

Mike Lee

AMONG the various scholarships she considered, Ms Joyce Hooi eventually picked Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) to embark on a career in journalism.

She likes writing and economics.

"I am interested in how the world works... everything in life can be viewed in the prism of economics," says the Catholic Junior College alumna.

Before securing the scholarship, she had to first complete a six-month internship as part of the application and selection process, which also included a writing test and rounds of interviews.

For the internship, Ms Hooi was attached to The Straits Times Money desk, and her performance as a journalist was monitored by newsroom supervisors.

At the end of internship, she told herself that there was a fair chance she could commit to being a journalist for four years — the bond for a local scholarship.

With SPH's sponsorship, Ms Hooi pursued a double degree in economics and business management, with a major in finance.

Outside of school semesters at the Singapore Management University, she did vacation attachments at The New Paper (TNP), the Straits Times Life! desk, and then at The Business Times.

Working at TNP, a tabloid, was considerably challenging. The stint taught her about laying the ground work and also developing a thick skin; trust of newsmakers had to be gained, and their stories retold faithfully.

At the Straits Times Life! desk, she found good training in balancing workflow — juggling deadlines for long features, arranging photography sessions, getting in touch with celebrities and more.

She returned to business writing in The Business Times, and after completing the attachment, she worked as full-time as a journalist at the business daily in February 2009.

In less than three years since then, Ms Hooi has become a correspondent. But she is not too hung up about the designation. "I get a new namecard, that's all. Your work has to speak for itself."

Ms Hooi was named a Promising Journalist of the Year 2011 at the SIAS (Securities Investors Association (Singapore) Investors' Choice Awards, and was also Young Journalist of the Year in SPH's annual awards.

Every story matters

SPH scholar Joyce Hooi combines her passion for writing and economics into a fulfilling career as a financial journalist



PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

She currently covers the telco beat, after previously reporting on shipping and green energy. Getting up to speed in the new field entails homework — talking to those in the industry and doing a lot of reading.

More than just trade magazines, though, the avid reader, who goes on reading dates with her boyfriend, her Kindle and iPad, likes publications like the New Yorker, Vanity Fair, Rolling Stone, The Economist and Wired.

Stephen King's *On Writing* and *Shrunk* and White's *The Elements of Style* are two titles she wants to keep in

her collection. She follows the writing of David Sedaris, Charlie Brooker and Lucy Callaway, picking up on the stylistic ways they use humour to get serious issues across to readers.

Meanwhile, Ms Hooi is getting her share of fans and detractors, with her soapbox and human columns on issues

she feels strongly about.

Besides being "just a lot of fun", she says it is a bonus if the piece makes a larger point and gets people to think.

In comparison, the typically straightforward stories like award ceremonies and new facilities launches she did as an intern may seem mundane now.

But in retrospect "every story is a big deal... every story is challenging at your level."

Her goal now is to become a better journalist. She advises those who consider following in her footsteps to continue to talk to as many people and ask as many questions as they can.