

Making a declaration of independence

A three-year process eventually leads to the Emerald separating itself from the University and becoming an incorporated publishing company

By Sarah Kickler
Oregon Daily Emerald

An independent newspaper." These words appear at the top of the front page of the Emerald every day, but few people are aware of the events that led to the newspaper officially becoming independent from the University.

The process was initiated by 1969-70 Editor Paul Brainerd and 1970-71 Editor Grattan Kerans, but it was not complete until June 29, 1971. On that date, University President Robert Clark and Kerans signed documents creating the Oregon Daily Emerald Board of Directors.

The board's function, according to the April 9, 1971, issue of the paper, was "to provide a single, clear authority over the income and expenditures of the Emerald."

Brainerd said he was spurred to examine the issue of independence after an incident at the University of Washington.

"Anti-war protests were occurring throughout the U.S. and on the UO campus," he said. As a result of coverage decisions, an editor at the University of Washington was removed from office by the school's administration. In the legal challenge to the case, administrators argued that they were legally responsible for the student newspaper.

Brainerd said that al-



EMERALD editor Grattan Kerans and University President Robert Clark sign the constitution which puts the Emerald under new management.

Emerald independence near as new board takes over

By CLAY EALS
Of the Emerald

complete control over the financial structure of the University's student newspaper. It replaces the University Publications Board which was dissolved by

Emerald archives

The front page story from the April 9, 1971, issue of the Emerald showing the signing of the new constitution.

though he had been following the issue of student press freedom for some time, "that event more than any other put a sense of urgency" on the issue for both the University and the Emerald.

To take the first steps toward independence, Brainerd began working with the assistant to the University president writing up paperwork and determining the future corporate structure of the newspaper.

This eventually became the Constitution of the Oregon Daily Emerald Board of Directors signed June 29, 1971.

Court precedents said stu-

"The new structure seems to have served the paper well, as far as I can tell."

Paul Brainerd
Emerald editor, 1969-70

dent newspapers had free speech, Brainerd said, but the social atmosphere of the 1960s led to a change in the line drawn between student newspapers and the administration.

"It got murky," he said.

The administration was supportive of the change because they wanted to avoid situations such as that at the University of Washington, Brainerd said.

The new board adopted a resolution to establish the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Company Inc. on June 29, 1971. This step made the newspaper independent as of July 1 that year. A headline on an editorial that day declares, "We're on our own."

Another catalyst for the change was cited by then-Editor Art Bushnell in the July 1 issue of the paper. "The reasons for going independent are primarily economic," he says in the article.

"In the past, the Emerald was unable to accumulate whatever profits might exist at the end of the fiscal year. Instead, those monies re-

verted back to the University. Now, we will be able to accumulate monies. We will have a growth potential that did not exist before."

The main result, according to the article, would be the ability to purchase and update equipment and the ability to avoid potential control of the newspaper by any group, "from the State Board of Higher Education to the University administration to student government."

The final step toward independence according to the agreement signed by Keran and Robinson was taken Oct. 26, 1971, when the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Company Inc. was incorporated under the provisions of the Oregon Nonprofit Corporation Act.

Soon after independence was finalized, the Emerald took further steps to separate itself from the University. In 1974, the offices moved from Allen Hall to its present offices in the EMU, and the corporation began paying rent for the space and financing all other services that had been provided by the University.

Students still pay a subscription fee through the incidental fee, but the paper is otherwise financially separated from the University.

"The new structure seems to have served the paper well as far as I can tell," Brainerd said.

Previous policies

The concerns that arose during the late 1960s that eventually led to the paper's independence were new, but not unaddressed. Often throughout the first 73 years of publication, the staff would describe its policy to let the readers know that the paper was student run. Here are a few excerpts from these statements:

"The Oregon Daily Emerald, as the official organ of the Associated Student Body of the University of Oregon, aims to serve the student body politic in the

following way: to diffuse correct and authentic news; to protect and conserve the highest ideals of the University; to consistently avoid all secret affiliations and alliances; to play the game squarely with no favoritism; to be optimistic and courageous in fulfilling its functions; to comment on, and receive comment on the problems concerning the University and its welfare; to pursue a constructive editorial policy which necessarily implies a destructive policy; in short, to pursue militantly a policy of proper publicity in regard to all problems that confront the Stu-

dent Body — all of this, based on the truism that a democracy can be effective and efficient only so long as it maintains a free and militant press."

— May 11, 1916

"The Emerald has no entangling alliances. There are no strings attached to it.

"The paper will have the courage of its convictions. The fear of criticism or opposition will not deter it from crusading, providing it believes its crusade is justified."

— from "Announcement of Policy," by Richard Neuberger,

Sept. 30, 1932

"The Emerald is student-managed and student-controlled. Twice yearly, the student-faculty publications board selects an editor and a business manager, who, in turn, select the remainder of the staff. ...

"Editorials will be used to present the opinions of the editor and the editorial board. Some have declared that since this is the students' newspaper, editorials should represent the majority opinion of the student body. This, indeed, is often the case — but to attempt to do so

with every editorial would be both impossible and undesirable."

— from "The Student Newspaper," Sept. 24, 1958

"The [publications] board picks the editors of the three main publications once a year. And that's as much as it gets involved in editorial policies. After that, it confines its interests to budget and other financial affairs."

— from "Student Editors Have Freedom Tradition," Sept. 20, 1966

— Compiled by Sarah Kickler