Serving as student editor-in-chief of The Business Lawyer is an enviable position with career-enhancing rewards. One former editor notes that the entry on her resume almost always sparks a positive comment during interviews. The price for these rewards is a daunting quarterly publication schedule, temperamental authors and hours of manuscript review—assuming that everything goes well.

Bryan Cyr's '99 tenure as student editor did not begin well. Already two issues behind, due, in part, to the sudden death of the former editor, Cyr also faced an ominous, yet unspoken, threat that the sponsoring Business Law Section of the American Bar Association (ABA) would pull the journal from the University.

"In the beginning was the fear factor," says Cyr (pronounced see). We knew they could take the book to another school. We were in the hole two issues so we needed to do something fast."

**Taking the Reins**

In 1990, after years of publishing The Business Lawyer in-house, the ABA began searching for a law school willing to produce the peer-reviewed journal. Competing against such heavyweights as Harvard and Stanford law schools, the University of Maryland earned the right to establish a student editorial board that would oversee the publication of the prestigious journal.

"The Business Section of the ABA has an editor who selects the manuscripts" Cyr explains. "When the articles are sent to me, I do a brief text review, review the sources and add footnotes." The editor then assigns the article to a team from the senior editorial board that continues checking and copying sources and filling in footnotes.

"I do another full review and double check the sources, then send the manuscript off to the author for comments," he continues. "From that point, it goes to the typesetter, then the author and I go back and forth with the page proofs until it's published."

The entire process, from receipt of articles to the final mailing of the journal, takes more than three months. When Cyr took over as editor, the process was in shambles. After the death of the former editor, the staff quickly fell behind two issues, which average 500 pages each. As his tenure began in May 1998, Cyr should have been editing the August issue. Instead he faced a stack of manuscripts from the yet-unpublished February and May issues.

"I would take the train to my job at a Washington, D.C. law firm, work all day, come home, drive to the law school and work at night on the journal," Cyr says.

"And weekends too of course. I drank glasses and glasses of iced coffee. It was a long summer."

It soon became clear to the young editor that neither he nor his staff could catch up without outside help. He needed someone who knew the publication, could begin immediately, and would embrace unreasonable hours.

**A Call for Help**

Sally LaFond '95 had just left her position with a D.C. law firm when she got the call for help. As a former editor of The Business Lawyer, LaFond was the perfect candidate to help steer the publication back on track.

"The summer is a very difficult time for these students," LaFond says, recalling her own days as editor. "They just finished their second year of law school, they're all stressed out doing their first associate jobs, and because it's summer, they're short-staffed." Agreeing to lend an experienced hand, LaFond began the arduous task of getting the publication in order. It gave her a strange sense of déjà vu.

"I remember thinking many times, 'Didn't I already do this?''' she laughs. "I was glad to be a part of it though. When I look back on law school, [working on] The Business Lawyer was a pivotal point for me. It was my training ground and made me want to be a corporate lawyer. The journal is so highly regarded, I didn't want it to leave the school.'"

With an eager and talented staff, Cyr and LaFond managed to produce the February, May and August '98 issues by..."
Competing against such heavyweights as Harvard and Stanford law schools, the University of Maryland earned the right to establish a student editorial board that would oversee the publication of the prestigious journal.

Bryan Cyr '99
Betty Lynne Leary is a freelance writer living in Severn, Md.

Improving the Process

Determined to make sure no one else ever faces the same circumstances he did, Cyr made time during his last semester as editor to train the incoming staff.

“We sat down and asked ‘How do we fix this so it never happens again?’” he explains. “We created a position that takes the pressure off the editor-in-chief. If something happens to the editor, there are a couple of people who know the job well enough to fill in.” The ABA supports the improvements and welcomes the changes as a way to smooth the transition from editor to editor.

Cyr’s successor, Jana Artnak, will serve as the editor-in-chief until summer 2000. Artnak participated in the training and feels comfortable in her new role.

“There’s a good network,” she says. “Brian is there even now for me.” Artnak still faces a grueling schedule in addition to her third-year classes and a summer position at Ober Kaler Grimes & Shriver. And though she was unfamiliar with The Business Lawyer when she first came to the law school, she looked for an opportunity to get involved with a publication to improve her writing and research skills.

“One I got involved, I was impressed with the breadth of material we cover and with its quality,” she says. “There’s a lot of good law happening here and I wanted to be an integral part of it.”

The November '98, February and May '99 issues on time. Although he admits it might sound presumptuous, Cyr says he never considered failure.

“I was probably a bit too optimistic,” he says. “The thing that kept me going was not thinking too far in advance. The task was so monumental, if I’d thought about it, it would have been overwhelming.” LaFond credits Cyr with taking a strong lead on a project in dire need of leadership.

“Brian leads by example. He worked as hard or harder than he asked his staff to work,” she says. “He has vision for such a young person, and it’s been a pleasure watching him grow as a leader and a lawyer. He has what it takes some people in this profession 10 or 15 years to get.”

Improved Relations

Amy Boss, editor-in-chief from the Business Law Section of the ABA, served as Cyr’s counterpart during the past year. She says that Cyr proved himself as an earnest and hard-working individual.

“I think that Brian went beyond the call of duty in the number of hours he dedicated to The Business Lawyer,” she says. “I actually think he slept in the office sometimes. He was on top of every article of every issue at all times.”

“The past year was great for our relationship with the law school,” she says. “I would like to look forward to many more years like the last one.” James J. Hanks Jr. ’67, faculty co-editor and a member of the Business Section, agrees.

“Brian’s work was outstanding,” he adds. “He achieved it by an enormous and selfless effort on his part and his staff’s.” Cyr left the editor’s position in May confident that he helped build bridges with the ABA.

“When things were going smoothly no one questioned the process,” he says. “But when everything hit the fan, both sides shared in the responsibility for what happened.” Last April, during the spring meeting of the Business Section, Cyr and his staff met with their ABA counterparts to discuss how to improve production.

“It was a very cordial, constructive meeting,” says Richard Booth, the new faculty editor from the law school. “It made the students feel more included in the process and fostered a sense of responsibility in them.”

“Having The Business Lawyer at the University of Maryland School of Law is a feather in our cap,” Booth says. “It really is a student-run journal and a number of highly placed individuals from the Business Section have told me the journal is a gem.”