



Feb 2012

May 2012

Oct 2012

Dec 2012

Looking back at the first year of The MagPi with Liz Upton



Liz Upton
The Raspberry Pi Foundation

Last March, an email came through to my Raspberry Pi Foundation address from someone calling himself Jaseman. He and a group of volunteers had been working on a monthly Raspberry Pi-themed magazine, and they were intending to give away electronic copies for free.

There had been chatter on the Raspberry Pi forums about what a nice idea a monthly magazine, produced by Pi users, would be: a sort of return to the old days of reviews, listings and hardware projects that some of us remembered from magazines like Micro User and Amiga Format. I didn't for a moment think that anybody would take that suggestion and turn it into a real magazine; this was just after the Pi's launch

announcement and we hadn't really got a feel for just how dynamic the Pi community can be when it comes up with a really good idea.

Magazines, you see, are hard. Before I started working for Raspberry Pi in 2011 I'd spent ten years working in publishing; first as an assistant editor for a group of classical music magazines, before moving into book publishing as a chief copy editor. I moved to books for a simple reason: magazines give you sleepless nights. The pay is awful; you'll find yourself subsisting on the canapés they serve up at events so you don't have to buy food

You're working on a month-long treadmill that never stops moving. You're corralling a million different contributors, none of whom take your deadline seriously; you're ensuring that everything gets proof-read by three different sets of eyes before going to press and trying to remember where the accents go in Antonín Voják; you're hoping that your advertising department manages to raise enough money this month to keep you alive for another cycle; you're chatting up the

production department on the off chance that they'll be able to create a bit more space for the really great feature that turned out too long for this issue; you're thrashing about in an attempt to come up with a really clever headline for that article about the old oboe da cacca-playing gent with the already-too-punny

name; and then, when the thing comes out, you'd better brace yourself for the reader feedback. Letters will arrive written in purple ink informing you that the theorbo you pictured on page 13 was, in fact, a modern sitar, and calling for your sacking. (It was a theorbo. I wasn't sacked.)

Seriously: if you think that electronics enthusiasts are geeks, you ought to meet the early music crowd.

I can't imagine doing all this stuff with a team of volunteers absent the threat of withholding someone's fee if they don't

"I can't imagine doing all this stuff with a team of volunteers"



pitch up on time with their article. I really can't imagine doing it without a team of experienced layout, editorial, production, photography, advertising, financial and legal people propping the whole enterprise up. But we kept our fingers crossed and hoped The MagPi team would meet with the same sort of luck we'd found at the Foundation and we offered them our help if they felt they needed it. (They didn't.) The core team seemed like a smart bunch of people. We prepared ourselves to be surprised.

And we were. The MagPi's quality, convincing from the start, has really been cemented over the last year.

Graphically it's getting better and better with every issue, and the contents are so good that the Raspberry Pi

Foundation has been strongly recommending the magazine to schools, parents and after-school clubs to use as part of their

teaching materials. The team working on the magazine has somehow found time not only to get a magazine out every month, but also to run a startlingly successful Kickstarter and, in the case of people like Tim "Meltwater" Cox, to set up some small businesses in the Pi ecosystem as well. I've referred people emailing me with questions to the magazine time and time again. It's a superb resource, and it's been driven by nothing but the extraordinary enthusiasm of a group of spare-time volunteers.

I met Ash Stone, who edits The MagPi, at an Agile conference in Cornwall last summer. We spent the evening sitting on the beach in Falmouth with him, drinking beer and eating hogroast, while talking about the magazine. He has a very demanding day job that brings an enthusiasm and a work ethic to his job on The MagPi that mirrors exactly what we saw at the Raspberry Pi Foundation in the days when we were a group of volunteers too. We have found that working for the love of something brings rewards that the daily grind for a paycheck can't touch. Ash and the team seem to be experiencing something very similar. There's such a depth and breadth of electronics and programming knowledge inherent in the group that's come together to make this magazine. Their impulse to share that knowledge and make it accessible to everybody, not just those who have the luxury of being able to afford a monthly subscription, is really admirable and, we hope, reflects the philosophy behind the Raspberry Pi Foundation itself. We believe that access to tools should be something that's available to everybody. We believe that nobody should be priced out of being able to learn, or

being able to build. Of course, computing and making is not for everybody; but everybody should be offered the opportunity to find out whether it's something they respond to or not.

We think there is something compelling, even in a period of ubiquitous e-readers and tablets, about the printed word. We're proud and excited to see The MagPi's print editions take off; even if you're not buying a print edition, I hope you're printing at least some of the PDF version magazine at home (or at work or school) every month. When you read a piece of code and then use your brain to process it

"We think there is something compelling about the printed word"

and send a signal to your fingers to type it into your Pi, you're cementing what you're learning in a physical way that just won't happen if you use copy and paste.

You will also, hopefully, make mistakes in your typing,

which will mean you'll have to go over the code again to pull out bugs, which will make you think about how things work. If you're like me, you'll fold the corners of pages down and mark interesting bits up with a pen, or stick a post-it note on articles you want to come back to. Scribbling your own notes on hardware instructions helps you to remember what they're for and how things fit together. We're looking forward to seeing how the team deals with the challenges of producing a physical magazine alongside the PDF MagPi; we're also looking forward to seeing sets of the print MagPi in school classrooms and libraries.

This second year of The MagPi has the potential to be even greater than the first. Everybody here at the Raspberry Pi Foundation would like to congratulate The MagPi team on a wonderful year; but most of all we would like to thank you. You've helped spread the word about our little computer; you've helped people to learn how to use it. You've helped kids to find their first enthusiasm for computing and engineering and you've helped grownups get back into a hobby they dropped when machines like the Amiga and the BBC micro went away. You're a vital part of an ecosystem that the Pi needs to stay important and relevant in education and we can hold you up as an example of the passion and skill of the community around the Raspberry Pi.

In many ways we wouldn't be where we are today without The MagPi. So thanks to all of you from all of us: and here's to year two!

