

Unpublishing Policy

Due to the permanent potential for access to news published digitally, requests that articles be unpublished have increased over time and aren't likely to slow anytime soon. This policy is in part to address requests we've had up until this point, and in part to prepare future *Carillon* staff for requests to come. Unpublishing policies are still catching on in news organizations with most managing requests case-by-case. While this process may work fine when an editor will be in their position for some time, most of our staff members work their position for 1-3 years and then graduate, so it's important to have a concise and coherent procedure set up to be passed down. Future editors will be free to adapt this policy as they see necessary, this is merely a starting point to ensure transparency and integrity on all sides when managing these situations.

In publishing a story, journalists are responsible to investigate a situation and report what truth they find to expand the public's record of events. This means that the essence of requesting that a story be unpublished is asking journalists to alter the public's record, to alter history for anyone with an internet connection. The expectation in journalism is that articles published will forever be available to any who wish to read them, and to remove them without so much as noting why damages the credibility of a paper and its journalists. This is especially true in situations where there are no actual errors in the information presented, when an interview source or an individual mentioned in an article decides they don't want the public to have access to that information. As creators and maintainers of this part of the public's record it would be quite outside our authority to remove information from everybody to suit the preference of one person; it is our place to report on newsworthy events, not to alter their accounts to make sure everybody's comfortable.

For these reasons and more, unpublishing an article is something we do only in extreme circumstances where we're left with no other viable option to remedy a situation. Fortunately, there are three options we've identified that satisfy the majority of requests while ensuring our journalistic integrity remains intact:

Adding an editor's note to update the original story. Often the simplest and most effective solution to an unpublishing request is for the section's editor or the EIC to add a note to an article to either correct inaccurate information or update on developments. The editorial board will decide whether the note goes at the start or end of the story, the current section editor along with the EIC will write the note, and the note will then be added to the web page along with the date the note was added to the story.

Writing a follow-up story with new, relevant information. If adding an editor's note wouldn't be quite enough to correct information or elaborate on developments, a

follow-up story may be written and published. The editorial board will decide the scope of the follow-up piece, the current section editor will either cover the story personally or select a writer to cover while they supervise as editor, the original story will be noted at the start of the follow-up piece so the purpose and intentions of the follow-up are clear, and the follow-up piece will be linked at the bottom of the original story with a note that more current information has been published on the topic.

Obscuring identity in the original story. There are very few situations where we would obscure a source or subject's identity post-publication, but sometimes the issue isn't so much what a person's said as it is the fact that the person is identifiable or locatable with information journalists have included. If a source is experiencing remorse for what they shared with a journalist we will not obscure their identity, same as if a subject's upset that true information about them has been shared. A useful example for where we would obscure identity would be if a prior source contacted us to say they were being stalked, and were concerned that their name or identifying factors in the article could be used by their stalker to locate them. Ethical journalism must balance the right to publish true information with the responsibility of minimizing harm. So, despite our right to publish that information, our responsibility to not contribute to potential harm comes first. If the editorial board determines that this is the best course of action, we will consider replacing their name with a pseudonym or removing their name and only identifying them by occupation should their occupation be obscure enough (e.g. "U of R President" would still be very easily identifiable). A note will be added to the end of the article stating that names and/or identifying information have been obscured for reasons of personal safety.

Whenever we receive a request to unpublish an article, the request will be reviewed and discussed among the editorial board at their next scheduled meeting in the fall and winter semesters; if a request is made in the spring or summer, a special editorial meeting will be called. This group of staffed editors and managers will consider things like the value of the information in the article to the public, whether the information in the article is widely available and easily accessible elsewhere, the accuracy of the information now (especially if the article requested was published some time ago), potential inconveniences or harms an individual may experience if no action is taken, and the extent of correction necessary should correction be deemed the best course of action.

If consensus cannot be reached by discussion on one appropriate route of action, the EIC will coordinate an anonymous vote, send the unpublishing request and notes on the discussion thus far to any members who weren't able to attend the meeting, give all members 2 days to consider and vote, and a 2/3 majority will be required before

action is taken. The EIC will be responsible to communicate the editorial board's decision and reasoning to whoever made the unpublishing request, and will also oversee the progress of the option chosen to ensure timely resolution if action is decided.

Resources

"About us: Unpublishing." *Globe and Mail*. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/about/editorial-code/>

College of Journalism and Communications, University of Florida. (April 21, 2017.) "Balancing the truth in newsroom policy." <https://www.jou.ufl.edu/insights/truth-news/>

English, K., Currie, T., & R. Link. (October 27, 2010.) "The ethics of unpublishing." *The Canadian Association of Journalists*. <https://caj.ca/the-ethics-of-unpublishing/>

"Guidance: Removal of BBC online content." BBC. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidance/removal-online-content>

"Journalistic standards and practices: Complaints: Requests of Content." CBC. <https://cbc.radio-canada.ca/en/vision/governance/journalistic-standards-and-practices>

McNealy, J. E., & L. B. Alexander. (March 24, 2017.) "A Framework for Unpublishing Decisions." *Digital Journalism*, 6(3). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21670811.2017.1301779>

Segal, C. (December 22, 2011.) "Is follow-up required on campus police blotter reports? Scholars speak out." *iMediaEthics*. <https://www.imediaethics.org/is-follow-up-required-on-campus-police-blotter-reports-scholars-speak-out/>

Tenore, M. J. (July 19, 2010.) "5 ways news organizations respond to 'unpublishing' requests." *Poynter*. <https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2010/5-ways-news-organizations-respond-to-unpublishing-requests/>