

Communication Clubs Adapt to Remote Format with a Commitment to Serving Students

by Christine Nappi

Just because there's a pandemic, doesn't mean news reporting stops. That's something Gabriella DePinho, Editor-in-Chief of *The Quadrangle*, popularly known as The Quad, made clear to her editors and staff writers once the college went remote last March. Coming into this semester, DePinho felt confident about continuing news production and was determined to make sure staff writers would still be producing stories.

"The good thing about The Quad, even when we went... totally remote last semester, is [that the paper] is online, we have our website, and the way we operate doesn't require us to be in person," DePinho said. "So the transition online or even into this hybrid situation was pretty easy and pretty natural."

The Quad has been holding meet-accessible to on and off-campus students. The newspaper has been printing physical issues and will continue to do so as long as there is an on-campus presence at the college.

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in these areas, something DePinho views as a positive consequence.

DePinho describes how the pandemic has not only made club members realize how crucial journalism is in society, but it has also made the campus community more aware of the club's importance.

"I think we've always been important in keeping people in the loop," DePinho said. "But I think now with campus so disjointed, it's kind of just nice to hear that feedback [that] people appreciate our coverage of what's going on."

The Quadrangle

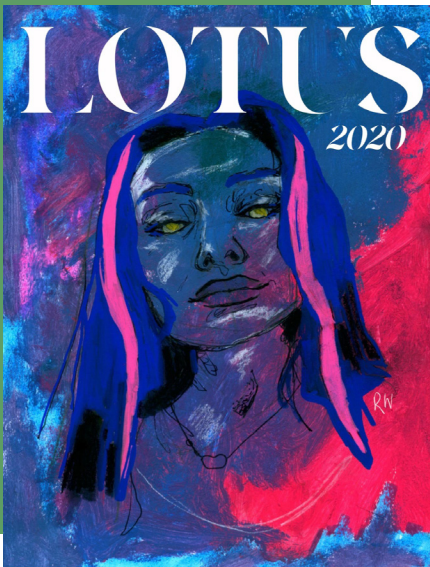


The Quad, however, has had to overcome certain challenges to succeed in this remote format. These include maintaining communication among writers to meet deadlines and learning how to conduct production of the paper remotely. In the past, the club has struggled to stay active on social media and increase their online presence, however, current dependency on virtual formats has challenged The Quad to refine and improve their skills

Although DePinho was determined to have The Quad continue production, she finds it wouldn't have been possible without the dedication from editors and writers.

"Everyone on staff just has a lot of enthusiasm for it, and I think everyone has [a] kind of love [for it,]" DePinho said. "I think that's what kept The Quad full each week... everyone's love for it has been even more visible than before."

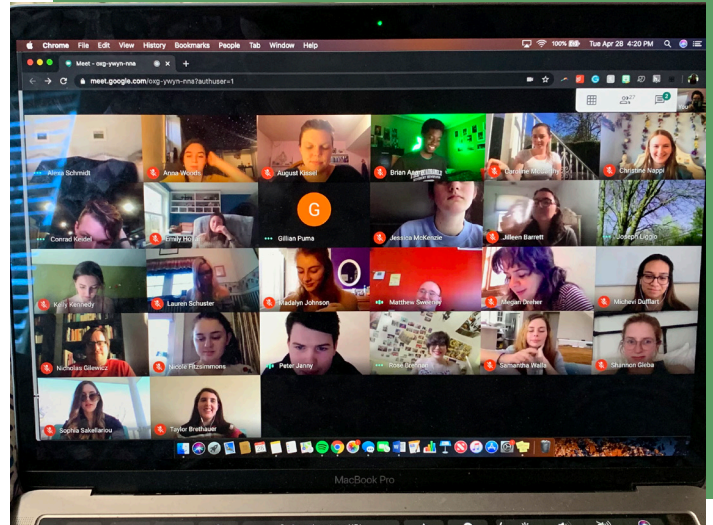
LOTUS



meeting happened, and then I realized how hard it was going to be to try to juggle a hybrid structure," Heavey said. "Trying to make it feel like this community and bring[ing] everyone together in this sense of collaboration that we really pride ourselves on, trying to mimic that in a hybrid setting was really challenging."

Despite the challenges brought on by the hybrid setting, the magazine's big 2020 issue came to fruition. The LOTUS team conducted a "Bare Skin" photoshoot that featured models as their most authentic selves with no hair or makeup done. The team, also composed articles centered around the pandemic, allowing writers to be honest and reflective during their time in quarantine.

Heavey finds the people who work on LOTUS make the magazine what it is: a community for students to express their individual passions. Regardless of the pandemic, Heavey knew this aspect of the club wouldn't deteriorate.



For Deirdre Heavey, coming back to campus this fall meant that she could return to doing what she loves: immersing herself in the community that is LOTUS Magazine. As the co-editor of the publication, Heavey was eager to get back to working on LOTUS, as the pandemic had halted production of the Spring 2020 issue. However, this semester, the LOTUS team produced an extensive issue for the whole year of 2020, with content from both spring and fall semesters.

This semester, LOTUS members adopted a hybrid format for club meetings, where they social distance outdoors while simultaneously communicating with remote students on Google Meet. Heavey found the hybrid format to be challenging as it takes away from the goal of LOTUS, which is to unite people to collectively create a publication together.

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MCTV

As a club that needs to be in-person to uphold its purpose and operate successfully, Manhattan College TV was forced to adjust to the challenges brought on by COVID-19. Under the leadership of club president Camryn Holly, MCTV adapted by embracing a hybrid format to continue producing content as they normally would.

“Usually we’re in the studio in Leo but we can’t use it like we normally would,” Holly said. “Our main goal this year is to make production still and do what we can.”

The executive board of MCTV has been able to continue using the studio in-person while taking various precautions. These include limiting the number of people who enter the studio, wearing masks, maintaining distance, sanitizing equipment after use, and designating one team member to a single piece of equipment for each production session. Although different than normal, Holly is still thankful for the opportunity to be back in the studio.

To include students who may not be able to come to the studio in-person, MCTV has also been meeting and coordinating production online. This includes filming tutorial videos for students trying to learn, and conducting interviews over Google Meet to use in production. Although not ideal, Holly describes that MCTV has been making the most of the virtual format by utilizing what they can and keeping an open mind about what opportunities it can bring for the future.

“Just like with any workplace or club, I think everyone is kind of realizing how much you can do remotely,” Holly said. “The hope is that this passes soon and then we’re all able to be together in the studio again like normal, but that’s not the case. Now that everyone knows we have the option to do stuff [remotely] I think that can maybe open more opportunities in the future.”

“ I think everyone is kind of realizing how much you can do remotely - Camryn Holly



According to Holly, this year will mainly be a learning and building year for MCTV. One of the main goals for MCTV this semester is to focus on educating students about the production process, despite the fact that many may not be able to enter the studio. MCTV hopes to provide many opportunities for students involved.

“Helping us brainstorm, helping us write, helping us edit... we want to be able to give everyone a chance to learn something,” Holly said. “Our goal is to just help students learn and have fun. We’re trying to keep it as enjoyable as possible, not too high stress or anything.”

PRSSA



Leading a club remotely has its challenges, but Madison Smith, president of Manhattan College's chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America, wouldn't let these challenges deter the club from its goal: helping students further develop in their careers.

The virtual format hasn't stopped PRSSA from operating as it did before COVID-19. Smith seized the opportunities brought on by the virtual format

and finds that it benefits the club in many ways, particularly in obtaining speakers from the industry.

"I think the fact that we are doing things remote[ly] this semester gave us unique opportunities to have more guest speakers," Smith said. "[This] is something that when I first became president I knew I wanted to have a lot of... speaker[s and] networking opportunities, because they're so valuable."

“The fact that we are doing things remotely this semester gave us unique opportunities to have more guest speakers – Madison Smith

In addition to hosting various guest speakers throughout the semester, the organization held an alumni panel, attended the International Conference for the Public Relations Society of America, and participated in a public relations campaign to raise awareness for Cystic Fibrosis. It also held various workshops for members on topics such as resume building and LinkedIn sessions, to help members develop professionally.

Smith was initially apprehensive about the success and overall operation of PRSSA when coming into the semester. Despite her fears, the club has not only gained its expected turnout but has increased its membership from years past.

"I'm really, really happy with our turnout," Smith said. "We've got a lot of great members that are super engaged, and what I feared has kind of subsided."

Smith's determination to keep PRSSA active this semester is because of how the pandemic has hindered students' ability to enter the workforce.

"The pandemic has been going on and I know a lot of people have lost their jobs and lost their internships and they kind of feel a little bit... helpless," Smith said. "But I think a lot of our events with professional organizations and our guest speakers and our alumni panel and site visit, I think I find that most rewarding because it's helping other people out."

WRCM

Amid the pandemic, radio is one of the most important aspects of communication for its ability to project people's voices anywhere, according to Samantha Walla, the General manager of WRCM. With this in mind, Walla has been determined to continue programming for the year-old organization throughout the semester despite the challenges brought on by COVID-19.

According to Walla, WRCM has been able to continue its programming as usual, with DJs broadcasting in-person from RLC, but has also included remote broadcasting opportunities for online students. Shows are still being broadcast each weekday from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m., with remote broadcasts being pre-



recorded and aired on Fridays. However, the sense of community that surrounds WRCM has been hindered by the inability to hold live, in-person events featuring bands and solo artists.

“We knew that there would be a significant decline in new DJs this year, but we are grateful to be able to broadcast at all,” Walla said. “I’d like to continue to grow and maintain our community during this time, which is slightly impacted by the format, but it’s important to just do the best we can and keep everyone engaged.”

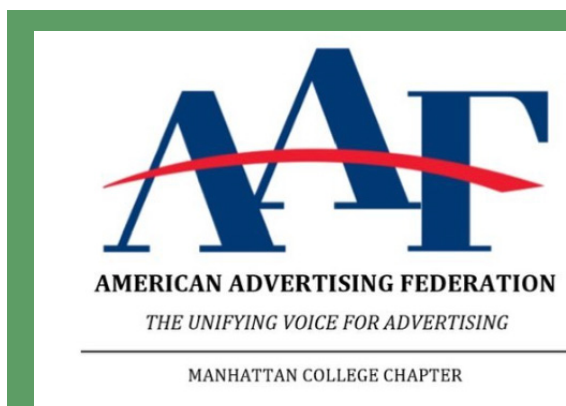
Regardless of the challenge to keep everyone engaged, Walla finds that the remote format will influence the operation of the club in the future. She states that remote shows will continue in years to come, because this allows flexibility in scheduling.

Although operating remotely has some positives, she doesn’t want to stray from programming, which she finds to be the heart of the club. Next semester, WRCM is hoping to have live outdoor concerts to increase involvement, engagement and to recreate the sense of community felt among members.

Walla was determined to have WRCM continue operating this semester, for she finds the club to an important aspect of the campus community at Manhattan.

“I’ve learned to go with the flow,” Walla said. “There are lots of silly difficulties that might seem like this isn’t worth doing, but it is worth putting the extra effort in. Even though we’re new, I feel that our campus wouldn’t be the same without WRCM.”

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AAF

When the pandemic hit, Matthew Cahill, vice president of Manhattan College’s chapter of the American Advertising Federation, thought club operations would be canceled for the semester. However, when the club gained members early this semester, Cahill and the rest of the executive board decided to continue running the club to give students the opportunity to grow in the advertising field.

This semester, the club has held workshops, hosted guest speakers, and has been planning to coordinate a mock

advertising campaign in order to educate students on the advertising industry. However, Cahill and the rest of AAF faced the challenge of recruiting members to join and be motivated about the club while in a virtual format.

“I knew it was going to be hard; it’s hard to reach out to people online,” Cahill said. “In-person [is] such a better way to give an explanation of what the club is and what it has to offer, as opposed to an email that... you don’t even know if someone is going to read.”

AAF would normally conduct an agency visit during the semester, but the club was not able to put one

together this semester due to the pandemic.

“The thing I looked forward to most when I joined was an agency visit,” Cahill said. “I really wanted to see... what the agency is like, what the office has to offer, and I never got to do that with the pandemic and now I probably won’t do it.

Despite initial fears at the beginning of the semester, Cahill describes how running the club remotely hasn’t impacted the integrity and overall mission of AAF.

“[AAF] doesn’t really change; pandemic or no pandemic, it’s just nice to be involved,” Cahill said.