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Finances

Income

Financial matters are not, strictly speaking, the editor's concern. They are the province of the group's administrative officers. But in practical terms the newsletter will be the group's largest expense, so the editor must keep budgetary considerations in mind as a critical factor in the conscientious fulfillment of his obligations.

The topic of local group finances, which is well covered in the *Local Secretary's Handbook*, includes sources of income such as funding from National, RVC discretionary funds, and door charges at functions. Some sources of funds will depend upon the editor's cooperation. While no one can tell the editor what he must publish (apart from those things that are required by law or by the bylaws), it is in the editor's own best interests—as well as the group's—to do his part for the solvency of the group by allocating appropriate space to financial matters and by fulfilling the requirements for institutional funding.

In addition to qualifying for funding—which may or may not exceed the corresponding actual expenses—and supporting other efforts to raise money, the newsletter can pay its own way in part by the sale of space to advertisers.

With respect to income, then, this section will discuss only what the editor may be expected to do.

The remainder of this section and all of the next are represented below in skeletal form only; some, if not all, of the information they contain is out of date and potentially misleading. Editors should obtain current information and guidance on these topics from the appropriate sources. —M.A. 1/26/2002

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Expenditures

In the *Local Secretary's Handbook*,* Amy Shaughnessy writes: "If your Editor is willing and able to put out a high-quality newsletter, as much money as possible should be available to provide the necessary paper and printing to bring it to fruition. However, volume is no substitute for quality. It is not a good use of your group's funds to print everything any member submits for publication. The Editor must be discriminating in selecting which items will interest enough members to justify the expense of printing them. A budget must be established so that the Editor knows how many pages can be printed each month and can select material for publication on that basis."

How the money is managed can vary from group to group. One group may prepare a twelve-month budget allocating a fixed sum for publications, which the editor is expected to apportion equally among all issues, and the treasurer simply will not approve expenditures that exceed it without a special vote of the executive committee. In another group, the editor phones the treasurer halfway through paste-up and asks if the exchequer can stand an extra eight pages in that issue. Some groups budget even more informally than that. One way or another, expenses must be paid and should be planned. The editor must understand and respect the limitations within which he is expected to work. He is also at liberty, of course, to challenge what he believes to be unreasonable limitations—and should be well prepared to substantiate an appeal for a larger budget. What is important to remember is that the editor, whether elected or appointed, does not hold the purse strings and is accountable for his expenditures.

* Ancient edition.

The major categories of expenses are printing and postage. Incidental expenses will occur and should be taken into account.

Printing

Commercial rates vary from area to area, though there is almost certain to be a reduced rate for larger quantities. There is no alternative to shopping around. Some editors may find their best deal with quick-copy shops that are not truly “printers”—there is no press, no plate, and no actual inking involved. High-quality copying machines often produce results that are indistinguishable from, and even sometimes superior to, those of inexpensive offset processes. The size of your press run and the number of pages per issue, as well as the turnaround you require, are factors to consider. (Note that second class mailing regulations specify offset printing*; see Chapter 5.)

Some editors are fortunate enough to find someone in their group who can secure printing services at little or no cost to the group. You would be smart to ask around. One group found a commercial arts student whose class made a project of running the newsletter, complete with colored inks and handsome graphics. Occasionally a member’s employer permits liberal use of the office copier. A few groups have invested in their own printing equipment.

Bear in mind that there are often qualitative tradeoffs with free duplication or owned equipment. Inferior reproduction quality, a long-term commitment to a deteriorating piece of hardware and an inflexible format, or unilateral reliance upon a specific member’s goodwill may sometimes be a bad bargain. Weigh your alternatives before locking yourself into an arrangement that could ultimately cost you more than the immediate savings are worth. It is wise to confer with the local secretary and/or other officers in making a choice of printer or in contemplating a change of printing method. The editor may administer the publications budget, but he does not authorize it.

Postage

Rate increases aside, postage is a fixed per-issue per-member expense.* The executive committee should decide when to make the switch to second class or bulk rate, taking into account permit costs, restrictions, paperwork, and contingent funding from National. The editor should contribute to the decision-making process but plan to comply with the executive committee’s conclusion, adjusting production and mailing timetables accordingly and meeting all postal requirements that pertain to the publication itself.

Equipment, Supplies, and Incidentals

The editor is responsible for maintaining the supplies and equipment necessary to do his job. While many editors may elect to contribute such materials as typewriter ribbon, paper, and correction fluid, there is a principle about volunteer jobs that says that those who donate their time and their skills should not be expected to pay for the privilege. You should feel no embarrassment about requesting reimbursement for direct out-of-pocket expenses such as rubber cement or wax, postage for copies to members who claim nonreceipt, and telephone calls made in the line of duty. Be businesslike about retaining receipts, recording expenses and any advances received against expenses, and turning them in regularly.

* In 2002 this is subject to verification.

Purchase of items of equipment such as saddle staplers and investment in bulk-quantity supplies such as paste-up boards should be approved in advance, since a few dollars above the normal monthly budget can be a major expense in some groups. Don't ever gamble on the executive committee's approval of a purchase unless you think you might like to end up owning the item yourself.