

J-Schools Open Other Doors

I chose to enter the journalism school for my bachelor's degree at Southern Illinois University Carbondale because it felt like my element. I was hired at the student-run newspaper, the Daily Egyptian, before I had even stepped foot on campus more than a couple times. Now, as a senior nearing graduation, I've done enough time in the news writing world to know that yes, I am cut out for it, but it just might not be in my heart to love doing it.

I realized this new, exciting world I had jumped into – interviewing new people every day, communicating with advertisers, meeting deadlines, and mastering the plethora of multitasking that encompasses it – I wanted to stay. That is, at least for a while.

At the Daily Egyptian, I began writing at least three stories a week; all as a full-time student. I still loved it. I loved the journalism classes even more. Everyone involved in the journalism school and the newspaper had that “never back down” passion, and we all fed and still feed from that. I have never walked out of a journalism class feeling uninspired. I have never turned my ears off when a journalism professor or fellow journalist speaks.

However, I burned out (as did my grades) and I became too frustrated my second semester to want to work for the campus newspaper the next year. The one thing I learned specifically about news writing is that

the news always needs a journalist and a journalist can never turn it down. I wasn't too sure I wanted it to be that way. It was a “it's not me, it's you” break-up situation.

I doubted I would be able to continue battling and quelling this never-ceasing, magnificent monster that is the news, at least while attending college. Someone suggested changing my

major. Thus begins that classic mid-college crisis where the student asks him or herself, "What the hell am I doing here?"

I howled back, "Journalism!" This year is when I realized I made the right decision in not changing my major to – what? English? Art?

I have learned so many things in my journalism education that I would not have learned in any other major. I was never able to communicate with such ease, write quality work under pressure or feel so accomplished every day. The greatest thing I learned is that all of my abilities are vital for any professional career. I'm looking at graduate programs in mass communications, and internships and careers in public relations, where I find myself on the backwards end of the journalism spectrum. Still, I will proudly carry the title of "Journalist" after earning my bachelor's degree even if I never find myself working for a newspaper.

Erin Holcomb is a senior in the School of Journalism at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.