages to do ever so much for CMA with meager resources.

The one thing that is paramount to me in the organization, no matter who is at the helm and running the day-to-day workings, is that CMA remains committed to its members and their students.

Our committee structure has served us well for many years because it provides opportunities for our members to develop their own planning and presentation skills, while contributing immensely to the organization as a whole. A real challenge for future leaders in CMA will be providing the infrastructure we need without eroding the strong volunteer base.

Various individuals within CMA may at times differ about how to achieve certain goals, but the commitment to what CMA does for its members and their students is always shared.

Thanks for letting me join you on this ride!
Not ready to let go of CMA’s lifelines

By Lance Speere
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Two people instrumental to CMA’s success throughout the past two decades are leaving their positions this year, and their contributions to CMA will be sorely missed.

Eddie Blick has worked behind the scenes for years running the CMA-L listserv, the unofficial listserv of this organization—and the single-most effective and no-cost method of instant communication for college media advisers around the world.

Mark Goodman has been the face of the Student Press Law Center for as long as any of us can remember. You can’t think of SPLC without thinking of Mark. And many of us have probably never imagined an SPLC without Mark.

Eddie is retiring this summer from Louisiana Tech. Mark is taking a position this fall at Kent State University as the Knight Chair of Scholastic Journalism.

College media advisers won’t suddenly become inept, and the media organizations they advise won’t suddenly screech to a halt. But it won’t quite seem the same, either.

It seems like every day for the past 10 years since I joined CMA, I have found an e-mail from the CMA listserv in my inbox. If there wasn’t, the following thought would inevitably flash through my mind: “Oh my gosh! Is the listserv down? Somebody call Eddie!”

It goes without saying that the listserv is the advising lifeline for many of us, including those who prefer to simply lurk and absorb the wit and wisdom offered by our colleagues.

A listserv will continue to exist, but it won’t be an Eddie Blick listserv. CMA will take ownership of the new members-only listserv currently being set up by CMA Treasurer Bill Neville. And you will be receiving an invitation to join the listserv any day now, if you already haven’t.

The new listserv will offer most of the same features of the old one, including, we hope, most of the same CMA characters that populate Eddie’s listserv.

Change is not always welcome for some. And undoubtedly we’ll experience some growing pains with the new listserv.

We won’t mind it if anyone wants to grumble, “We didn’t have these problems with Eddie’s listserv.” Because you’re probably right. But with patience and time, we’ll grow into the new listserv. It will start to fit, and we’ll begin to feel more and more comfortable in it.

But that doesn’t mean we’ll forget about the glory days of Eddie’s CMA-L listserv, or about Eddie, working silently behind the scenes, helping to connect our advising community.

Mark Goodman, on the other hand, has been at the forefront of student media First Amendment battles for 22 years. That’s longer than most of us have been advising.

Mark has been at nearly every college media convention or workshop, offering his legal advice and wisdom. He’s been one of the first people we try to introduce new advisers to. We proudly seat him at our head table and pass the hat for SPLC.

We approach him with all kinds of challenges: stolen newspapers, funding-cut threats, potential libel lawsuits, prior review demands, etc. And Mark always listens, patiently, head slightly down, nodding, understanding.

He has a way of making us feel better just by being there, in front of us, like a lighthouse in a fog of First Amendment conundrums.

Thankfully, Mark has built an SPLC that is populated with equally qualified legal advisers and student press advocates. Our calls will not go unheeded and our battles will continue to be fought. Mark has seen to that.

Nonetheless, his calm and assuring voice will be missed. We’ll just have to get used to the fact that SPLC exists without Mark at that helm. And in time, we will.

But for now I want to remember a CMA world where Mark Goodman and Eddie Blick reside as our friends and our lifelines.

Thank you, to both, from all of us at CMA.
College newspaper editors have asked me what books they should keep in their office. The AP stylebook is an easy choice. So is one of the many fine introductory reporting textbooks. Tim Harrower’s “The Newspaper Designer’s Handbook” deserves a place on the shelf.

There’s a new addition to my list: Rachele Kanigel’s “The Student Newspaper Survival Guide” (Blackwell, 2006; paperback $34.99).

Kanigel is a veteran CMA member who currently heads up the CMA professional development program committee. The book reflects her 20 years of experience as a journalist and her stints as adviser to the campus newspapers at San Francisco State University, where she currently teaches, and California State University at Monterey Bay.

The book’s 18 chapters include the usual areas of reporting, editing and design. But it also ventures into such areas as recruiting and training a staff, starting a newspaper, advertising and the role of the student press, issues not covered in conventional news writing texts.

The chapters are well illustrated with photos of front pages and Web sites from award-winning college newspapers, and they include boxed tips from professionals and student editors on such subjects as getting in touch with readers and how to find story ideas.

There are Q-and-A sessions with experts, listings of print and Web sources for additional information and end-of-chapter activities to reinforce the lessons.

The author was inventive in offering templates such as employment applications for staffers, sample job descriptions, elements of a readership survey and editor performance evaluations. The list of newspaper contests is another welcome addition.

Kanigel is generous in thanking the CMA listserv and dozens of CMA members by name for their roles in supplying the wide range of information contained in the 188 pages.

In covering the entire waterfront, Kanigel is forced to keep most chapters short. Very short. The entire news-writing chapter is all of seven pages long (although there are other chapters that cover similar issues, such as a separate reporting chapter).

Arts and Entertainment gets all of six pages. So if it is depth of information you want or need, you should use this book as only a first step.

Yet the very fact that are chapters on A&E writing, opinion writing and lifestyle pages is a plus because it can be hard to find a book that offers a cogent summary of the basics for people entering these areas.

The book also is, by definition, a cookbook: take this reporting ingredient, add those two and, voila, you have a news package. There is no stress on having students discover concepts themselves, no place for critical thinking or novel connection of concepts. Even the chapters on ethics and law are all laid out in 1,2,3 style.

If the handbook is to be used in any conventional classroom course, it needs to be complemented by something more theoretical.

College newspapers often get newcomers who show up at the door with interest—but no experience—in writing. For them, this book is ideal. Experienced college reporters and editors also will benefit from using it to better understand other aspects of the paper, from advertising to photojournalism and Web site design.

And even veteran newspaper advisers will find much to enjoy and benefit from in this essential addition to the bookshelf. Most advisers are not expert on every aspect of a student newspaper, and the book does a terrific job of filling out any missing information and bringing you up to date on changes in the field.

Kanigel offers generous praise in her book for the work and advice of CMA members, as well as the CMA listserv.
Take a page from ‘The Student Newspaper Survival Guide’ — Literally

For this bi-month’s lesson plan, we’re ripping a page—Page 14, to be exact—from Rachele Kanigel’s textbook, reviewed on the previous page of this newsletter. This material is printed here with permission from Kanigel, who teaches at San Francisco State University. She can be reached at rkanigel@gmail.com.

Training Exercises

#1: Story Idea Hunt

Break participants into groups of three or four. Make sure each group has people in a variety of positions—editor, reporter, photographer, designer, etc.

Send the groups out on campus for half an hour and instruct them to come back with at least three story ideas. You may assign each team to go to a certain building or part of campus or allow them to go wherever they choose.

When the groups return have them pitch the story ideas to the whole staff. Make a list of the story ideas on a board and then discuss which would make good stories for the paper.

#2: Project Planning

Arrange participants in two concentric circles: In the smaller, inner circle place the editor in chief, opinion editor, photo editor or chief photographer, news editor, art director or lead designer, graphics editor, online editor and possibly two or three other editors. The rest of the group should sit in a circle around them.

Then propose a news scenario—the adoption of new smoking restrictions on campus, flooding in the student health center, a visit to campus by the president of the United States.

Have the inner group spend 15 minutes planning how the paper will cover the story. Then have the outer group critique the planning process by addressing these questions:

• Did anyone dominate the conversation?
• Did everyone get a chance to speak?
• Did the group discuss photos as well as text?
• Did the group come up with good ideas for graphics?
• Did the group come up with innovative ideas for presenting the story on the Web?
• Did the group miss any important angles on the story?
• What was productive about the discussion? What wasn’t productive?

Then break the rest of the staff into small groups to discuss real upcoming stories and how they can enhance those stories with graphics, photos and special online features such as discussion boards, links, polls, slide shows and multimedia reports.

#3: Interviewing

Break participants into groups of three. In each, one person plays the role of a reporter and one the role of a source. The third person is an observer who will take notes on the interaction.

Have the reporter interview the source for five minutes for a short biographical profile.

Next, have members of the group rotate. The observer becomes the reporter, the reporter becomes the source, the source becomes the observer. Have the new reporter interview the source for five minutes.

Then switch one more time. By now, each person has played every role.

Finally, have the groups discuss the interactions.

What did the observers notice? Did the reporters establish rapport with the sources? How were the reporters at drawing out their sources? Did they follow up on interesting things the sources said?

How did the sources feel about the interaction? Did the reporters make them feel comfortable? Did they feel heard?

How did the reporters feel about the interaction? What do they think they did well? How do they think they could have improved?

If time permits, you could expand this exercise by giving each reporter time to write a brief profile of the source and then discuss the stories.

#4: Scavenger Hunt

During a training workshop for editors or for the whole staff, divide participants into groups of four or five. Try to group people with others they don’t know well or with whom they don’t normally work.

Hand each group a campus map, then tell the groups to come back in a set amount of time (an hour and a half works well) with as many of these items as they can collect (or come up with your own list):

• A bus schedule for a line that goes to campus
• Three fliers for different campus events
• A brochure from the student health center
• A menu from a campus restaurant
• A brochure from an academic department
• A game schedule for an athletic team
• A library map or some other handout readily available at the library

Reward the winning team with a gift certificate or coupons to a campus eatery and encourage them to celebrate their victory with meal together.
And she blogged about the spirit and togetherness of the Hokie Nation and how she wished she could be part of something so special.

“The message I have seen over and over and over again in the past three days is ‘We are all Hokies,’” she wrote. “And today, I realized that by being here and showing my support through telling their story through a student’s point of view, I am a Hokie too.”

Karen blogged about the unusual smell upon arriving their first night onto the Blacksburg campus—a smell she couldn’t quite identify at first.

“It was a combination of every scent of candle you can think of,” she wrote. “There were so many tiny candles that the air actually smelled sweet.”

And she blogged about whether a disturbed mass killer should be forgiven.

David put down his camera long enough to blog about what he viewed as the national media’s cavalier treatment of students who had experienced unfathomable tragedy.

“It seemed every time a student broke down, at least three photogs and five cameramen rushed them,” he wrote. “People couldn’t even have moments of sorrow as they looked at the memorial on the lawn in the center of campus without being bombed by the media.”

David also wrote a letter to the editor of the Collegiate Times suggesting that No. 32 be retired from all VT sports teams in remembrance of the 32 victims of the massacre.

I’m obviously biased, but I thought The Orion’s VT coverage was an extraordinary undertaking for a newspaper from so far away. It was expensive, to be sure, but how do you put a price tag on a priceless educational experience?

Ashley and Karen and David all became better journalists in Blacksburg, and they all learned about the kind of journalists they want to be—and not be.
the response abilities of local hospitals and the detainment of the staff’s photo editor. Columnists immediately began debating the issue of gun control, and photographers captured images of the massive police and media presence.

Yet even with the hardest news there was a softness to the delivery. As members of the community, the students were not as eager about catching administrators for doing something wrong as they were about ensuring their readers were safe — both physically and emotionally.

Two days later, the staff huddled around the television to watch NBC broadcast Seung-Hui Cho’s video manifesto. Everyone had the same question in their minds: What would the newspaper do with the images?

The day before, the editor had made the decision that Cho’s image would not appear on the front page. On this day, she quickly reiterated that stance.

At the time, I privately disagreed with the decision but deferred to her judgment. Cho’s image, and certainly this latest development, were stunningly newsworthy and clear Page 1 contenders. I began to worry that, in trying to spare people’s feelings, the staff was becoming more of a memorial than a newspaper.

That ended up not being the case, however. Cho’s picture, as well as a screenshot of his broadcast rant, did appear in the newspaper, but inside.

It’s not that they didn’t think the images were big news, staff members said, but the idea of walking by every newspaper rack on campus and seeing those images over and over was unsettling.

It’s a fair and debatable argument, but what made it easier to understand is that, once again, the staff was focused on the readers.

As advisers, sometimes our biggest failings are not having the right words at the right time. Even after students had left for the summer, I kept thinking back to my conversation with our photo editor, Shaozhuo, and how nothing I said seemed to comfort him.

So I sent him an e-mail:

“I’ve been thinking a lot about your concerns related to getting paid for your photographs. I know I had said earlier that you were simply doing your job, and you should never feel guilty about doing your job. I still believe that, but there’s something I want to add.

“It’s not just about doing your job, but whom you do it for. And throughout this entire ordeal, I have repeatedly seen you and the rest of the staff working diligently for your readers. That’s something that should never make you feel guilty and in fact should make you feel proud.

“Keep up the good work. Sleep well. And take care of yourself.”
The 411 ...

June 24-27
New Advisers Workshop
Louisville, Ky.
www.collegemedia.org

August 2-5
ACP/CMA College Summer Journalism Workshops
Baltimore
www.studentpress.org

Oct. 24-28
ACP/CMA National College Media Convention
Washington, D.C.
www.collegemedia.org

Feb. 15-17, 2008
ACP Best of the Midwest College Newspaper Convention
Minneapolis
www.studentpress.org

Feb. 28-March 2, 2008
ACP National College Newspaper Convention
San Francisco
www.studentpress.org

Oct. 30-Nov. 2, 2008
ACP/CMA National College Media Convention
Kansas City, Mo.

Tell us your stories, histories, herstories, travels and travels. Send submissions to Christopher.Evans@uvm.edu.

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