

AEJMC Student Magazine Contest 2011

Judges' Comments

Articles—Places

Judge: Scott Stuckey, managing editor of *National Geographic Traveler*

First Place

"Not So Wild About Woofing," for *Marie Claire*

Why it won: This report explores the messy realities behind the promises of a organization that places travelers on organic farms worldwide. The travelers work on the farms in exchange for free room and board. Unfortunately, in some cases, the work, the hours, and the living conditions turn out to be far worse than you're led to believe. The piece told the story through vivid examples of freezing bedrooms, 10-hour days in the field, and dirty toilets to be cleaned. The writer interviewed numerous participants, bringing in a variety of voices and experiences, including some folks who had good experiences. The piece concluded not with a broad condemnation of the program but with tips for how to find the good farms in the program. So, it was a consumer report, in effect, on a very niche kind of travel with a strong buyer-beware point of view.

Second Place

"Fiji On My Mind," for *Travel and Leisure*

Why it won: Successful travel narratives transport the reader to a distant destination with writing that holds their interest throughout. This story about visiting Navala Village in the Fiji Islands did just that. The village is remarkable because government mandate has preserved it in its traditional state, with locals still living in thatched-roof huts. The writer takes us along for a visit, and through first-person narrative, we experience life in the village, including the sharing of kava, a traditional, slightly narcotic beverage, with the locals. The strong point of the piece is its use of dialog throughout, putting us in the moment of encounter.

Third Place

"Down To Earth," for *Urban Plains*

Why it won: This piece is a report on a modern-day hippie community called Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage. The community, near Rutledge, Missouri, is off the grid. Motorized vehicles and most uses of fossil fuels are prohibited. Waste must be recycled. Power must be renewable. The article succeeds because of its wealth of observations and clever formatting, presenting some of the report as boldfaced "Myths" that are refuted, such as "They have a cult leader" and "They grow pot."

General strengths of entries: Many of the entries this year exhibited solid reporting.

General weaknesses of entries: The beginning of an article is so important. It has to grab the reader through narrative anecdote, some bold statement, or a surprising fact. After that strong lead, you need a strong setup, cluing the reader in to the scope, purpose, and perhaps the structure of the article. Several entries made the mistake of leading with background information, or preamble, losing the reader before the piece had a chance to build up steam. On another front, one or two pieces jumped among the first, second, and third person, which becomes glaring and annoying once you notice it and betrays the writer's uncertainty about how best to present his piece. A couple of the pieces were self-indulgent rambles, focusing on the writer rather than revealing something about the place at hand.

Articles—People

Judge: Dick Stolley, senior editorial adviser at Time Inc. and founding editor of *People*

First Place

“He Jumped, I Followed,” for *The New Yorker*

Why it won: The death by suicide of the author’s older brother leads him into a painful investigation of the reasons why he threw himself off a seven story parking garage in far-off Hawaii. Although we know the outcome, the author manages to create amazing suspense as he interviews his brother’s friends, scrolls through his cell phone, recalls his troubled adolescence and surprising Air Force enlistment. Suicide is the ultimate puzzle, and we never really learn why. But we do achieve an understanding of the 22-year-old himself and grieve for him almost as if we were family members ourselves.

Second Place

“Not All Smurfs and Sunshine,” for *Ryerson Review*

Why it won: Stories about writers and why they write can often be painful reading. This is an outstanding exception. It details the career of Chris Jones and his long-form journalism in *Esquire* and other major magazines on such diverse subjects as the return home of an Iraqi KIA, Tiger Woods and movie critic Roger Ebert who was rendered mute by cancer. The author reveals Jones in all his aspects: his ambitions, both his temper and his patience, his honesty (his brother hasn’t spoken to him since he revealed the sibling’s infidelity in the Tiger Woods story), and most of all, Jones’ obsession with factual reporting. “In journalism,” the author quotes Jones as saying, “objectivity as this ideal should be replaced with truth. As long as your story is 100 percent accurate, no one can question you.” These are words for all of us to live by.

Third Place

“A Fox in Boy’s Clothing,” for a consumer, student magazine

Why it won: For astonishment alone, this story deserves commendation. It’s about a little-known, online community of people, called furies, who dress up as animals and develop “fursonas,” or portrayals of how they imagine themselves as anthropomorphic characters. Weird, huh? The author follows a 21-year-old gay man, who sees himself as a red fox, into this strange world and manages to treat him and the community with both curiosity and respect. Almost every paragraph contains a surprise: fur suits are truly expensive, starting at \$1,000; when a furry goes out in public, normal people either want to hug you or ask sympathetically, “Isn’t it hot in there?”; and unless it’s an emergency, you never ever take off your head. This story is a follow-up in effect to a scathing *Vanity Fair* piece in 2001 that categorized “all furies as gay men with beards who love science fiction and indulge their delusions accordingly.” The furry world is more complex—and fascinating—than that.

Honorable Mention

“Choosing to be Amish,” for *Vox Magazine*

Why it won: This story follows two young men who temporarily left an Amish community in Missouri; one returned, the other, after great soul searching, did not. With appealing sensitivity, the author digs into the reasons and motives for the actions of both. The comparisons give us a surprisingly intimate understanding of the appeal of life inside and outside this unusual religious sect.

Honorable Mention

“Jake Nash: Speaking for the Transgender Community,” for a consumer, student magazine

Why it won: Most people who change their sex want to be anonymous and pursue a simple closed life. Not Jake (formerly Pamela) Nash who endured multiple surgeries and 13 years of hormonal therapy. The author gives us a candid but sympathetic look at how Jake became the symbol of and spokesperson for the transgender community in Ohio, and why.

General strengths of entries: This year, the more unusual the subject, in general, the better the entry. Mundane subjects usually resulted in mundane stories. That may be the result of unavoidable school assignments, but it could also be writers' laziness. Go for subjects that really intrigue you, subjects that will be difficult to get to, subjects that will advance your skills and take you into areas that are scarily unfamiliar. They can range from our own dysfunctional families (suicide, mental illness) to strange communities (the Amish, the transgendered, the "furries").

General weaknesses of entries: Reporting, reporting, reporting. Too many authors tried to substitute fancy writing for facts. Story after story, I found myself asking, "Why didn't he (or she) ask the next obvious question or contact the next obvious source?" Any worthwhile story should be OVER-reported. You might not use all the stuff you collect, but it will certainly inform and improve what you finally do put on paper.

Articles—Investigation and Analysis

Judge: Mike Sager, writer for *Esquire* and author of *Scary Monsters and Super Freaks* and *Revenge of the Donut Boys*.

First Place

"Suicide Notes," for *Ryerson Review*

Why it won: Well written and researched. A look at suicide and cultural shame in the decision that faces the media in choosing to (or not to) to write about suicides. The writer brought first person insight and passion to the investigation without over-playing the dramatics.

Second Place

"In an Instant," for a consumer magazine

Why it won: Probably more suited for the feature category—but a prime example of how "investigation," when combined with effective "narrative story telling," makes for the most compelling read. Interviewing the family and friends of the dead, and dealing with police and court issues, especially in a controversial situation (murder and alt lifestyles in the context of sports), are difficult and uncomfortable for reporters of any age.

Third Place

"Overcoming the Shock," for *Ball Bearings*

Why it won: Well written and researched. Synthetic tampons a true hazard v cotton? If so, this is an important issue for over half the nation's/ world's population.

Honorable Mention

"Missouri Death Row Inmates Face Uncertain Future," *Vox Magazine*

Why it won: Well researched, touches all the bases of a good investigation. It reflects the difficult process of dealing with a corrections department and with inmates, and discusses an interesting issue.

General strengths of entries: Enthusiasm, work ethic, an understanding of what bases need to be covered.

General weaknesses of entries: The pieces maintain a certain level of maturity and depth that would be of course expected at this level. Most pieces are a little thin and aw shucks. This will change with time.

Articles—Service and Information

Judge: John Rockhold, managing editor of *Mother Earth News*

First Place

“Find a Furry Friend,” for *Jayplay*

Why it won:

- Professional level writing – solid and straightforward, informative and engaging.
- It’s not uncommon for articles on traditional topics such as this to end up short on real-world details. But this piece doesn’t make assumptions or gloss over the important details. It has all the practical information the audience needs, with bits of fun and spice throughout to keep the reader engaged.
- The writer maintains a conversational tone throughout the piece without crossing the line into too much telling and not enough showing.
- Great balance of quotes and stories from peers within the audience and relevant experts.
- Excellent use of subheads (literally a sequence of questions the reader is likely to have) and a sidebar that can capture the reader’s enthusiasm and catapult him/her into action.

Second Place

“New Age Ettiquette,” for a campus magazine

Why it won:

- Loaded with important, practical information that will be useful to the audience, even if they don’t realize it. I can imagine the article’s audience saving this piece and sharing it with others.
- Accurate and sound advice throughout the article that’s presented in a lively voice, with a mixture of relevant stories and expert advice.
- Many service articles (even many submitted for this competition) employ exaggerated statements or metaphors in an attempt to capture the reader’s interest through shock. This article stays on the right side of that line, and is genuinely useful piece.
- Well organized sections, with entry points galore to hook casual readers and keep those already captured interested.

Third Place

“Remember the Alamo! ... And the Theater,” for *San Antonio Magazine*

Why it won:

- Provides a colorful window into local (and apparently little know) treasures.
- Nice balance of a wealth of information about specific theaters and plays with insight into the people who make those theaters what they are.
- The comprehensive list of local theaters provides extra, long-term value for the reader.

General strengths of entries: The best of the best starkly stood out from the rest. The top two articles were some of the best I’ve read for this competition. The rest of the entries were some of the worst. The best articles clearly had genuine, substantial effort put into them – with practical information for the reader, presented in an accessible, engaging manner.

General weaknesses of entries: On the surface, many entries reflect that the writers didn’t take their entries into this competition seriously. Typos on cover sheets. Missing sheets. Remnant formatting and text from the online versions. Typos in the articles themselves. Etc.

A pattern in many of the articles was the use of exaggerated statements in apparent attempt to capture readers’ attention. Sometimes these were just silly; other times they were egregiously irresponsible, with inaccurate information or comparisons. I don’t know if it was simply bad writing or research, or a flamboyant social media style spilling over into formal writing, but it’s at best unappealing and at worst dangerous to the audience.

Articles—Features

Judge: Mary Hickey, channel editor for AARP online

First Place

“140 Characters in Search of a Story,” for *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

Why it won: This piece has all the ingredients of an ideal magazine feature: It explores the big-picture impact of Twitter on the world of journalism through a sharply focused examination of local political coverage in Ottawa. Its portrayal of the changing news business is lively and engaging. The writing is smart and creative, but not at all overwrought. The piece is impressively reported and clearly organized. It is thoughtful and analytical, but lets the facts and carefully constructed anecdotes tell the story.

Second Place

“Destiny USA,” for *New York Times Sunday Magazine*

Why it won: This piece gives a fascinating behind-the-scenes account of a stalled mega mall development that had promised to be the economic savior of Syracuse, N.Y. The piece draws readers in with a colorful description of the projects plans that ends with a provocative foreshadowing of what’s to come. It’s extremely well reported, and masterfully weaves colorful detail with economic and demographic data. The strength of the writing holds up throughout the piece.

Third Place

“Vice Goes Global,” for *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

Why it won: Who knew that *Vice* magazine had such an interesting history? This business feature about a media conglomerate is told with such color and detail that it makes the subject come alive in a totally engaging way. The depth of reporting, the clever organization and the intelligent, thoughtful writing combine to make this a completely professional feature article from start to finish.

Honorable Mention

“Risky Recruiting,” for *Sports Illustrated*

Why it won: This piece brings to light a little-publicized fact about the athletic recruiting scene: The way Facebook, texting and other new technology are widely used, sometimes in a way that violates the rules. The writer recognized this fascinating, untold story and captured it well with telling anecdotes and powerful quotes. The piece is thoroughly reported and structured in a clear and logical way

Honorable Mention

“Gay and Greek,” for *North by Northwestern*

Why it won: The growing (and sometimes begrudging) acceptance of the LGBT community is much in the news these days, and the writer found the ideal slice of this story for a student magazine. The piece details the ways that fraternities and sororities are finding a place for LGBT students. It is well reported and exhibits a well-woven mix of anecdotes and narrative. The piece captures the nuances of integrating LGBT students into a system that has the gender binary at its core.

General strengths of entries: The entries in this category represented a full spectrum of skills and abilities. The best were as good as what you’d expect from a professional writer. To me, the most impressive feature of many of the entries was the fresh eye that these young writers brought to the content. Many seemed to recognize the fact that a good, fresh idea is an essential ingredient to a story. I was also impressed by the depth of the reporting in many of them, and by how well the student journalists were able to weave narrative and anecdotes — something that can be very difficult for novice writers. I also liked the candid and irreverent voices of many of the writers.

General weaknesses of entries: Aside from the fact that a good half of the pieces were just too thin, the thing that struck me as a general weakness was over-writing. Too many of the students let their purple prose get in the way of clear storytelling. If you've got a good story – and a clear understanding of what makes it interesting – a good writer just kind of lets the piece write itself. (Or at least read as if it's written itself!)

Articles—First Person

Judge: Kitty Morgan, executive editor, *Better Homes and Gardens*

First Place

“The Coldest Winter,” for *The Atlantic*

Why it won: This is a remarkable piece. There is the talented, inventive writer who can evoke a scene and imbue it with meaning, who can capture a character in a few phrases, and who can be incredibly, self-deprecatingly funny. And there is the story: the writer's mother, dying. The central conceit, that her death is inevitable and yet unknown and unknowable to her, is far from new. But it captured me immediately and pulled me through the story.

No other story in the mix had the combination of style and substance. So many other essays also dealt with death and/or loss, but few of them had anything revelatory to say. “The Coldest Winter” has a sad yet beautiful quality that is rare.

(This writer also wrote “The Season”—the style gave it away, and I could figure out his/her name. That piece was very promising too, but needed far, far more strenuous editing. The writer has great, original descriptive powers, but still has to learn to edit out what doesn't propel the story or the character. “The Season” might also have been an award-winner if it hadn't rambled the heck all over the place.)

Second Place

“Jess and Mark,” for a consumer, student publication

Why it won: How can you make a story about a girlfriend's ovarian cancer funny? How can you make the question of loving someone who may just die funny? How can you make funny poignant, touching, wise? This writer: I could sit and listen to him tell a story any time, based on this lovely piece. That his humor and compassion saved his sanity—old story. But the ability to translate that to the page is exceptional. I came to know two oddball but loving people who survived the unsurvivable. And the writer never dropped into cliché. His observations, particularly of his own emotional life, were entirely fresh.

Third Place

“War Torn,” for *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

Why it won: A combination of memoir, reporting and analysis, this piece stands out for its ambition. The author—a daughter of a Bosnian Serb and a Bosnian Croat—uses her own divided identity to question why the world media (actually, the Canadian media) did not successfully pursue and report the Bosnian war and atrocities. The writer is most comfortable with the memoir part—and that makes it fresh—and the reporting, through key journalists who covered the war, gives a truth-in-hindsight understanding. I was not convinced by the question at the core of the story: the writer asking why the media didn't do its job. The question felt contrived. And the resolution—that it was hard to cover the war—seemed too easy. But overall, the piece is a complex work of a careful writer willing to use her personal life as a journalistic lens.

Honorable Mention**“An Open Letter to Anthony Bourdain, the Chef who Hates My Dad,” for Vox**

Why it won: Funny, irreverent, charming. Great voice. I wish the writer had made a clearer case for her father’s work—or at least looked at her own need to defend her father in a more complex manner. But so fun to read.

Honorable Mention**“I Love New York,” for campus or alternative publication**

Why it won: There were many essays in the mix about students transitioning from student life to The Bigger World. This writer (like the best in this group) did so with self-deprecating humor and sharp descriptions of place and character. I wish the story had resolved itself; the narrative through line is shaky.

Specialized Business Press Article

Judge: Sandi Wendelken, editor, RadioResource Media Group

First Place**“Crusading Against the “F” Word,” for *The Chronicle of Higher Education***

Why it won: Of all the entries, this article seems the most likely to be published in a b-to-b magazine. The article does a good job of integrating facts and information with feature-type writing. The profile brings to light a large societal issue with interesting details about ongoing research and programs.

Second Place**“An American Makibaka,” for *Military Heritage Magazine***

Why it won: This article effectively describes a personal experience while highlighting an issue affecting the federal government. The article does a good job of tying in historical information with personal experience and cultural details.

General strengths of entries: The articles generally did a great job of tying in feature writing with facts and information. Interesting topics, well written and well organized.

General weaknesses of entries: Some of the entries took a more essay-type approach. I don’t think this generally works for most b-to-b magazines. More business-focused writing would fare better in this category.

Online Magazine

Judge: Nick Fauchald, editor-in-chief of tastingtable.com, an online food magazine

First Place***Flux Magazine* (<http://www.fluxstories.com/>)****Why it won:**

- Right away the homepage commands the reader’s attention with arresting, dramatic photos. It’s clear you’ve arrived at a publication that takes its artwork seriously.
- The homepage is also easy to navigate, with feature stories organized into three categories.
- The features themselves are easy to read. There are few distractions from the story, and captions are smartly placed alongside photos but in the margins away from the main body of the text.
- I also appreciated that the video-based features let the video content speak for itself, with only a brief text introduction.

- One thing that could improve the site: adding more structure to the blog. Make it easier to navigate all of that great content by either offering better category navigation and/or tease recent blog posts more prominently on the homepage.
- Overall, this website offers many of the same bells and whistles of other online magazines, but its design is simple and clean enough to provide a quiet and engaging reading experience.

Second Place

Ball Bearings (<http://ballbearingsmag.com/>)

Why it won:

- The slideshow dominates the homepage, which encourages clicking into feature stories right away. My only complaint is that the photos rotate too quickly.
- The features do an excellent job of combining visuals, audio and text. Where many “multimedia” stories are more style than substance, I rarely got that sense with Ball Bearing’s features.
- The “Clickables” features are a lot of fun and do a great job of demonstrating how to create a highly interactive story experience.
- I thought the “see more” button inside the magazine stories was unnecessary. Why not display the entire story right away? The reader has already committed to visiting the piece.
- Overall, this website offers some of the best examples of multimedia and interactive storytelling I’ve seen in this contest.

Third Place

Fakeality (<http://fakealitymag.com/>)

Why it won:

- The main slideshow on the homepage allows the reader to dive right into videos, photos and audio. And the pause/play button is much appreciated!
- The “Table of Contention” is very smart: I enjoyed seeing what multimedia features each story offered.
- Navigating the site was very easy; from each page I could find other relevant stories and get back to the homepage in a hurry.
- Overall, this website has a great sense of humor (I especially loved the photo/avatars on the About page). Fakeality is true to its mission: “Just like the life we knew, some of what we encounter in this realm is important, a lot of it is frivolous, and some is deathly serious.”

General strengths of entries:

Each year the entries do a better job of using the various media on hand (photos, videos, audio, interactive graphics, etc.) as real added value to the story experience—instead of just throwing too much distracting multimedia at the readers for them to sort out.

General weaknesses of entries:

- Navigation was a frequent problem. It should be easy to click out of a story (and browse the rest of the site) once you’ve finished experiencing it.
- If a page layout calls for a large, prominently displayed image, make sure it’s a good one! Too often the large visuals weren’t of a high-enough quality to do their placement justice.

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—Design

Judge: Andi Beierman, deputy art director, *Texas Monthly*

First Place

Think (Drake University)

Why it won: *Think's* daring all-type cover stood out from the crowd for boldly and successfully subverting the typical full-bleed photo format. The jumble of words beneath the masthead introduces a strong color palette that continues throughout the issue. Inside, spreads are solidly executed. Headlines, decks, bylines, drop caps, and pull quotes have a consistent style. Photos and type are deftly arranged on a three-column grid with a refreshing amount of white space between elements. The established color scheme is artfully applied and prevents layouts from becoming rote. Splashy infographics and bold blacks break up the content to create a dynamic pacing of stories. *Think* eschews gimmicks in favor of a less-is-more approach; the design is energetic but it never overwhelms the reader or distracts from the content.

Second Place

The Planet (Western Washington University)

Why it won: *The Planet's* full-bleed cover photo of an electrical substation at night is an instant attention-grabber and an excellent way to kick off an edition devoted to power and energy. A motif of yellow bars and circles is established from page one and it becomes a unifying theme throughout the issue. Cleverly arranged photos and pull quotes exploit a three-column grid to create movement and prevent pages from feeling slavishly templated. Sharp infographics and sidebars are used appropriately to supplement the copy. Headlines, decks, bylines, and captions are smartly and consistently formatted and never feel like an afterthought. Varying type sizes and weights are used to establish a clear hierarchy from spread to spread. In short, *The Planet* took a dense topic and made it engaging and accessible. Basic principles of design—contrast, repetition, and hierarchy—are skillfully executed.

Third Place

Flux Magazine (University of Oregon)

Why it won: *Flux's* cover—a nice portrait image overlaying a bold masthead—makes an impact and has the look and feel of a professional magazine. Inside, the design embraces a wide range of content while keeping the reader engaged. The layouts make good use of white space and have a clear hierarchy. Excellent photography (most notably the images for “Pastime to Prime Time” and “No Shave, No Shame”) really helped set *Flux* apart from its competitors, as did their use of editorial illustration throughout the issue.

Honorable Mention

Vox (University of Missouri)

Why it won: *Vox* expertly tackles real-world design issues. A flexible grid and strong type hierarchy create a clear separation between editorial content and advertisements. Eye-catching headers boldly announce different sections. Service information (masthead, table of contents, calendar and film listings) is skillfully executed with strong color, solid type, and abundant white space. Fine points have not been overlooked: typefaces, spacing, and color are delightfully consistent from page to page. *Vox* has dialed in the details, giving them a clean look that rivals many professional weeklies.

General strengths of entries:

- Strong covers
- Good use of photography
- Clear grid structure

General weaknesses of entries:

- Weak typography
- Inconsistent templates
- Lack of attention to detail (type styles, art placement, spacing)

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—Editorial

Judge: Ashley Deahl, acting editor-in-chief and managing editor of *Phoenix Magazine*

First Place**Ryerson Review of Journalism, Winter 2011 (Ryerson University)**

Why it won: The depth and breadth of stories covered with top-notch, professional work. I wouldn't have known this was student journalism had I just picked it up and started reading. The stories were so compelling I could hardly put it down. The story about Esquire's Chris Jones was just as intriguing as Jones's work itself. And the clean yet appropriately creative design simply elevated the copy to its highest level. Nice work!

Second Place**Think (Drake University)**

Why it won: The stories here went beyond what a typical university magazine might do. Instead of the sensational stories most colleges lean toward, there was actual hard, investigative journalism in here. Loved "Into the Deep," and "Art Behind Bars" in particular...these were features befitting of a professional city magazine. It's clear the editors and writers take the time to think of how the university fits into the bigger picture on social issues...not just about social issues you could find at any university.

Third Place**Jerk (Syracuse University)**

Why it won: There was just something about this little guy I loved from start to finish. From the campy, colorful photo shoots to the quick-hit features that manage to inform, enlighten and entertain all in a condensed space. This is definitely something I would carry around and read if I were a student at Syracuse.

Honorable Mention**Vox Magazine (University of Missouri)**

Why it won: Typically student magazines can get too caught up in a themed issue, and certainly "sex" isn't a new theme, but Vox took its sex and religion issue to new heights by really digging into serious, social matters – not just the salaciousness of sex. They really explored every angle of the theme and did a nice job balancing out all points of view. The hard work is evident on every page and in every story.

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—General Excellence

Judge: Diane Anderson-Minshall, executive editor of *The Advocate* and editor-in-chief of *HIV Plus* magazines

First Place**Think (Drake University)**

Why it won: This magazine does an incredible job of speaking to its progressive readership with hard-hitting articles, investigative journalism, news reporting and socially-conscious service articles. Articles, art, design and illustrations are all consistently wonderful. The articles are international in their scope, yet often speak to Midwestern readers with local tie-ins, regional interviewees, etc.. Sidebars, call-outs and photos all lend themselves to a great deal of

interactivity. Excellent magazine that could compete on newsstands with the likes of *Mother Jones* and *Utne Reader*—no easy task.

Second Place

***Mississippi Observer* (University of Mississippi)**

Why it won: This prototype of a newspaper/magazine does an excellent job of all the things that make magazines great: in-depth coverage, investigative reporting, topics that serve to inform, educate, entertain, and sometimes enrage, their target readership. Unlike a number of student publications, the magazine does a brilliant job of maintaining objectivity without losing a sense of tone, voice and style. Several articles, including ones on racism, obesity and the abortion debate, serve not just to promote excellent journalism but also--as the editors indicate in their notes--present their readership with more accurate reflections of their lives.

Third Place

***Jerk* (Syracuse University)**

Why it won: The magazine does an excellent job of speaking to its readers with irreverent takes on traditional college stories (one example is an article on Adderall abuse as a form of eating disorder) that you can't find elsewhere. There's a diversity of traditional articles and first person essays. There's also a nice balance of articles between male and female writers and topics as well as diversity in the photos and articles. A few articles are professional caliber and could easily find a home at a non-student publication

Honorable Mention

***Fusion* (Kent State University)**

Why it won: Fusion reads like an LGBT publication that could rival its national consumer magazine peers like *The Advocate*. Combining controversial topics and straightforward news features and profiles, Fusion offers up incredibly spirited work for a student publication. The cover story, on those in the gay "furry" community--complete with 3D glasses and a photo spread that sends nods to the largest national public service campaign of 2010 (NoH8)—is something you just won't find anywhere else, nor would another publication present it this way.

Honorable Mention

***The Planet* (Western Washington University)**

Why it won: Combining environmental advocacy with journalism, *The Planet* offers up some seriously strong national, environmental writing that is still straight-forward and accessible enough for their target readership of students and staff. In addition, the magazine staff has taken national topics and related them to their Pacific Northwest region in a smartly compelling way.

General strengths of entries: All the things that made for winners, including irreverent article topics, comprehensive coverage, a balance of articles that meet reader needs (e.g. investigative articles, service pieces, straightforward news, entertainment profiles, sidebars, callouts, etc), inventive design that enhances reading rather than distracting from content, and finding ways to bring big issues to a local/regional or school-wide level.

General weaknesses of entries: Over reliance on themes. For every publication that did it well (*Jayplay*, for example) many more did not. Themes can be great ways to focus content but done poorly is sure to make readers put the magazine down (or not pick it up to begin with).

Another common mistake was in design; designers and art directors need to find a balance—creative design that captivates readers but doesn't get in the way of the articles. Too often design or typography will obscure the text, or will be so jarring (varying fonts page by page for example) that it creates a sort of visual cacophony for readers (not in a good way).

Last weakness I spotted was in editorial planning, articles that were either too short or too long for the topic. Some of the winners executed this quite well, but others need editors to work on honing their craft and knowing when to cut the darlings from the text and when to let it go long.

Start-Up Magazine Project—Team

Judge: Roger Tremblay, executive search consultant specializing in marketing communications for Allen Austin Global Executive Search / Advanced Leadership Communication in Dallas.

First Place

Earth + Sky

Why it won: Of all the entries this year, I thought this was truly the most original. In a world of multiculturalism or “omniculturalism” as one of my agency friends calls it, I think this would resonate in the marketplace. It serves a distinct, definable audience with recognizable buying power. While you can make the argument that Native Americans are wholly assimilated into the US culture as a whole, the increasing diversity of our society creates a dynamic that lends itself to a pride and awareness of origin that makes a magazine like this attractive.

This entry also exhibited the best prototype. Good graphics and design, well-thought-out editorial plan, strong cover and overall, just a really good-looking magazine.

The business plan could have been more thoroughly developed but at least it was realistic. I was surprised not to see a digital platform included but maybe that wasn't part of the assignment.

Second Place

Handshake Magazine

Why it won: Although it's somewhat counter-intuitive, I actually believe that Geeks like to read and I think this magazine would be very appealing to a target audience that is no longer adequately served by *Wired* and *Popular Science*.

Given the geometric progression of new technology, there will always be a wealth of story ideas and people who have opinions about them.

This was also an excellent execution in terms of design, art direction, editorial content and cover appeal. The business plan is a little unrealistic in terms of initial investment but I think the team is right on target when they say that the magazine's success will be advertiser-driven.

Third Place

Wik Magazine

Why it won: I watch all my friends with college-bound high school children who are going through the agonizing process of finding the right college and I sympathize with their angst. Nobody is really addressing this need in the marketplace right now and the process seems to become increasingly difficult especially given the rising costs of higher education. From a marketing standpoint, the audience renews itself every year much like bridal magazines, which makes audience acquisition an easier proposition.

I think for this magazine to be really successful, it would have to have regional editorial editions and advertising options as the team has stated but maybe today's seniors have a broader view of the world.

Overall, the business plan was well done but I think the ad sales portion needs more thought as to who the target prospects are and what the pricing strategy should be. In terms of graphics and design, I would say good but not great and this audience would respond to a strong visual appeal.

Honorable Mention

Modern Grandparent Magazine

Why it won: I'm not kidding anyone; this is a magazine for me! My wife who is much more tech savvy than me is always teaching me things like how to use SKYPE to talk to the grandkids. So I get the premise.

My only concern would be how long of a run something like this would have. Are my great grandchildren going to look at my kids like they look at me now or is the next generation going to always keep pace with technological advances. Stay tuned.

Honorable Mention

International Kitchen Magazine

Why it won: The world will never run out of foodies, especially foodies who like to mix travel and eating. And Conde Nast shuttered *Gourmet*. Lot of folks still shaking their heads over that one.

General strengths of entries: The students who submitted these projects clearly have a grasp of the process and discipline of a start-up publication. There are a lot of good design and graphics executions and as well as unique editorial direction. Some very well-thought-out advertising sales strategies.

General weaknesses of entries: As much as I hate to say it, I was disappointed in the lack of really unique and creative ideas this year. I thought more than half the entries were warmed-over executions of magazines that are all already being done and done well. I also admit to having a bias against any magazine that is aimed at college students or recent graduates. That's called research that's extrapolated from a sample of one.

And very little discussion of digital platforms to go along with the print execution. Maybe that wasn't part of the assignment but it sure is a concern for every magazine publisher in America right now.

Start-Up Magazine Project—Individual

Judge: Kevin P. Keefe, vice president-editorial, publisher, Kalmbach Publishing Co.

First Place

LetterPress

Why it won: This is a good example of a special-interest magazine aimed at a clearly identifiable audience with a strong core passion for its subject. It is a classic match of an audience to helpful, entertaining information. The editorial plan gets a lot of mileage out of what, at first glance, would seem to be a narrow subject. But the publisher makes it sound rich and appealing. The writing is professional and engaging. The design is appropriate to the readership: smart, crisp, classic. Although the competitive analysis is thin, it appears the market is wide open for a title like this. On the basic question of merit—"Will someone out there in the world find this to be of positive, lasting value?"—I rate it very highly.

Second Place

Reaction

Why it won: This was a difficult call, because *Reaction* made nearly as strong an impression on me as *LetterPress*. Here is a convincing presentation of a magazine that can be important in people's lives. The business plan is comprehensive and detailed, and if sponsorship by the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network truly is possible, then *Reaction* really begins to sound practicable. The editorial plan shows excellent vision, with a thorough mix of topics geared effectively for an audience of parents. The design is bright and inviting. The competitive analysis was the best I've seen of all the entries: it really spells out the differences between *Reaction* and other publications. The positive twist in the writing is a big plus. On overall merit, another winner.

Third Place

Funny or Die

Why it won: Assuming the publishers really can win over the owners of FunnyOrDie.com for sponsorship, they could have a hit here. I found the editorial and business plan to be appropriately brash, creative, and detailed. The editorial plan is exceptionally well written, and

the competitive analysis is one of the better ones among all entries. The writing and the design are appropriately subversive and witty; the challenge for these guys is to preserve the energy of laughter, a tricky business with an art form that easily deflates when examined or analyzed. If they can be as funny as their subject, they could avoid the comedian's worst fate: dying.

Honorable Mention

Green Bride

Why it won: That "green weddings" are a meaningful slice of the wedding demographic is news to me, but assuming there is a matching affinity group, then the *Green Bride* proposal is fairly convincing. They are smart to avoid going for a subscriber audience, and smart to consider making a pitch to Ogden Publishing, an experienced, high-quality company. The writing and design exhibit the sort of fresh, smart attitude that can win over young couples. In its competitive analysis, the publisher makes a credible case for *Green Bride* as an alternative to the other traditional, predictable magazines in the market.

Honorable Mention

Cartwheel

Why it won: I like this because of the sheer exuberance of the editorial plan. And it would need a lot of energy, because the magazine would have to win over parents more than it would the kids at whom it is aimed. Not an easy thing to do. The editorial lineup shows solid expertise and a deep love for gymnastics. It's easy to imagine would-be readers gobbling up most of the information. Although the writing seems aimed at more of an adult audience than a younger one, this is smart if the business aim is to attract parents as customers.

General strengths of entries:

- Excellent command of the basic principles of magazine marketing
- Overall strong skills as writers and designers
- In most proposals, a convincing passion for the subject or idea
- A basic grasp of circulation and advertising realities
- Dedication to all of today's magazine platforms: print, web, social media

General weaknesses of entries:

- A preoccupation by some with the shallow, predictable, ephemeral hallmarks of the times: fashion, sex life, physical beauty, "edginess" (whatever that is). That's why this judge emphasized "merit" in some of the winners described above.
- The presence of product brands in so much of the prose; must the lingua franca really be the names of cars, sunglasses, shoes, and electronics?
- It's difficult to fully judge the writing off just headlines, decks, and editors' notes.
- Revenue streams often are overstated, costs understated, especially content acquisition costs
- Many underestimate the difficulty of breaking into the single-copy, mass-market distribution chain