

University of Melbourne Student Union
Media Report
Ashleigh Barraclough, Esther Le Couteur, Jesse Paris-Jourdan & Monique O’Rafferty
to the Annual General Meeting
1 May 2018

Batman by-election

In the week beginning 12 March, we completed substantial coverage of the Batman by-election. You can see an overview of our coverage [here](#). In the process, we did something kind of historic: the first ever [live video coverage](#) of breaking news by *Farrago*.

We saw our coverage as an opportunity to do a few things:

- 1) to inform students (who make up a large proportion of the Batman electorate) in their choice of whom to vote for; and,
- 2) to teach our reporters (and learn ourselves) about the requirements of live broadcasting. We intend to do more live video this year, and are already planning a number of potential future events: coverage of the federal budget, the UMSU election (maybe including a presidential debate), the state election at the end of the year.

Carnival Day

On Carnival Day on 21 February, we were handing out copies of *Farrago* and talking to keen young jaffies about how they can get involved in the media office. We had a presence at both Parkville the VCA—one of only a couple departments to be at both campuses. We signed up over 100 people to our mailing list!

Digitising *Farrago*'s archives

This year, we’re doing something a bit boring but really important and useful: digitising *Farrago*'s archives! That means that all of *Farrago*'s 93 years of history will be made available in electronic form to the general public! That’s pretty cool! Even better—we've made the university library agree to pay for the process! Not much to report on this yet, but there will be movement soon. There is a [draft project outline](#).

Farmers’ Market

The media office is down at the weekly UMSU Farmers’ Markets on Wednesdays—repping Radio Fodder and providing some sick beats to the good people of the Concrete Lawns. We haven’t missed one yet! No promises to continue the 100% attendance rate as the weather gets more brutal in winter.

Farrago

Edition one of *Farrago* came out on 20 February. Edition two came out on 15 March. On the day of submitting this report, we are waiting for edition three to come back from the printer.

We have been very pleased with the quality of *Farrago* so far, and it seems to be getting better with every edition.

This has been our print schedule for the year so far:

| Edition | Copies | Cost |
|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| Edition one | 5,000 | \$13,618.00 |
| Edition two | 3,500 | \$12,870.00 |
| Edition three | 3,500 | ~\$13,000.00 |

In terms of writing, here are some highlights from the year so far:

- [“Neo-Nazis” Escorted Off Campus on First Day of 2018’](#) by Ashleigh Barraclough
- [‘The Inheritance of Grief’](#) by Tilli Franks
- [‘Bard Times’](#) by James Gordon

Monique definitely deserves a special mention under this heading. As graphics editor, she is the person who ties the whole magazine together—without her, there would be no *Farrago*, let alone the beautiful publication we’ve been producing.

Governance

Jesse has begun the process of reviewing UMSU’s media governance, including the student newspaper policy and other potential constitutional changes.

“Student newspaper policy” is, itself, a dated phrase. The media office produces a whole lot of things—a magazine, a website, a YouTube channel, a full-time radio station—none of which are mentioned in the policy. The one thing the media office no longer produces, however, is a newspaper (a fact that causes one or two members of the editorial team to shed a single tear). Also standing out in terms of aspects of the policy that need amendment is the section on letters to the editor. Letters are a potentially outdated concept in an age when readers can make their thoughts known to a wide audience in the comments sections on Facebook and the *Farrago* website. What is missing from the policy, however, is a sophisticated approach to the moderation of comments and engagement with readers on social media. Recent events surrounding the spicy campus article about neo-Nazis on campus and comments thereon have made the need for this clear to us. The redrafting process is ongoing.

We are also looking at introducing affirmative action for people of colour in the media office. We are in the process of drafting a terms of reference for an UMSU working group to look at the possibility.

Launch parties

We have completed two launch parties—on 20 February and 14 March. Our third launch party is scheduled for 24 April. All of these events were held at the Ida, UMSU’s new student bar. The

first launch doubled as the unofficial opening of the bar (being the first event held therein), so we set aside extra money to account for a large group of people. A breakdown of the expenditure (and expected expenditure) is below.

| Launch | Expenditure |
|---------------|-------------|
| Edition one | \$995.65 |
| Edition two | \$400.00 |
| Edition three | ~\$500.00 |

Making improvements to the Radio Fodder studio

Isaac from AVMelbourne has delivered a quote for his work making improvements to the Radio Fodder studio. Isaac is installing a new desk to organise the cords, which are a mess and a safety hazard at the moment. He is installing the desk in such a way that it will be able to be flat-packed and moved easily to the new student precinct when Union House is no longer operational.

Money

An extensive and updating breakdown of how we have spent every cent this year can be viewed at [this spreadsheet](#).

News briefing

Ashleigh has started creating fortnightly newsletters with campus news! Click [here](#) to stay up to date with campus news and receive *Farrago's* news briefings delivered to your inbox every fortnight. It's a really fantastic initiative, making it campus news more accessible than ever before.

NEWS Conference

The NEWS Conference (National Editors Workshop and Skillshare Conference) is an annual two-day event presented by Express Media for students editors, publishers and contributors across Australia. This year, the NEWS Conference was presented on January 29 and 30 in Melbourne. It is an annual tradition that the media officers attend this event. We went along, and found it a valuable experience in terms of learning skills for the year and creating networks with other Australian student publications.

NUS NatCon

On the week beginning 11 December last year, four of our reporters, including Ash, spent four days in Geelong for NUS NatCon. You can check out our [coverage of the conference](#), if you're into that.

Radio Fodder

In terms of Radio Fodder, things are on track! Kudos to our Radio Fodder station managers, Carolyn and Conor.

Here are a few, of many, incredible shows to check out:

- [Melbourne Anthology Hour](#)
- [No Eye Deer](#)
- [Snappy Hour](#)
- [When She Speaks](#)

Restructuring the media office

In our budget at the start of the year, although we did not ask for significantly more money than in 2017, the budget did represent a shift in the relative proportions of its budget lines. Specifically, the introduction of the “staffing” budget line signified the first time the media department would offer honoraria to a small number of its contributors. To make this change possible, we shifted money from various budget lines. In particular, we received a reduction in funding to Radio Fodder and Farrago Video to make these honoraria possible.

Arguably the most pressing issue the media office has faced in the past several years is the rapid growth of the media collective. In 2014—just three years ago—Radio Fodder did not exist, nor did a functioning website, a social media presence or any kind of video content produced by the media department. Three years ago, *Farrago* did not provide feedback to contributions that were not accepted in the magazine, and the subediting process was closed to the writers of the contributions. Now, in addition to the same number of printed magazines on stands across campus, the media department runs a full-time radio station, along with two websites, eight social media channels and anything up to 30 videos a year. In 2014, the media officers had roughly 50–100 volunteers to manage. Today, the number is closer to 300.

This growth is important and desirable. Only in recent years have students involved in the media collective had the ability to gain experience in the types of media that are, in our opinion, likely to be most prevalent when these students are serving out their careers—i.e., experience in the creation of video, audio, social media and internet-based content. The provision of feedback to authors not published in the magazine, and an open, collaborative subediting process increases the value of the magazine to its contributors, who are developing their skills and need honest, engaged feedback above anything else. In addition, this growth increases the value of *Farrago* to its audience, with associated advancements in the accessibility of content.

However, despite the growth of the media office, there has not been a proportional increase in the number of media officers, or a decrease in the amount of regular printed content the department produces. In 2018, we have opted to experiment with bringing on board a number of volunteer positions with extra responsibilities, each paid a small honorarium. These positions would include a Radio Fodder station manager, Farrago Video manager, social media coordinator and web developer. The amount of money we allocated for these positions is not a living wage. The Radio Fodder station manager and social media coordinator—both positions that require some form of contact with the media officers from Monday to Friday during semester—will be paid \$3,000 over the course of the year, the equivalent of \$125 per week of semester. The video coordinator will receive \$2,000, or approximately \$83 per week of

semester. The web developer will receive \$1,000 for specified work on the Radio Fodder website.

Reviews

The [reviews section](#) of the website is banging this year—thanks in large part to the hard work of Esther. This is a fantastic way of using our leverage as editors to give back to the collective, providing them with free tickets to various events and opportunities for development as writers.

Sleepover

UMSU’s Sleepover on 23–24 February went okay for us. We played Radio Fodder on the second floor of Union House and we held an informal Wordplay in the Rowden White Library. Not many people came to the latter, but we still had a good time.

Style guide

Towards the start of the year, we made a new *Farrago* style guide. [Look how beautiful it is.](#)

Tepid 100

On 25 January, we completed the Tepid 100—an initiative by Ed Pitt which will see Radio Fodder scooping the ‘Hottest 100’ two days before Triple J did it. The songs played were based on votes posted on social media, which Ed scraped with a Python program. The event, coordinated by Conor Day and Ed Pitt, was quite successful, with a high number of listeners for Radio Fodder. It was a great way to start off the year!

VCA distribution

We’ve set up a decent presence at VCA campus! Students can find *Farragos* at the two students’ lounges on campus. We’ll keep these stocked up as the year goes on.

Website (*Farrago*)

We have started to experiment, more than *Farrago* has done in the past, with new online-exclusive stuff. We have:

- Revamped the website.
- Begun to experiment with [data visualisation](#) and other JavaScript-based reportage.

Wordplays

Wordplays are events where we encourage students to get up and perform their poetry and other writing and performance. Wordplay number one was held on 27 February. Wordplay number two is scheduled for 1 May. Expenditure and expected expenditure are given below.

| Wordplay | Expenditure |
|----------|-------------|
| One | \$361.88 |
| Two | ~\$300.00 |

Conclusion

The media office has been going well so far in 2018! The writer of this report is already dreading leaving this job in December. Being media office has involved creatively and intellectually fulfilling work with some of the best people he's ever met in his life. It's sometimes stressful and sometimes very fun. Thanks for reading!