

# History of student publications includes 'The Rag' and more

By Doug Forbes  
Staff Reporter

The Daily Nebraskan was not UNL's first student publication. However, its roots can be traced to some of the early student literary and news publications.

The Palladians, the first student organization, was established on Sept. 15, 1871 "to help build up and perfect the moral and intellectual capabilities, and in like manner, social qualities." At their first meeting, the Palladians decided to publish a monthly newspaper, the Hesperian Student. By the 1890's, its name was shortened to the Hesperian and it was published twice monthly. Later still it was published weekly. Willa Cather served on its staff from 1892 to 1894, first as literary editor and then as managing editor.

Among other publications on the campus were the Sophomorian, which was published in 1899 for one year and the Lasso. The Lasso, a monthly magazine designed to foster school spirit, was published in 1891-92. Louise Pound, the sister of Roscoe Pound and Willa Cather were associate editors for one semester.

In 1892, a formidable rival to the Hesperian appeared. It was called the Nebraskan. It came out weekly, and was later edited by Frank T. Riley. Riley's nickname was "Rag," and the paper became known as "Riley's Rag."

A third weekly, the Scarlet and Cream, organized in 1900, proclaimed on its masthead that it was the official organ of the debating clubs of the three literary societies, the university debating and oratorical associations, the Army Corps, and the Alumni Association. In 1901, the Hesperian, the Nebraskan, and the Scarlet and Cream joined forces to publish a single paper, the Daily Nebraskan. Then, as it still is now, the paper was known to the student body as the "rag."

What was it like to work for the DN back in its early days? Eleanor Clizbe White, who worked on the DN staff from 1935 to 1937, remembers that she spent "a lot of hours at work." As a news editor, she received a small salary. Though she doesn't remember exactly how much it was, she remembers that it payed about half of her monthly sorority house bill. She co-authored a campus gossip column titled "Paging the Smart Co-ed." There were no crossword puzzles back then.

Arnold J. Levin, who was a news editor during the fall semester of the 1936-37 academic year, remembers that that the relationship between the university's administration and the DN was "very paternalistic."

"UNL," he said, "acted as your parents when you were away from home. No student demands for change in the university's policies were ever printed, nor any criticism of UNL officials. We really minded our P's and Q's."

White Levin was a sophomore, before he was on the staff, he remembers an "alternative rag" that came out sporadically. It contained unsigned stories that the staff thought that the administration wouldn't have wanted them to print. He doesn't remember how it was printed, but it was distributed across campus, in the residence halls and

other buildings.

There were four editors at that time, who received monthly salaries of \$25 or \$50, depending on if they were news editors or sports editors. All told, there were about 10 staff members, who worked on a volunteer basis.

The printing was done at night, in the old Journal-Star building.

Journalism was introduced at the university in the English department as a news writing course in the mid-90s. After expansion in 1915, a certificate

program was instituted in 1917. By the early twenties, there was a growing demand for a school of journalism within the College of Arts and Sciences. In 1923, the Board of Regents authorized the establishment of the School of Journalism.

Some of the information used in this story comes from the Centennial History of the University of Nebraska, Volume I, by Robert N. Manley and Volume II, by R. McLaran Sawyer.

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