Marine Journalism in Hawai‘i: *Seawords* Internship

Final Report

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Abstract:
Beginning in June, 2005, I worked for the Marine Option Program's (MOP) Seawords newsletter with progressively increasing involvement. The newsletter provides students, faculty, alumni, and the general public information about current activities of the MOP and also contains articles about current research, concerns, and events relating to the ocean with specific focus on the Pacific and Hawai‘i. In December of 2005, I became the editor of Seawords and began completing responsibilities including researching, composing and editing articles and accompanying graphics, composing the newsletter layout, and working with the Seawords assistant editor, Julie Grass, to find and develop issues of interest for her articles. I also contributed to the maintenance and organization of the Seawords archives and worked with Justin Quezon, MOP webmaster, to remodel the Seawords website which included developing a color format available online. In my presentation I will briefly cover the history and evolution of Seawords since its conception. I will also discuss changes I have made to the format as editor and practical and professional skills I have acquired during the internship.

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Introduction:

An early issue of MOP's newsletter when it was still named MOP Hotline.
Seawords newsletter originated as Marine Option Program News in 1971 and has continued to be published by MOP under various names since. The publication, sponsored entirely by MOP, serves to inform MOP members and the marine community about current happenings in the program itself and in the local marine community. Currently, Seawords is a monthly publication consisting of at least four pages of text and graphics and a double-sided insert with conference listings, job and scholarship opportunities, and miscellaneous marine-related announcements. Every semester, Seawords prints a list of marine-related classes students can use to fulfill certificate requirements, a review of the MOP symposium and MOP graduation, and current events in MOP and the marine community. Approximately 530 issues are printed in black and white by University of Hawai‘i Duplicating Services every monthly and every issue is also posted online. Copies are mailed to more than 400 recipients, and subscribers to the Seawords email list receive electronic notification when a new issue is posted. Beginning in May of 2006, the online version of the newsletter was posted in color. While the publication always encourages and accepts submissions from students, the articles and photographs are primarily researched and composed by Seawords staff.

The publication is primarily targeted to MOP students and members, and serves to inform them about current MOP happenings as well as current issues relating to the marine environment. Also, Seawords is available to alumni, researchers, scholars, and the general public. Therefore, it acts as an avenue for spreading knowledge and information. The ocean is a vital resource for Hawai‘i and the rest of the Pacific; public awareness promotes responsible behavior and informs the local electorate so they can better manage the resources of the sea.

As Editor, I was responsible for at least one article and corresponding graphics every month, for composing the layout of all pages excepting the insert and for composing the color version to be posted online. I was also responsible for formulating potential articles for the Assistant Editor and for reviewing, revising, and editing all submissions as needed. Final editing and approval was done by Dr. Sherwood Maynard, MOP Director. Beginning spring semester 2007, I posted links to marine-related articles on the Seawords website; I worked jointly with Julie Grass, the assistant editor in finding appropriate and provocative articles and will supply a list to Justin Quezon, MOP Webmaster.

The Editor position offered a great deal of experiential instruction. First, the position forced me to be aware of current issues in the marine sector. By regularly browsing journals, newspapers, and other scientific publications, I gained a broad knowledge base from which I can draw ideas for articles and that also gave me a greater understanding of the ocean and marine fields. I completed personal as well as electronic (email) and audio (phone) interviews, improving my communication and critical analysis skills. I gained experience in doing relatively short-term research, and, in composing the articles themselves, I improved my writing skills and learned how to balance scientific requirements for writing with those for journalistic text. I practiced basic photography using a digital camera and did simple adjustments using Adobe Photoshop. In composing the layout, I improved my understanding of visual presentation of information, arranging
text and images to best catch the attention of readers and to effectively communicate the subject matter of each piece. I used Adobe InDesign to construct the layout, developing my abilities to use said program.

Working as Editor of Seawords gave me substantial experience working as part of a team. I worked directly with Julie Grass, the Assistant Editor, in reviewing each article and issue and in completing other duties associated with constructing and distributing the newsletter. Additionally, I worked in the MOP office and with other MOP staff, promoting the program through the Seawords publication and also through my interactions with students and staff members. Working in the MOP office taught me to collaborate with a team in furthering the program and aiding students.

Methods and Materials:

As Editor, I was responsible for the publication from each issue’s inception to its publication. I regularly perused newspapers, journals, magazines, and the internet to develop article ideas that were relevant to contemporary marine issues and also frequently consulted Seawords archives as well as the MOP Director, Dr. Sherwood Maynard, all campus coordinators, and, quite frequently, the Manoa coordinator, Jeff Kuwabara to establish upcoming MOP events such as symposia and graduations that Seawords regularly covers.

For the first five issues of 2007, during the final semester of my internship, I attended the fall MOP O‘ahu graduation and both the Maritime Archaeology and History of Hawai‘i and the Pacific Symposium as well as the annual MOP Symposium to cover these events for Seawords. I also assisted Julie Grass, the Assistant Editor, in developing a series on the possible impacts of global warming on marine and coastal environments. I also coordinated with UH Hilo Student Coordinator, Jason Trimble, to include an article he wrote about his experience removing invasive coral as part of our continuing efforts to incorporate the entire MOP system into the Seawords dialogue. For the April issue, I decided to pair one article reporting on the status of wild fisheries and one on the developments of aquaculture as both issues were appearing in many scholarly and scientific publications. Because Julie Grass was enrolled in a living marine resources class, I designated the fisheries research to her and began investigating the state of the aquaculture industry in Hawai‘i. As part of this project, I attended a MOP field trip to three aquaculture farms on O‘ahu where I talked with the managers and owners and observed commercial mariculture operations. Because Dr. Sherwood Maynard is retiring this year, the May issue was dedicated to him so most of the research included soliciting written pieces from past students and coworkers with fond recollections and entertaining anecdotes about Dr. Maynard’s nearly three decades with MOP. This issue also included a piece recounting presentations from the MOP symposium that was a collaboration by me and Julie Grass. The May issue was my final issue as Seawords Editor.

In developing the articles and collecting information, I primarily relied on publications and contacts available through MOP, occasionally contacting various UH student and professors to supplement my own paper research. MOP also provided vital materials for composing articles and layouts including digital cameras, both desktop and laptop computers, and the necessary programs: Microsoft Office and the Adobe Creative
Suite. For most issues, Julie Grass and I took our own photographs although we also relied on images provided by other MOP staff and students as well as some provided by various organizations. For example the humpback whale photos used in the February issue were provided by the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary. Both Ms. Grass and I relied primarily on the Seawords desktop computer in the MOP office and checked out the program’s digital cameras when needed.

In order to have access to necessary Hawaiian language diacriticals, I wrote and edited all articles in Microsoft word, returning hard copies with corrections to other article authors whenever possible. I edited and adjusted all the photographs in Adobe Photoshop and constructed all the layouts using Adobe InDesign. In October of 2005, I attended a seven-hour training course in InDesign and primarily use techniques from that class as well as those I’ve discovered through the process of constructing seventeen issues since beginning as Editor. University Duplicating Services completes all the printing of hard copies and the MOP Web Master posted online color issues that I also composed in InDesign.

Discussion:

Although Seawords has been a MOP establishment for many many years, with each new editor, the newsletter undergoes changes. Over three decades, new technology has had a significant impact on the appearance of the Seawords layout, but even in since the turn of the century, when digital cameras and computers were already standard tools in layout composition, staff members have used a variety of programs and styles to effectively redesign the publication while continuing to provide information about MOP. In 2004, under the editorship of Brian Richardson, with two assistant editors, Seawords became shorter and contained primarily stories and articles. In the prior year, job, internship, and symposium announcements each had more extensive written descriptions that, after the newsletter was shortened, were posted online and dispersed to students via email (Richardson, 2004). In February of 2004, staff used blue paper for all issues, and in the December issue, the insert was introduced to hold announcements. Over the next two years, Seawords primarily contained reports regarding immediate MOP activities such as field trips, graduations, symposia, and changes of staff. There were occasional articles regarding current marine issues, such as Corinne Knutson’s (Assistant Editor) discussion of the proposed Pupukea development, and the majority of all printed information emerged from O‘ahu events and matters (Knutson, 2005).

In June of 2005, Christine Fron started as Editor, and I began my duties as Assistant Editor. My first two pieces were reviews of my experiences visiting QUEST 2005 and completing my internship on a National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration’s Lobster Cruise. Because I did not have extensive experience in journalistic writing, one of the biggest challenges for these articles was adjusting my somewhat wordy and abstract ‘English-major’ writing style to compose informative and terse prose based in concrete occurrences and ideas. Fortunately, in both cases I was physically present for both programs, although during QUEST I was an observer rather than a participant. Once the semester began, I became more involved in MOP and better understood the workings of the program and the place of Seawords in MOP. While Fron
began what was intended to be a three-part series about the honu, or green sea turtle (*C. mydas*), I interviewed new MOP employees and attended the ‘Ohana fundraiser and wrote two pieces directly relating to program events. At the end of November, Fron resigned and so for the November and December issue I took over the Editor position and composed both layouts, switching from PageMaker to InDesign and putting to use the skills I learned in the class I took for the latter program. Because I had little time to compose the last two issues of 2005, I made few changes to the layout and followed the format of past Editors.

For 2006, I had three primary goals: to improve timeliness of publication, to include materials beyond Manoa MOP activities, and to refurbish and improve the layout. As I had acquired responsibility for composing the layout and also had gained the aid of an Assistant Editor, the first goal was the first we worked to meet. Throughout the year, I attempted to have the layout composed by the 20th of every month. When I could meet this goal, I found it to be effective, however, class scheduling as well as the unpredictable schedules of events and interviewees sometimes made meeting this goal difficult. In order to meet the second goal, I composed one article about the controversy surrounding the proposed development of Kaka'ako Makai for February, and Julie Grass composed two pieces about the inter-island ferry, Hawaiian Superferry. By May, I had changed the layout to incorporate the MOP logo into the newsletter name and to make the appearance of the title page complement that of the following pages by putting a bold underline at the top of both. I tried adding the MOP logo as a water mark to every page, but found it distracting to both images and text and, after the May issue, only used the water-mark as a backdrop for the address labels on the final page. Also in May, I started using drop-shadows and different text box borders to emphasize short pieces such as that listing the State High School Science Fair Best Marine-Related Research Project that complemented a larger article about the award winners at the 2006 Spring MOP Symposium (Anders and Grass, 2006).

The June, July, and August issues presented geographical complications resulting from a series of unforeseen circumstances that put both me and Julie Grass out of state for most of the summer. Because this made access to computer and printing resources very difficult, we ultimately decided to create one large summer issue. This compromise presented its own difficulties as we had to incorporate several articles and announcements into one coherent issue. I also created an opportunity to experiment with layout style as we were working with twelve printed pages that had to include announcements usually printed on the insert rather than the usual four pages. This allowed me to create a graphic cover page and two-page spreads for both the QUEST program and Ms. Grass’s article about the designation of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands as a National Monument. I was pleased with these two spreads as I felt they gave appropriate recognition to significant events for MOP and Hawai‘i’s marine environment in a way that was appealing to casual readers as well as those within the program. I was disappointed, however, with the fact that the articles in this issue, as within many of the issues, were not necessarily complimentary and, while they were united under the umbrella of ‘current marine and MOP events,’ they did not supplement or balance each other. While we had some congruence between successive issues with March and April of 2005 both having
pieces presenting controversy around coastal development and the proposed Superferry service, the standard two articles in each issue as well as the four in the summer issue covered disparate subject matter.

In October of 2006, I was able to realize one of my goals of including submissions from islands other than O‘ahu (Christopher, 2006). The UH Hilo Student Coordinator, Jason Trimble, worked with me and the UH Hilo MOP student authors of the piece to compile the text and the images necessary for the spread. In this instance, I discovered that sending revision commentary electronically was necessary and worked with Trimble and Christopher using Microsoft Word’s reviewing function. While this method, in theory, should have been easiest for all involved, because we all had different levels of experience with this function, it proved to be quite complicated. Ultimately, I was able to work with the authors to improve the piece, but publication was somewhat delayed because we could not complete the spread until both the authors and I had approved the final version. In 2007, when I worked with Jason Trimble on an article he wrote about removing invasive coral in Kaua‘i, I used the same method of electronic editing and found it to be much more efficient and effective. Electronic edits could prove to be very useful for Seawords staff, especially in the event of travel or other geographical constraints, however, all parties involved should have some experience with the program and function to be used before this is attempted again.

By the beginning of 2007, I was happy with the layout format and made few changes aside from minor ones to accommodate various articles subjects. Late in 2006, I decided to begin a series on the impact of global climate change on Hawai‘i’s oceans. This resulted in one introductory article that I wrote (Anders, Dec. 2006) and two by Julie Grass (Grass, Jan. and Feb. 2007, but lost some momentum towards the end most likely because we did not start with specific article subjects, but rather hoped topics fitting under the heading would emerge. I felt that the broad subject of climate change was relevant and interesting and was happy with those pieces that did result from this idea, but felt that if we had identified clearly delineated subtopics before beginning I could have better planned the order of publication and maintained continuity. Also, I believe that had I developed a specific layout design that would have visually identified installations in the series, the plan would have been more successful. Series such as that about climate change as well as Fron’s about sea turtles could be a very useful tool for future Editors to create continuity between issues as well as to build a dedicated readership, but they should be more thoroughly developed the spread design as well as subject matter should be planned in advance. Coastal erosion, marine species diversity, and ocean voyaging, for example, are all interesting central themes around which series of articles could be based. Also, Seawords could become involved in the current debate about marine protected areas, possibly drawing on MOP students and alumni to offer expert opinions about the large-scale and small-scale ecological impacts of areas such as Hanauma Bay, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, and Kealakekua Bay. Such series could also address concerns from the commercial fisheries and diving industries. For the April, 2007 issue, I decided to pair a piece about the status of commercial fisheries and one about aquaculture as contemporary literature contained much debate as to the viability of wild fisheries and of cultured ones. While time and space prevented
extensive investigations of either topic, I was happy with the end product as I felt that the issue, more than others, had complimentary content.

While I started as *Seawords* Editor with perhaps unrealistic expectations as far as the rate of change, over the two years I spent working on the publication, it did undergo several changes. InDesign has proved to be an effective and efficient program to use and the layout is relatively standardized, but could easily be improved by specializing spreads for different content. Because most issues contain only two articles that begin on the first page, inserting an issue highlights would be somewhat redundant, but may prove successful for longer issues. While print quality cannot be controlled very much, continued experimentation with Adobe Photoshop and perhaps a workshop for the Editor could improve photo quality for the print version. The online version has proven to be a success, allowing a more visually stimulating color issue while avoiding prohibitively expensive color printing costs. Also, electronic distribution allows the program to reach a wider audience and to reduce paper use. The *Seawords* website has also become more responsive with the addition of the section with links to external marine-related articles, although maintaining this section has proven to be more time consuming than expected and readership is difficult to measure.

Like all written material, *Seawords* will always have room for improvement and future Editors will have the opportunity to build upon precedents set by decades of work. One area of the publication that I was not able to focus on was attention to detail. Standardization of formatting for titles, text, and image captions as well as careful consideration of capitalization and diacritical use would bring the publication to a more professional level. Also, scientific articles should be more thoroughly referenced to increase validity of *Seawords* pieces, especially among our highly informed audience. Undoubtedly, the newsletter will continue to cover MOP events and activities and may benefit from the development of a series tracking MOP students through their projects each semester as well as MOP alumni who are continuing to make an impact on the marine community. This type of series would also be a good forum to include MOP students and activities from outside Manoa where publication is based. While the two Hilo articles were a substantial improvement from my previous reliance on Manoa contacts and events in developing and researching articles, strengthened associations with other campus students, staff, and faculty would diversify and strengthen the newsletter as well as improving program-wide service.

I believe that *Seawords* has successfully served to inform the MOP community about program events and has also efficiently engaged and enlightened readers interested in current ocean-related issues. We have responded to contemporary controversy and occurrences while remaining constant in our efforts to cover program activities, using the newsletter as a forum to impart the many strengths of the Marine Option Program.

**Evaluation of Learning:**

As both Assistant Editor and Editor of *Seawords*, I have acquired significant and substantial experience with an actual marine environment publication. Creating *Seawords* issues from start to finish has given me a great deal of insight into the many tasks and
skills involved in constructing a periodical that serves MOP as well as the many members of its ‘ohana.

I was constantly surprised by the difficulty of developing and researching articles ideas; although most of the written pieces were relatively short, they required a significant amount of reading of both online and printed materials as well as effort in contacting and communicating with experts and involved parties. Working under constant deadlines definitely motivated me to commit to and finish article projects and also allowed me to improve my writing skills so that I can now communicate a significant amount of information in a relatively small amount of text. I also was able to develop a more journalistic style that hopefully keeps audiences’ attention without becoming tediously difficult to read. In addition to developing my writing skills, I have also gained some experience in photography. Although I relied primarily on the casual ‘point and shoot’ method, I spent a great deal of time working with MOP’s cameras and in Photoshop to take and then manipulate photographs that are clear and visually pleasing in their final printed form. The photography was, at time, quite frustrating as the quality of the printed product varied greatly with the status of Duplicating Service’s printing machines, the time I spent experimenting with computer enhancement and manipulation of images gave me much more confidence in this field than I had when I began. Also, working with Adobe InDesign proved to be extremely educational, especially because I had virtually no experience with graphic and layout design programs and, by necessity, learned the minimal skills as well as several auxiliary ones that allowed me to construct layouts relatively quickly and also to aid other staff members in composing posters, announcements and event programs. I have grown to enjoy working with the program and have found it to be extremely useful in constructing any sort of layout that combines graphic and text features. Technology and computer skills are by no means the only abilities I have honed in my capacity as Editor.

When I stepped into the Editor position, I was not aware how closely I would be working with our Assistant Editor, all MOP staff, as well as marine students, faculty, and experts. My interactions with the Manoa MOP staff almost always made my job easier as members proved to be valuable sources of information about MOP events and functions as well as references for marine experts in all fields of oceanic studies. I once again encountered geographical obstacles in working with program members from other campuses, but was fortunately forced to develop communications skills through a variety of media. I discovered that many people respond best to personal interactions while some appreciate the convenience of electronic communication, and others the ease of phone interviews. For each article, once I established a list of involved parties and experts I wanted to interview, I initiated contact in all ways possible until finding that which was most comfortable for each subject. Although I have always felt relatively comfortable speaking with people both casually and professionally, my internship with Seawords forced me to hone my written communication skills and also to adjust my own conversational style to more effectively elicit information. When I encountered resistance to discussions of work quality from other University departments, I benefited greatly from witnessing and participating in the process of bureaucratic processes and compromise. My most rewarding interactions were definitely those with other MOP staff
as I learned the value of working within a tightly-knit program those genuine serves students and grew to sincerely appreciate the assistance and wisdom offered to me by all of the employees. Through these interactions, I developed a strong desire to operate as a member of the team so that Seawords could serve not only its own goals, but also further those of the program as a whole.

I believe that as Editor of Seawords, my writing, graphic design, and interpersonal communication practical skills have all developed significantly. I have worked with equipment and programs I had never before encountered, experienced employment in the university system, and also had the opportunity to share this involvement with many people who enhanced my experience and contributed much wisdom and expertise both to Seawords and to my own knowledge bank. My experiential education journey has given me a breadth of skills reaching far beyond those I assumed I would need to complete the necessary tasks of the job.

Acknowledgements:
I would like to thank, of course, Dr. Sherwood Maynard who has been eminence grise for Seawords since long before I came on board, who is responsible for the existence of Seawords and MOP as it is today, who was my project mentor, and who advised me through uncountable obstacles as Seawords Editor and as an undergraduate student. I also would like to thank Jeff Kuwabara who, with unimaginable patience, instructed me regarding the functions and operations of MOP, who was always ready to offer any assistance I needed in producing a publishable product, who offered countless hours to MOP and Seawords, and who guided me through my professional and educational experience at UH Manoa. Also, Julie Grass, our Assistant Editor, deserves serious thanks for her written, visual, professional, and personal contributions to Seawords. I also owe any published successes to all the MOP alumni and staff, with special mention to UH Hilo student coordinator Jason Trimble who patiently persisted to ensure Hilo’s participation in Seawords, UH personnel, and marine experts who gave me their time and expertise for every article I wrote. Seawords is definitely the result of a combined effort and my endeavors would have been fruitless without the generous contributions of countless others.

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