



Lucas Peters, '98
Digital Content Manager, WOOD Magazine

Since Lucas Peters has experience in both writing and woodworking, his job at WOOD Magazine just might be custom made for him. The 1998 University of Oklahoma graduate, who earned a degree in journalism with an emphasis in professional writing, currently works as the digital content manager for the brand. Peters recently shared more about how he has combined these skills and interests into a career, how his time at OU prepared him for his job and more.

What is your favorite memory from your time at the J-school?

Though I never had a novel published, the novel-writing class stands out as a bright memory. It was a mixture of passion, anxiety, learning and exhaustion. Plus, it was a darn good conversational follow-up to the standard college-student question, “what classes are you taking this semester?”

How did the J-school prepare you for your future career?

The ability to create clear, compelling communication is like a cheat-code for many careers. First, you can trick anyone into thinking you’re the room’s expert on nearly any topic. Second, it’s not a trick. You can’t explain with *clarity* unless you have a grasp on the topic, yourself. Better still if you can do it *concisely*. And a chef’s kiss to you when you can inject *cleverness*. My time at OU introduced me to the tools that let me research toward understanding, organize toward explanation, and then communicate in a clear and compelling way.

What advice would you give to current students aspiring to a career in mass communication?

First, in communication, the true “art” of the craft is nearly always in the revision. Trust the editing process. One thing that led me into a career in writing was a love of

Do you have a favorite faculty/staff member at the J-school?

Deborah Chester, of course! (Hi, Deborah!) Her classes were such a focused distillation of the fiction-writing craft in a room that was practically electrically charged with the group's love of story. I could never take notes quickly enough.

How did your career path lead you to WOOD Magazine?

In addition to the writing degree, I had a strange mixture of experience that made me a unique fit for WOOD Magazine. I spent my summers in high school and college working for a small construction company and cabinet shop near my rural-Oklahoma hometown. I started in publishing shortly after graduation at Saxon Publishers in Norman where I eventually managed the textbook company's multimedia/software projects and later drifted into educational video production. Back then, my dad and I often traded woodworking magazines back and forth and he pointed out the job posting listed in WOOD Magazine. They were looking for a combination feature writer and video producer with knowledge of woodworking. Frankly, with such a narrow job description, I might have been their only option and they had to hire me by default.

Describe your role at WOOD Magazine.

After stints as multimedia editor and how-to editor, I'm currently the digital content manager for the brand. This basically means I project-manage the editorial website and ecommerce website, and have a guiding hand in the social accounts, e-newsletters and video production efforts. I'm sort of the traffic cop for the magazine's content after it sees print. Woodworking content is evergreen; a step-by-step plan for building a piece of furniture is as useful today as it was 20 years ago. So, we're able to leverage and monetize the content in multiple, ongoing ways beyond its newsstand lifespan.

What do you consider to be the most significant moments of your career so far?

- Ancillary revenue is becoming increasingly important in the publishing world as ad share becomes concentrated with the online juggernauts. Our readers are

reading. Initially, both in my classes and my career, I was horrified that my first draft utterly failed to be as brilliant as the works I admired. Slowly, I learned that the tortuous process of having that precious work critiqued by monstrous editors was in actuality making it come out much improved on the other end of a few revisions. Don't be too precious to kill your darlings nor too timid to push the envelope. The masterpiece is somewhere in that first lump of clay. Work it to reveal it. Second, and no surprise to you young'uns, commercial content-creation is increasingly about "the package." You may need to turn in a content package containing an article, a photo gallery, a video script, an audio script, cover blurbs, teasers for social, a newsletter promo, and so on, for a single "piece." So, while you may aspire to be only a writer or only a broadcaster or only a marketer, a little experience in a variety of mediums can make you more marketable. Get into the editing bay so you know how to script for continuity and an efficient shooting schedule as well as where you can cheat with B-roll. Help with some photo shoots so you get a handle on where you can let the images do the heavy lifting for a story. Familiarize yourself with a few content management systems to understand the transition your article will make to the web and the optimization work required for it to rank in search engines. Deep dive into AP, Chicago and Strunk and White guidebooks in order to position yourself as an editor's no-brainer, go-to choice.

What do you do for fun outside of work?

Woodworking, naturally. In recent years, I've started playing around with incorporating computer numerically controlled (CNC) routing as well as laser-cutting and engraving into my projects. One OU-related project I made: a frame for my diploma that incorporates a laser-cut topographical and street map of the OU campus. I added in some LED lighting to make the map labels and campus buildings glow a bit. That was a fun project that had me learning a lot of new skills. [instagram.com/peters.lucas](https://www.instagram.com/peters.lucas) if anyone's interested in seeing a few of my occasional woodworking projects.

incredibly loyal, so super-serving their interests has helped us to diversify our revenue beyond advertising and subscription dollars and weather some rough patches in the economy. To that end, one big win under my care was the creation of a digital back-issue archive product collecting the entire history of the magazine's decades-long run. We were able to command a premium price and it has generated respectable revenue over the years.

- Also, I once got handwritten fan mail for using a horrible pun as a photo title. It was one of my proudest moments. A reader took the time to (deservedly) lambaste me for how bad the joke was. In the world of pun fandom, that amounts to a sappy love letter.
- Working for a magazine has also allowed me to add "Cover Model" to my resume.

Are there any other organizations or projects you're involved with outside of your full-time job that you want to highlight?

Everyone should take up woodworking, so feel free to check out woodmagazine.com and woodstore.net. And though we're pretty large in the woodworking niche, WOOD Magazine is a small (but mighty) brand within one of the largest magazine publishers, Meredith Corporation. Our portfolio includes People, Better Homes & Gardens, AllRecipes, Martha Stewart Living, Magnolia Journal, Rachael Ray In Season, Food & Wine, and many more. Keep an eye out at meredith.com for job openings. I'd love to have some more Sooners around. The joyous duty of trash-talking during football season would be best shouldered by many.



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