

UPDATED: Reflections on a Production (Parts 1 & 2)

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February 20

Added some stats about the history book below. Click [READ MORE](#) to, um, read more...

February 16

Introduction

On Monday, a milestone was reached. The Raleigh Fire Department centennial history book wrapped production with the final proofs returned to the printer. (Said proofs being oversized sheets of paper, each showing a two-page "spread" from the book. Corrections were noted on each page using pens or magic markers. Big stack of papers, as the book is 264 pages long.)

The project formally started in January, though conversations about getting the thing started were had at the end of 2011. There was also an earlier attempt at getting going in 2010. A committee formed and held a couple meetings. It was determined that waiting was needed until closer to the anniversary year of 2012.

That's probably the first lesson to be learned. When planning a commemorative fire department book, timing might be your first consideration. Does the project timeframe align with current or coming department milestones? And/or, will key participants be available during the production period? (Not just available, but still members of the department! Retirements happen, and you might lose resources mid-project.)

Picking People

We chose wisely with our key people. Or, perhaps, they chose themselves wisely. The project committee ended up with sufficient representation from five perspectives:

- Younger/newer firefighters
- Older/experienced firefighters
- Really old/retired firefighters
- Fire Chief/command staff
- Historical/historian

Why those five? In my opinion, a successfully "history book" (or "yearbook", if you prefer that term) is appealing to a number of audiences: firefighters both young and old, the Fire Chief and his/her staff, and those with a mind to history. Having those five "camps" in your camp ensures a good balance, both in the content (what's in hand) and project participation (what it takes to get it done).

As an aside, a project like this is, say, three projects in one. First is "the stuff you'll be putting into the book." Huge effort there. Second is "the process to get the book made." Also a heady thing and which requires an immense amount of time and attention unrelated (if you will) to the first task. Third is "the people making the book." Short of a single author, there's a mess of overhead with the "people stuff." Schedules. Approvals. Coordination. Opinions. Conflicts. Voting.

Project Management

My first and foremost recommendation on "the process" is having a single project manager. Not just a point of contact, but someone who is watching everything, managing all things as needed, and calling shots and/or making executive decisions as needed. If possible, this person should be different than the person(s) creating the content. Project management can impinge on creative juices. If you spend a chunk of time "managing the stuff," you lose that time for "making the stuff."

I don't have any particularly recommendations on "the people," beyond the value of varied perspectives. Include young and old ones. Have someone there who's watching for the chief's best interests. Keep your historian or historical resources close. Add anyone with experience in design, or visual presentation skills, or simply a good collection of fire department history books. And think outside the "operations box." There's more to your department (and its history) than wet stuff on red stuff.

Now's a good time to reference this essay from 2007, that recaps the creation of our prior history book. Lots of good details here:

<http://legeros.com/history/yearbook>. I'll try not to repeat myself.

How To Be Historical and/or Hysterical

This is where the second part of this essay begins. To be written later.

Counting Words and More

From the Department of Too Much Free Time, here's a chart showing the most popular words in the book. By my count, the text contains over 107,500 words. Largely written by Yours Truly. Total number of images is 2,117, not including the cover. That includes, say, 950 portraits. Thanks to our designer for providing that data point.

Some frequent phrases:

- Fire Chief - 275
- Placed in service - 187
- American LaFrance - 147
- Was appointed - 115
- Fire prevention - 105
- Asst. Chief - 51
- Was delivered - 46
- Was purchased - 28
- Entered service - 22
- Years of service - 21
- On scene - 11

Most popular words include:

the	6890 (most popular word in the book)
fire	2394
station	885
chief	722
department	708
engine	622
raleigh	601
new	441
city	438
first	428
company	420
service	411
firefighters	360
rescue	357
ladder	329
truck	305
building	294
street	267
year	257
years	254

training	232
hose	213
members	205
apparatus	202
capt	193
water	167
pumper	164
companies	164
fires	163
stations	152
division	145
carolina	143
firemen	135
equipment	135
aerial	125
photo	122
alarm	119
wake	116
haz-mat	116
safety	112
located	111
personnel	107
platoon	102

Name: (real name preferred)
E-mail: (optional)
Web Site: (optional)

Remember personal info?
 Yes
 No

Comment:

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Comment moderation is enabled on this site. This means that your comment will not be visible on this site until it has been approved by an editor.

To prevent spam we require you to answer this silly question

What are the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word 'fire'?

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