Newspapers have been a necessary piece of history for hundreds of years. News stories are collected everyday and some days offer more important information than others. The Roanoke Times provides southwest Virginia with valuable and accurate information. The Times is a large newspaper that prints about 90,000 papers per day. “We have the largest physical footprint traffic and the least populated area”, says Tarrant.

26 years ago Carole Tarrant graduated from West Virginia University with her bachelor’s degree in Journalism and began her career. Before becoming the editor of The Roanoke Times, Tarrant worked for The Tampa Tribune in Tampa, Fl. Her decision to leave Tampa for Roanoke was easy because there was an opportunity to work for a highly valued newspaper. She has been the chief editor of the Roanoke Times since 2007.

Tarrant’s office is covered with items that display her as a journalist and a normal person other than the editor of The Roanoke Times. She has a few awards hanging on the wall and postcards beside her desk.

One of the awards on display is the recent awarding of the 2011 Mimi Award. This prestigious award is from the Dart Society and is given for excellent stories covering tragedy and trauma. This award is rewarded in memory of Providence Journal editor Mimi Burkhardt. Unfortunately, the loss of Mimi in 2004 was surprising and shocked journalists around the world.

The Internet has greatly affected the field of journalism over the past ten years. The World Wide Web is a vault of unlimited information that is constantly being accessed from all over the world. This has forced journalists to stay ahead of the curve by obtaining and publishing information online fast enough to satisfy the public’s desire.

Online journalism dramatically changed The Roanoke Times because the Internet allows more people to track news with ease. Breaking news is no longer limited to the next day’s paper because the Internet allows recent events to be immediately published for anyone to view. The Internet allows news to become a shared experience for consumers and journalists together. “I love the Internet because of having so much information available”, says Tarrant.

Online journalism is not limited to news stations or newspapers. Social media sites have also jumped into online world. Sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are incredibly popular programs that allow people to interact with the Internet. These sites allow an otherwise impossible communication to occur. Tarrant describes these sites as a manner of sharing experiences.

Tarrant covered Fashion Week in New York City when she worked for the Tampa Tribune. She described this experience as incredibly fun and educational for her wardrobe. Unfortunately, not every story that carries journalistic weight is gratifying. Some stories are difficult due to the nature of the story.

Tragedies are as important and necessary as an election or football game. Virginia Tech experienced a devastating tragedy in April 2007 when a gunman killed over thirty people, including himself. “We needed to get as much info online as soon as possible because online news was family news in 2007”, Tarrant says as describing the shootings that April morning. “We had to structure the information as a blog format.”

This blog format allowed people to read the information in a way that was easy to understand. The public was eating the updates so fast that day that there was no time for a journalist to write a full article.

The Roanoke Times decided to form three different teams to cover the shootings. The first team was the victims’ team. These journalists only reported on the victims of the shootings, which means they gathered information such as names, ages, addresses, etc.

The second team was the investigation team and they were assigned to purely investigate the crime. This group was responsible for police reports, witnesses and any other crucial information.

The third team was the public reaction team. This team was in charge of gathering information from the public, which includes students, faculty, local residents, visitor and other people immediately affected by the tragedy.

As Tarrant briefly relives the emotional drama of that morning, a reality of memories floods us both. The intensity of that day has yet to be matched. She describes this story as, “the most intense and important story I have ever covered.”

Someone as experienced as Tarrant has copious amounts of advice useful for aspiring journalists. She is confident that journalists should constantly be “reading as much material as possible”, says Tarrant. “You should always have a new book in your hand and find an author that you admire and stick with them.”

She also promotes journalists to observe leads from various stories and the content of those stories. “Look at the story [your are writing/reporting] as a story and try not to spit our facts.”

The knowledge and experiences of Carole Tarrant is priceless. Every journalist should aspire to produce the quality reporting that Tarrant is known for.