

# Professors propose procrastination prescription

Students find procrastination is seductive, but journalism faculty and staff offer solutions

By Eric Martin  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Procrastination eats at students' time like a swarm of termites devours an abandoned log cabin — deliberately, and with unmerciful results.

For some, procrastination tantalizes the psyche with addictive qualities. For others, it manifests itself in the form of pounding headaches and lost opportunities.

Perhaps no one can speak better about procrastination's rewards and pitfalls than former journalists who battled the phenomenon on a daily basis to produce copy on a tight deadline.

Scott Maier, an associate journalism professor, described himself as a "recovering" procrastinator. He worked as a reporter for 20 years with The Associated Press, The Seattle Times and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. He said college was the breeding ground for his love of the last minute.

"I used to boast that I hadn't turned in a single assignment on time all year," the 1977 Oberlin College graduate said. "It seems natural that I then decided to become a journalist. There's nothing more addictive than putting off a story until the last minute — and then grabbing a cup of coffee and putting it off another five minutes."

Maier said writing a story with an editor breathing down his neck only enhanced the effect. But he said procrastination begins way before deadline nears, often at the moment an editor assigns a story.

"You find every reason to put it off," he said. "Part of it is, when you're given a story idea, it's wide open. You don't know where you're going with it. And that's a fearsome challenge."

John Russial, an assistant journalism professor, said the fearsome challenge often induces a moment of clarity as deadline approaches. Rus-

sial worked in the newspaper business for 17 years, as a copy chief for the Philadelphia Inquirer and as a reporter, editor and computer systems manager for the now-defunct Bethlehem Globe-Times. At the Inquirer, he and his associates on the copy desk were on the receiving end of reporters' missed deadlines.

"Procrastination is almost institutionalized in newspapers," he said. "When you think about the concept of deadline, it's easier to put off starting something that's further in the future. When deadline draws closer and looms larger, at some point you realize that if you don't get started, you're not going to get done."

Russial is facing a deadline right now. He is writing a copy editing text, tentatively titled "Strategic Copy Editing," and he said he is learning that book editors often expect professors to miss deadlines, partly because of the rigors of their daily work.

"Some nights I work until 1:30 (a.m.)," he said, chuckling. "It brings me back to the desk."

But he added that procrastination can provide its practitioners with an incredibly useful skill: the ability to motivate and complete a project in a scant amount of time.

"The ability to recover is the trait," he says. "Theoretically, one can't have that ability without procrastination."

Maier agreed that procrastination holds some benefits. It enables reporters or students to distance themselves from a project and see it from a fresh perspective.

"Over time, where you go (with a story) often becomes clearer, especially if you're thinking about other things," he said.

Maier said two factors steered him toward a more diligent schedule and ultimately away from his procrastination addiction: raising two daughters and growing wiser with age.

"Children do not accept delayed gratification," he said. "Their needs are immediate."

Furthermore, his wife of eight years, Judy Shaw, would be at "the



Russell Weller, Katie Mayer and Jessica Blanchard Emerald

We were going to take a photo for this space, but we got caught up in homework and enjoying the weekend — and we just sort of lost track of time. Please accept our apologies for this misunderstanding, but we're sure you understand.

end of her rope" if he put something off. And he is a fan of avoiding the noose — a feat he couldn't accomplish one election night at the Post-Intelligencer in the mid-1980s. He missed deadline because results came 10 minutes after it passed.

"My editor was unforgiving," he says. "And I decided I was never going to repeat that again."

But he said getting burned isn't the only caveat for avoiding procrastination's bonfire. One grows wise with time — and with less energy.

"You realize it's just not worth it," he says.

Beth Pfeiffer, internship coordinator for the journalism school, and journalism academic counselor Sally Garner agreed with Maier, adding that opportunities for students dwindle as time expires. The two are barraged with students hoping to land internships or spots in crowded classes at the last minute. Garner said a long line often forms outside her door at 111 Allen Hall the day before or the day

## PHOTO GOES HERE

of freshman registration each term.

"Now, I can spend 25 minutes to a half hour with (students)," said the academic adviser of more than a year. "But when there's a line, I'll help them as much as I can, but at

*"Procrastination is almost institutionalized in newspapers. When you think about the concept of a deadline, it's easier to put off starting something that's further in the future."*

John Russial  
assistant journalism professor

the same time I know in the back of my mind there are three other people out there."

Pfeiffer, internship coordinator since July 2001, said some students get antsy in March because they

want to land a summer journalism internship.

Many of the deadlines for newspapers have already passed at this point — the bulk of them request submissions from candidates in fall and early winter.

But Garner and Pfeiffer say there are many strategies for beating procrastination's pitfalls. Both are great fans of the "to-do" list and goal setting. They say a student's list should consist of manageable increments, not monumental ones, when chipping away at a large task. They also believe students should be careful to set realistic goals because they will be more likely to follow through.

"It's so easy to get sidetracked," Pfeiffer says. "But being aware of your responsibilities, even when you are doing other things, keeps you on track."

However enticing veering off track might seem.

E-mail reporter Eric Martin  
at [ericmartin@dailyemerald.com](mailto:ericmartin@dailyemerald.com).

## Web porn draws criticism, heavy use

It may be a harmless pastime, but experts say Internet porn can turn into an obsession

By Brook Reinhard  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Internet pornography is called an obsession by some and an addiction by others, but many University students simply say it's something they view occasionally without guilt.

In a random telephone survey the Emerald conducted, 40 percent of respondents said they had viewed Internet pornography. None of the 20 students surveyed had a problem with other people viewing Internet pornography, but they were careful to add that it shouldn't be viewed when minors are involved, or at a public institution such as a library or computer lab.

"I use porn all the time," said one student, who preferred to remain anonymous. "I just used it yesterday."

The student said surfing the Internet for pornography is just something to do to pass the time, like watching TV.

But Substance Abuse Prevention Program administrator Miki Mace said Internet pornography can turn into an obsession for some people.

Four years ago, a University student came to her office and said he had a problem with pornography that was destroying his life.

"He was logging in several hours a day and not attending classes," Mace said.

Mace referred him to Wendy Maltz, a nationally recognized counselor in Eugene with 25 years of experience dealing with sexual issues.

Maltz, a certified sex therapist and psychotherapist, said she's seen an "explosion" in the number of patients who feel they are addicted to Internet pornography.

"Internet pornography has been shown in studies to be highly addictive. It's anonymous, accessible and affordable," she said.

She added that the Internet is so readily accessible that many students, especially males, are having their first sexual experiences with pornography instead of with another person.

While agreeing with Maltz that pornography can be harmful, Mace hesitated to label Internet pornography as an addictive substance.

"I don't see that there's a chemical addiction, where there's a hunger or craving in the brain for it," Mace said. "If I were talking about opium and Internet pornography, they'd be in completely different categories."

The University doesn't have a problem with students using pornography, as long as they don't block bandwidth for other uses.

"We don't look at the content of what students do," ResNet manager Norm Myers said. "What they do in their own room is their business."

Of the 40 percent of survey respondents who said they had viewed Internet pornography, half of them had viewed it in the last week. The overwhelming majority of viewers were male; only one female in the group said she viewed pornography.

Maltz said the Internet makes pornography easily accessible and seemingly harmless.

"This generation has had great exposure to Internet pornography without any precautions," she said, likening the current permissive culture to the early days of cigarettes, before packs came with warning labels.

"People think it's harmless, and it's not," Maltz said. "Pornography programs people to respond to pictures of strangers — how are these same people supposed to relate to real men and women?"

But most of the students surveyed said they thought people who aren't in college would be more likely to use Internet pornography than college students.

People not in college might view pornography more "because of the lack of social interactions," a student said.

But Mace said anyone who uses Internet pornography may endanger his or her relationships with others.

"It breaks us down into body parts," Mace said. "It makes us into non-humans."

E-mail reporter Brook Reinhard  
at [brookreinhard@dailyemerald.com](mailto:brookreinhard@dailyemerald.com).

# Need Cash?

## Earn Extra Money

New donors bring this ad in for an extra \$5

**Aventis Bioservices • Eugene**  
(Formerly Seramed)

1 Block east of 8th and Garfield  
1901 West 8th Ave., Eugene  
**683-9430**  
also at 225 B Main St. in Springfield

OREGON DAILY EMERALD  
WORLDWIDE

www.dailyemerald.com