

How the IPMS/USA Journal Gets Made

*A Conversation with
the Managing Editor
Bob Lomassaro & Art
Director Ro Annis*



Bob: Whenever I imagined how newspaper or magazine articles came about, I would think of Clark Kent or cub reporter Jimmy Olsen bringing in a hot lead to Perry White and being told to “get right on it” and have it ready for the late edition press that night. Inevitably, they would always get in trouble along the way and Superman would then swoop in and save the day. Well, creating each edition of the *IPMS/USA Journal* is not quite like that, although we do have our own Superman, Ro Annis to “step in” and save the day from time to time.

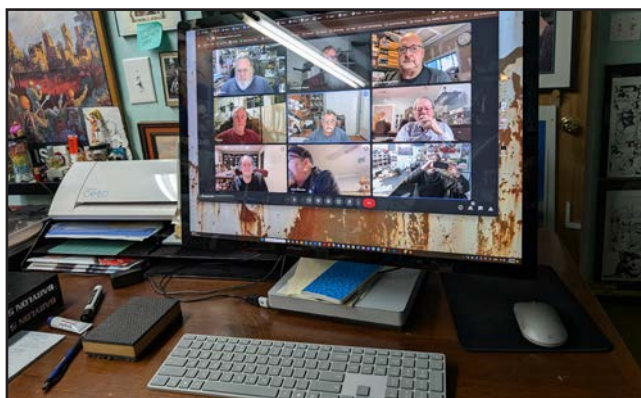
Ro: I appreciate the kind words. Last year John Heck and Chris Bucholtz retired from the magazine after 18 years. I was the publications director at that time and realized this would be the best opportunity to implement an improved system to produce the *Journal*. The biggest change would be to divide the work among a larger team. Fortunately we were able to recruit new volunteers to do the work of editing and design. The transition was a bit bumpy at first, but after a couple of issues we nailed down the magazine’s new look and got it back on schedule.

Bob: Before becoming part of the team, I would receive my magazine in the mail, flip through the pages, read a few of the articles and stack it on a shelf for later reference without giving much thought as to how it came about. In fact, I gave it very little thought. It just miraculously appeared in my mailbox.

Ro: Same here. I had a couple of articles printed in the *Journal* but really never gave much thought as to how my words and pictures made it into print. I do remember how excited I was when my model appeared in its pages.

Bob: Since assuming the role of managing editor of the *Journal*, I’ve received a great many emails about the magazine. Most contain compliments and suggestions, a few explore creative uses for expletives, and others want to know when they can expect to see their article in print. It was also suggested that an interesting article would be about how the *Journal* gets produced. This would solve a few mysteries and prove wrong the theory that it just miraculously appears in mailboxes.

Ro: I can understand the confusion and misconceptions regarding how the *Journal* comes to be and this would be a good way to shed some light on the subject.



All of the editors and designers live all over the United States so it is important to have video meetings. Here is a typical meeting as seen on my computer screen.

Bob: Unlike a newsstand magazine, the articles come primarily from you, our fellow IPMS members. Without your submissions, there would be no content for the magazine. The same holds true for its creation, the entire production team is made up of unpaid volunteer members. Luckily, we have managed to find some incredibly talented people willing to give up their bench-time and devote their spare time to the magazine. Prior to the current production team coming on board two years ago, the magazine was essentially produced by just 2 people. How they did it is just unfathomable considering that it takes a team of 12 to do it today. Today our production staff consists of two teams, editorial and design who report to both Ro and myself.

Ro: Report is a strong word. We all collaborate to build the magazine. Both Bob and I are more like “project managers” who weave all the bits together into the magazine. Both Bob and I believe that the editors and designers should have a lot of freedom in turning your submissions into finished articles. That leeway is essential, because creative people need some motivation to keep volunteering. So far, this strategy has worked and we have been able to deliver both great and varied articles to the membership while retaining our volunteers.

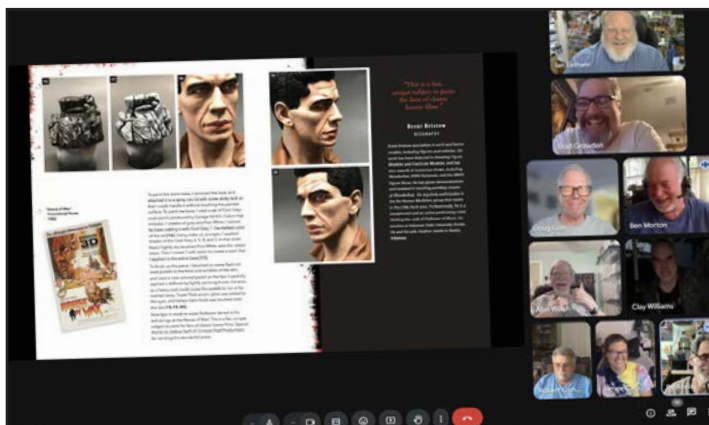
Bob: Let’s start at the top! The process begins with me. I go through the submissions and sort them by image quality and genre. The goal is not to overwhelm the reader with one or two genres each issue but rather showcase different subject areas such as aircraft, armor, cars, ships, figures, sci-fi, and Gundam. Depending on the submissions we have sometimes we might not be able to have the perfect mix, but we do the

best we can to print something interesting to everyone, in every edition.

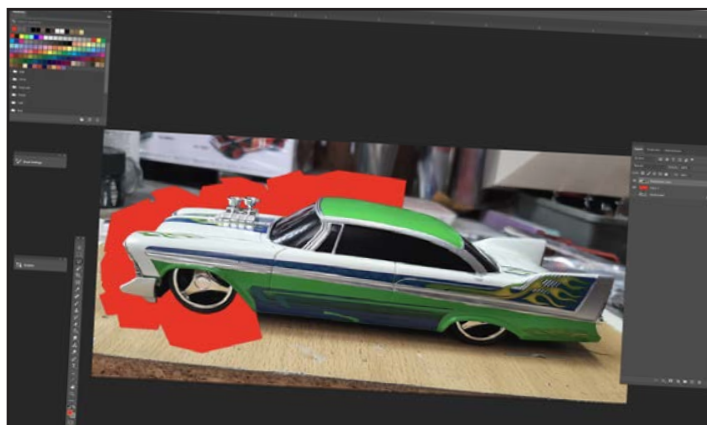
Ro: Just to back up a bit, the process of creating the magazine really begins with you, the reader. As mentioned earlier, our content comes from IPMS/USA members. We have gotten a lot of great submissions and hope that if you are reading this that you will send us whatever it is that you are passionate about. Send us your submissions! Unlike other modeling publications we can print anything of interest to modelers. If you are unsure about an idea you have, run it past us!

Bob: Most model articles we print are selected by the quality of the photos that are submitted. For feature articles we need well-shot photos that are at least 1 megabyte or greater. We also look for good written content that contains a detailed explanation of how the model was built, painted, vehicle history, and so on. Not all great model builders happen to be great writers, but if the build story has all the details we need, our editors can edit it into a good story.

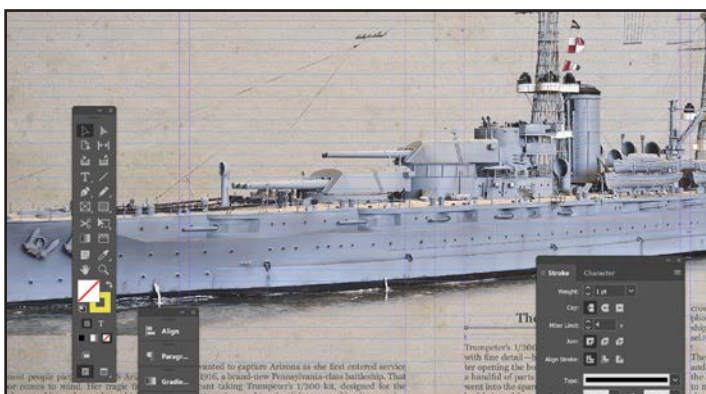
Ro: I would like to clarify what we mean by “well-shot” photos. Mostly it means that the images are clear, shot on an appropriate background, and the subject is well lit and in focus. It also means that there is a variety of views of the model that present it in interesting ways. The *Journal* is primarily a visual medium, so interesting, well-shot images are the most basic thing we need to make it work. If we get in-progress shots that show some unique process that is also a plus. We can fill in the gaps of most any submission, but if we don’t have the right images then it probably won’t make it to print.



Questions about design are brought up in our video meetings. In this case a designer has shared an in-progress article for feedback.



This screenshot illustrates typical case in which Photoshop is being employed to remove a background from a member gallery image.



Removing ships from their backgrounds is always a challenge. In the case of the "Arizona" all of the rigging disappeared and needed to be added back in by hand.



Every image is individually tuned for the Nats issue to look as good as possible. Likewise, checking and re-checking that the text information is correct is no small task.

Bob: Maybe you don't want to write an article, or take pictures while you are building it. Then you can always take a few pictures of the completed model and we can print it in the member gallery. We still need some basic information, but it is still a good way to show off what you have done.

Ro: Exactly. Think of the *Journal* as the closest thing the whole society has to a club meeting. There is some business, some words from the president and then everyone who brought things for show and tell gets a chance to talk about their model. I know at my local club meetings people bring in all sorts of things. I may not be building what others are showing, but I still want to see what they did and get inspired.

Bob: Currently, the editorial team is made up of 5 volunteers: Scott Huber, Chris Klaver, Randy Bumgardner, Doug Cole, and Ben Morton. Their job is to edit the written content in each article submission, and make each one read as if it was done by a professional writer, without losing the writer's personal style or personality. They are also responsible for proofreading each other's work assignments and creating stories and reviews of their own. I manage the team and keep track of who is doing what, when it needs to get done and so on. I am also the main point of contact for article submissions.

Ro: I have to say Bob is doing a great job. I typically have my hands full on the graphic side of the magazine, so it is really nice not to have to think about sorting through all the submissions, figuring out which issue they will go into and editing them. Bob also handles giving out article assignments to the design team during our weekly meetings. At the moment the design team consists of 5 volunteers: Ian Latham, Brad Growden, Alan Welch, Clay Williams, and Chi Wang. They all have graphic design experience

and do great jobs. They take the edited text and images of each submission and transform them into the article that will appear in print.

Bob: Once an article has been both edited and graphically designed it is then uploaded to the IPMS Google Workspace where Ro downloads them. He then arranges them into a printable magazine format along with all the advertisements, editorials, event calendars, and all the other content. This is by far the hardest and most time-consuming process of them all.

Ro: The magazine is made using InDesign, an Adobe software used for the creation of digital and print media. Once I have all the articles, all the other more mundane parts of the magazine also need to be made, such as the table of contents, the events calendar, obituaries, and so on. So, for example, I remove the backgrounds from the member gallery images and use the AI image generator "Gemini" to create backgrounds for them. I need to make sure that the magazine's pages are some multiple of four, as each printed sheet becomes four pages. There is a lot to juggle to get it all to fit together coherently and get the digital files to Spectra Print (our printer in Wisconsin). Once they have the files, they will send back a digital proof a few days later flagging problems such as digital images that are too low resolution to print or missing bleeds. These need to be addressed before going to print so that the magazine will reach the membership in a timely manner.

Bob: Believe it or not, although the process from start to finish is complex and multi-faceted, we have managed to create a streamlined and highly efficient process that does not drastically invade our personal and professional lives too much.

Ro: Yes, that was the main goal when setting up the new team. All of our volunteers



have lives outside the IPMS. The only tangible compensation we can offer is a free membership, so I believe that in order to keep our talented volunteers on board they have to want to do it. This is why our editors and designers have the agency to create articles however they want and I believe this style diversity makes the magazine more engaging. Think of it in the same way that when you look at models at a show, you will see all types of subjects presented in a wide range of formats. That's what makes it interesting.

reporters" who are always out there sniffing out a new story lead. We are open to anything that would interest modelers. We do not have any strict guidelines as to what type of things we should feature in the magazine. In fact, we don't have any guidelines at all, other than the models being submitted are to come primarily from our membership. Where else would you find a feature article of a prehistoric lion, mechanized robot, antique cannons as well as planes, trains and automobiles?

"Remember all the articles you see come from you."

Bob: Everyone on the team meets for an hour long video meeting every Thursday and considering that everyone is spread out across the United States in four different time zones, this too takes a commitment by our dedicated volunteers. It's during these meetings that we exchange ideas for future articles, review design layouts, address readers' concerns, and generally think about new ways to improve and grow our magazine. It is also during these meetings that work assignments are allocated to both the editorial and design teams.

Ro: Strangely, everyone willingly shows up and seems to enjoy them.

Bob: That's about it. Remember all the articles you see come from you. This is what sets us apart from the newsstand magazines. In many ways, you are all our "Jimmy Olsen cub

Ro: As talented and committed as our volunteers are, we can always use more help. If you want to be part of something special and contribute your time and unique ideas to our winning team, please reach out to us and we'll see if you have what it takes to be our newest "Jimmy Olsen" IPMS cub reporter.

Bob: If you want to submit an article, join the team, leave feedback or have any other questions, contact me at lpms.journal.editor@gmail.com. If you want to send us your show ad or advertise in the *Journal* contact Ro Annis at advertising@ipmsusa.org. If you have questions regarding your membership or missing *Journals* contact Nancy Hackney at manager@ipmsusa.org.