

AEJMC Student Magazine Contest 2006

Articles—Places

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

First Place

“High on Tamarindo,” by Carolyn McKibben, Boston University
For *Atlantic*

This piece about the Central American nation of Costa Rica jumped out from the other entries as a clear winner. No question about it. The piece wasn't the best written, and it still needs a good edit. But it takes first place for three reasons: It was the most thoroughly reported. (That means the writer worked harder than anybody else.) It had a strong angle, namely, that “Ecotourism in Costa Rica is backfiring.” And finally, it was chockfull of compelling encounters with colorful locals—the real estate developer with fears of the future, the transplanted Californian figuring out local trash collection, the surfer dude suffering from overexposure to ultraviolet light. As readers, we could handle the serious expository passages because they were broken up with vivid encounters. And it was the stories of the locals, their struggles and hopes, that gave us a true sense of the place.

Second Place

“The Masochistic Traveler,” by Sarah Tolkoﬀ, Northwestern University
For *Travel Girl*

Sometimes an article succeeds for being nothing more than a delicious piece of brain candy. I felt a little naughty reading it, like eating a half-pound of M&Ms. I worried that the article wasn't weighty enough, that it was pandering to my voyeurism. But no matter. The subject was novel, and I had to keep reading. The premise was straightforward: “Globetrotters are covered with scars, and behind each scar is a story.” The writer found a wide variety of travelers who had suffered bizarre maladies in far-flung places, and yet still loved travel. Admittedly, there wasn't much to it, but it won because, besides its simple structure, it had storytelling and colorful people.

Third Place

“Seine and the Single Girl,” by Erin Zaleski, Northwestern University
For *Elle*

This one explored dating customs, and more broadly, male-female interactions, in Paris, revealing something interesting about French culture in contrast to our own. The stated theme, that “Paris isn't just for couples anymore; now singles are discovering it,” was trite, but the supporting evidence was well presented and interesting to read—and came together coherently, even if the wrong theme served as the umbrella. The piece also feathered in some discussion of Paris neighborhoods, which, combined with the exploration of local customs, gave us a sense of place.

General strengths of entries: All of the entries this year were competently written, showing craftsmanship and maturity.

General weaknesses of entries: None of the entries was perfect, and that's to be forgiven, because writing a piece with a good sense of place isn't easy. It takes a combination of elements. Narrative is generally more interesting to read than exposition, and the world is full of people more interesting to read about than ourselves. Accordingly, a good “place” piece blends narrative and exposition and is filled with encounters with the people who live there. But don't leave the writer out entirely. We like to move with the writer through the landscape, meeting people, discovering the place. And background information is feathered in, not larded on.

A crucial element missing from most, but not all, of this year's entries was point of view, or angle. I suspect this comes from a fear of being subjective rather than objective. But we're not talking about advocacy, but rather purpose, having a point to it. Without it, the reader wonders, “So what?”

There were many pointless articles this year. One competently explained the history of a particular American neighborhood, but the theme—that the neighborhood was “in transition”—was merely descriptive. Another piece took us inside a monastery to see how the monks live. But again, nothing but description. This could’ve been a brochure. Another piece appeared under this deck: “Does America’s car culture give us more freedom—or does it destroy our communities and isolate us from one another?” Sounds good. But it soon became clear than some editor had slapped that theme down after the fact. The article itself was a sprawling discourse that lamely raised some questions toward the end but had no backbone—narrative or thematic—to hold it all together. Journalism pros aren’t doing their jobs when they let pieces like that get out the classroom door. With a little direction, that writer could have turned all that reporting into something worth reading rather than just a bucketful of facts.

Articles—People

Judge: Dick Stolley, retired editorial director of Time Inc. and founding managing editor of *People*

First Place

“Whyte Noise,” by Joe Castaldo, Ryerson University

For *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

This is a thoroughly professional, first-rate portrait of the strange, controversial new editor of the famed Canadian magazine, *MacLean’s*. There isn’t a false step in this story. It deals with his checkered past, his unusual management techniques and his inability to articulate in a lively but even-handed way. It describes the enormity of the publishing challenge Kenneth Whyte has taken on, and amazingly, the reader is rooting for this weird duck by the end. A truly outstanding job.

Second Place

“Helping with the Last Journey,” by Nicole McEwen, Boston University

For *Boston Magazine*

A highly unusual and riveting profile of a young Chinese woman who turned from nursing to undertaking. Tired of the neglectful attitude of fellow nurses and abuse from ungrateful patients, Susan Tapia took up a profession where complaints are rare. The story describes her career decision, her training and her early years on the job as a mortician in the Wing Fook Funeral Home. Susan comes off sympathetically, and the story is also notable for its wealth of little-known and bizarrely interesting information on mortuary science.

Third Place

“Me and Maureen,” by Amanda Junker, Northwestern University

For *New York Magazine*

This is a strange but fascinating story about both the author and *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd. It is part suspense—will the busy and prickly Dowd respond to the author’s request for “the most influential piece of criticism you’ve ever received?”—and part confession—the author sees her own life reflected in her elusive story subject’s. The story is well reported “around” Dowd and well written. In the end we find the author smart, patient and endearing and, perhaps surprisingly, we’re far more sympathetic to Dowd than we expected to be. It’s a story that is anything but a run of the mill profile.

Honorable Mention

“Webb: Young and Homeless,” by Arthur Martori, Arizona State University

For *Phoenix Magazine*

This is a harrowing story of homeless teenagers in Phoenix and Tempe. The author has caught both the defiance and the fear of “squatters” and “rats” with extraordinary reporting and vivid but straightforward writing.

Honorable Mention

“Desert Dracula: An Actor’s Journey from Ohio to Iraq and Back”

For *Echo Immortalis* magazine—*Midwest Goth and Industrial Culture*

This is the odyssey of a high school rebel who yearned for a show business career but who enlisted in the Army Reserve to pay for rent and acting lessons and wound up under fire in Iraq in 2003. Now he’s back in the U.S., suffering from post-traumatic stress and trying to revive his Hollywood dreams. The story follows all the strange twists in his life with sympathetic but hardheaded realism. It is full of telling details of his life—the rapport between subject and author seems astonishing—and the writing is powerfully simple.

General strengths of entries: This is the best batch of stories I have judged so far in this journalism competition. I knew which story deserved the top award as soon as I read it, but I had real difficulty evaluating the other winners. They were all excellent.

The best stories were those that focused on a single individual and did not try to explain a situation or trend with a variety of voices and experiences. The best stories also made clear what the subject was doing but did not neglect the kind of historical and personal detail that explains why.

General weaknesses of entries: There was too much overwrought writing. As the old journalism saying goes: If you have the story, tell it. If you don’t, write it. This was particularly true of leads; it was as if the writer felt he or she had to snag the reader by overwhelming the story with pretentious sentences, obscure references, confusing quotes, fancy language, weird verbs, etc. Some of the stories started in that grandiose, off-putting way, then settled down. But too many did not.

Spelling was off, but not as badly as other years. “Lay” instead of “lie” cropped up far too often. “Rather unique” is not English. Try to avoid the use of the same word twice in one sentence.

Some of the stories were stretches; they simply went on too long for the subject. Brevity is the soul of journalism.

Articles—Investigation and Analysis

Judge: Joan Hamilton, editor-in-chief of *Sierra* magazine

First Place

“University’s Cooling Costs Not Looking So Hot,” by Ryan Kost, Arizona State University

For *State Press Magazine*

This story reveals that the Arizona State University is wasting nearly a million dollars a year making campus buildings too cool for comfort in the summer. What the story lacked in literary richness (the writing is spare), it made up for in enterprising reporting. On two different occasions, the author took temperatures at various locations inside 80 different campus buildings. He found that, on average, the buildings were 8 degrees cooler than the university standard of 76 degrees. In many instances students were wearing sweaters or parkas inside when the temperature outside was over 100 degrees. No scientific studies were handed to this reporter. He or she did an independent study to draw attention to a simple problem with a simple solution that could save big bucks for Arizona taxpayers.

Second Place

“Going Down,” by Jacqueline Nunes, Ryerson University

For *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

This piece offered engaging reporting about a Canadian publication working hard to adapt to the age of electronic information. At the *Ottawa Citizen*, the author roams the newsroom, interviews staff of all stripes, and sits in on lively editorial meetings. Vivid descriptive writing and good quotations offer an inside look a resourceful publication under intense competitive pressure. The author skillfully uses this single example to explain the broader trends in the business; the technique kept what could have been an unwieldy story under control.

Third Place

“A Question of Perjury,” by Laura Dannen, Katie Lieserie and Rachel Lux, Boston University
For *Boston Globe Magazine*

An enterprising reporter follows up on a *Boston Globe* story about “testilying”—Boston police officers perjuring themselves on the stand. The earlier story had announced a new process set up to help alleviate the problem. Several years later, this piece points out, the perjury problem remains, and the once-touted process has never been used. “The momentum faded as soon as public attention shifted,” one source says. Kudos to this reporter for writing a clear, readable story that shines a bright light on a small but important public promise that might have otherwise been forgotten.

General strengths and weaknesses of entries: Investigative pieces were scarce. Given the category, that was a major disappointment. . On the other hand, a heartening number of pieces tackled topics that are not well covered in the mainstream media. I enjoyed the fresh ideas, energy, and ambition evident in many entries.

Some exhaustively researched pieces got lost in their own details. Large volumes of contradictory information were presented in he-said/she-said form. One paragraph essentially begins with “Person A says,” and the next follows with “Person B disagrees.” That approach is tedious and unenlightening. More of these reporters should have been using their research and analytical powers to help people sift through the claims—particularly in magazine pieces.

Even when there aren’t many conflicting claims in a story, it’s sometimes hard to figure out how to make it interesting. Magazine writers often spend hours, or even days, pondering what to do with the pile of facts they’ve amassed. They know that if they don’t take time at the end of the research phase to consider this problem carefully, they’ll lose a sale or have to do a painful rewrite. If you get good at this task, you’ll have mastered one of the most difficult parts of magazine journalism.

The most successful authors in this batch of entries picked topics of appropriate size. Nobody can save the world in one magazine article, but some of the less successful pieces seemed to be trying. Some would have benefited from a million-dollar budget or the staff resources of Time Inc. Some authors had picked an appropriate topic but needed to go deeply into one or two aspects of the topic rather than stretching their reporting too thin by trying to cover a number of angles.

Articles—Service and Information

Judge: Valerie Latona, editor of *Shape*

First Place

“Home is Where the Mold is,” by Anya Britzius, Arizona State University
For *Minnesota Monthly*

This article was completely engaging from start to finish—and left me with a sense of urgency about checking my own home for mold (an incredible call to action). The writing was smooth— and each section left you wanting to read the next section. Important information was naturally woven into the text, as well as into the two sideboxes. The first box answered the questions I had in my own mind (something that the writer had anticipated) and the second focused on where to go for more information. My only (very tiny) concern was that the second sidebox didn’t include enough diverse resources, but this wasn’t enough to take the first place award from this writer. Well deserved!

Second Place

“It Always Happens to Someone Else,” by Irene De Vette, Boston University
For *Glamour*

Number one, the topic is one of great importance to women and men alike. And the writer took great care to draw the reader in with helpful (and scary) details and statistics about STDs. These were woven

carefully throughout this piece to maintain its momentum so the reader wouldn't want to put it down. The facts and figures about STDS are sure to grab any sexually active person who reads this — and the other helpful boxes (one on STD clinics and another on informative websites) helped to round out the package. Also great: “Do They Practice What They Preach,” a sidebox detailing the results of an online sex survey. All in all, a fabulous piece.

Third Place

Article title: “Job-Searching 101,” by Melissa Byrd, University of Kansas

For *Jayplay*

This piece spoke to its audience (students) extremely well, by covering, in depth, the hunt for a job — and the potential mistakes many students make along the way. Good sources were interviewed, but what made this piece top-notch were its extremely informative sideboxes that round out the entire package. One dealt with the art of a cover letter. The other talked about the quickest way to blow an interview (from experts). The third offered advice from those who have been through the hunt after school. I'm sure that any student who read this gained extremely helpful information on how to succeed in his or her own job search.

Honorable Mention

“The Dangers of Social Networking Web Sites,” by Stephanie Berger, Arizona State University

For *944*

This piece was excellent, in a nutshell. It would have won first place if it had sideboxes/pull-out information to grab those readers who may not want to wade through a lot of text (a critical component of the service and information category). But this topic is extremely timely given the articles that have surfaced in top newspapers about this very thing: social networking Web sites that students get involved in (and the problems that can develop as a result of them). The writing was engaging with lots of good information woven in. I kept wanting there to be a box summing it up, or basic facts students need to know pulled out, or...but none of that was included, which is why this took an honorable mention.

Honorable Mention

“The Breeding Ground,” by Rachel Clayton, Northwestern University

For *Seventeen*

There was incredibly good information throughout this piece: stats on body dissatisfaction among women, details about the pressures of college life and numbers about the number of women with disordered eating. The writer also talked to great resources (women with eating disorders). The end was an interesting twist: the writer admitting to her own eating disorder. The only reason this didn't win a first, second or third place was the lack of packaging: There could have been helpful sideboxes on how to tell if you have an eating disorder or where to go for help (to name just a few).

General strengths of entries: It was much harder to pick the winners this year than last. The reason was the majority of entries were very good. The writing, for the most part, was smooth and engaging (not clunky). And the topics were very interesting — not trivial.

General weaknesses of entries: There still seems to be a lack of knowledge about the importance of packaging an article: engaging heads, decks and helpful sideboxes. A lot of the pieces that didn't place didn't have a great deal of service in them: Okay you have an idea is interesting, but you need to figure out a way to grab any reader who turns to your story. Engage them, make them NOT want to put down your piece. This is another reason targeting your magazine to your story is very important (you need to be able to understand your reader).

Articles—First Person

Judge: Erin Zammett Ruddy, articles editor at *Glamour* and author of the memoir *My So-Called Normal Life: How I Learned to Balance Love, Work, Family, Friends...and Cancer at 23*

First Place

“Home Shame Home,” by Jennifer Justus, Boston University

For *Boston Magazine*

This piece is very well written, but not over written. It’s loaded with colorful details and anecdotes that serve the piece perfectly, which make it clear the author put a lot of time and thought into crafting the story. I also like that the resolution at the end doesn’t seem forced, which isn’t always the case with shorter first-person pieces. Finally, the author tackles a difficult subject in a graceful and eloquent way and gives the reader something to think about.

Second Place

“Open Hearted: A story of life after lost love,” by Mindy Lee, Arizona State University

For *State Press Magazine*

Given the topic, this story could have easily drifted into melodrama, but it never did. The writing is economical and there is no woe-is-me feeling, which is often the case with stories of loss. The writer wove past events and present and used great imagery and dialogue. I loved how honestly this story was told; nothing was sugar-coated, not even the writer’s own flaws. It was heartbreaking, but somehow didn’t leave me feeling sad. Above all, this was a beautifully told love story.

Third Place

“Heartbeat Away,” by Leslie Yingling, University of Missouri

For *Vox*

I found the point-of-view of this story incredibly refreshing and the narrator totally easy to relate to. There were quite a few entries that dealt with cancer, and this one was the most unique. It was honest and lively and tackled a common topic—breast cancer detection—in an uncommon way, which is an important quality in magazine writing. It wasn’t the most polished of the bunch, and certainly could be developed further, but it stuck with me.

Honorable Mention

“In Your Face,” by Marco Ursi, Ryerson University

For *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

While I’m not quite sure this story fit the category, I did find it incredibly well reported and researched. The profile aspect was the most interesting—and the writer did a great job of capturing the subject’s personality—but the historical facts and secondary quotes were woven in nicely without losing the reader, which is often the case with these longer-format issue-based stories.

Honorable Mention

“In My World,” by Tara Schupner, University of Kansas

For *Jayplay*

This is an incredibly interesting topic—and an issue that I don’t think gets a ton of coverage. I loved learning about the difference between deaf and Deaf. The first-person details are fascinating (wish there were even more) and the struggles the writer faces come to life nicely. But the structure of the piece is problematic. The chronology is confusing and I found myself unsure of where the writer was at the time (still at Gallaudet, at KU, in high school, etc.). The piece is very ambitious and perhaps it tries to cover a little too much ground. With a good edit, though, this could be very strong.

General strengths of entries: There were a lot of personal details revealed and I think that makes for a great first-person essay. The entrants really stretched, it seems, and didn't pull any punches on themselves or their families. And in most cases, there were some universal lessons that came through, rather than just a straightforward telling of a person's life story. I also liked seeing a few essays on less-serious topics, like the woman who wrote about searching for an engagement ring with her boyfriend.

General weaknesses of entries: There were grammatical mistakes and typos in several of the entries, which made them hard to read—and some of the words were cut off, perhaps in the copying stage, which signifies a lack of pride in the work. Also, in some cases, I felt like the target magazines were chosen arbitrarily. (It did not seem like the entrants knew the audience and the type of article that would actually get published in their target magazine.) As for the content, there were places where I felt the writing could have been more lively and full of voice—more like an actual magazine piece and less like a paper written for class. Overall, though, I really enjoyed reading them. Well done!

Specialized Business Press Article

Judge: Sally Roberts, senior editor at *Crain's Business Insurance*

First Place

"Converting the Motherhouse," by Meghan Christiansen, Northwestern University

For *Green Interiors Magazine*

This article about the eco-friendly mission of the Immaculate Heart of Mary sisters and the story of their renovated 240-nun convent into "a living laboratory for sustainable design and responsible living" is a great read. It's well written, concise, newsworthy and full of interesting information. Who would have thought that a bunch of nuns would be so into the green movement? This article explains it all.

Second Place

"Franchise pacts keep Red Rock Chili's growth potential red hot," by Jason Horn, Northwestern University

For *Nation's Restaurant News*

This article about the success behind the Red Rock Chili franchise is packed full of information that is bound to be of interest to any existing or prospective franchisee. It's well written, concise and balanced as it recounts the restaurant's beginnings and gives all the details behind its subsequent growth.

Third Place

"A Day in the Life of Vic Myers," by Jeffrey Lee, Northwestern University

For *Nation's Restaurant News*

An interesting profile of Vic Myers, a 33-year veteran of McDonalds Corp. who was paralyzed 10-years ago while on the job. The article aptly depicts what a day in Mr. Myers' life as director of menu management is like as well as gives a glimpse into how, with a little accommodation, an employee with a disability can succeed at his job and remain fiercely loyal to his employer.

General Strengths and Weaknesses of Entries: Given my personal background in news/feature writing for a specialty trade publication, I view great business articles as those that are not only well written for the target audience, but also newsworthy, accurate and balanced. With that premise in mind, I would say the specialized business press article contest had some hits and some misses. While all of the entrees were on target with their audiences, some read more like long research reports, with very little outside interviewing being done and in some cases too much editorializing as well. The articles that stood out to me were the ones that were short, full of facts, newsworthy and above all interesting to read.

Online Magazine

Judge: Laura Bronson, editor of RealSimple.com

First Place

Imprint Magazine: College Life's Internet Magazine, Ithaca College

While many of the entries in the Online Magazine category mix together words, images, video, audio to take advantage of the Web's capabilities, *iMPrint Magazine* (<http://www.imprintmagazine.org/>) from Ithaca College uses the medium most effectively. That it was created as an online magazine and isn't a print magazine that's simply been repurposed for the web is evident in the site's architecture and functionality.

For example, the site navigation is simple and clear and provides readers with multiple ways to dive into the content: the search box is clearly called out; articles are efficiently organized by topic (and can be filed under as many topics as are relevant); writers' names are linked to pages listing all of the articles they've written; and every article has links to other recent articles, so a reader is never stranded at the bottom of the page. And each article, as well as the editor's blog, features comment functionality, which supports the site's mission to give readers the "opportunity to voice their opinion and become involved in the discussion." (Readers can also e-mail, IM, print, and even listen to each article.)

The articles themselves make good use of bold subheads, thumbnail images that can be enlarged, supporting audio and video clips, and links to other websites for additional, relevant information.

Other features to note: RSS feeds, a Flickr photostream (it's not always clear why the photos are relevant, so more clearly associating them with the stories would be helpful), and use of Yahoo! feeds to provide national news coverage.

Second Place

The Devil's Tale, Arizona State University

Arizona State University's *The Devil's Tale* (<http://cronkitezine.asu.edu/>) is a content-rich site that found an interesting way to include links to nearly all of its pages from the homepage. But the two things that made it stand out were the video stories and the clean design of its article pages: great sidebars (including links to other sites for more information), pull quotes, photo galleries, and use of subheads to guide the reader through the story.

Something to consider for future editions of *The Devil's Tale*: Provide readers with easy navigation to other pages on the site without requiring that they continually return to the homepage. For example, a global nav that appears on all pages could include links to the departments (Experiences, Issues, People, etc.). And each article and photo gallery should include links to other articles and galleries (and if the articles are long, consider including links at the bottom of the page so readers who get to the end don't have to scroll back up to click to another article).

Third Place

Ryerson Review of Journalism, Ryerson University

The Ryerson Review of Journalism (<http://www.rrj.ca/>) has a nice uncluttered design with an effective global nav for moving around from page to page. It also features two RSS feeds, e-mail and print functionality for its articles, searchable archive of past content, and a blog. It's immediately clear that this is the online site of a print magazine, so it's no surprise that most of the articles look like they were pulled straight from printed pages. But the articles that are touted as being "exclusive online articles that you won't find anywhere else" also don't take advantage of the Web's capabilities—no links, no video interviews, no photo galleries—and that is surprising.

General strengths of entries: For the most part, the sites were easy to navigate, understand and use (although there were a few that had designs that would make it difficult to print the articles). And they seemed to keep their target audiences in mind while creating the mix of content and the content itself.

General weaknesses of entries: Many of the sites were online counterparts to print magazines, but that relationship was not always clear. For example, promoting an "On the Cover" article might not make

sense to a reader who doesn't know that there is a print magazine with a cover. And does having an "Online Articles" department make sense when all of the articles on a site are online?

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—Design

Judge: Bob Gray, design editor at *National Geographic*

First Place

515

One flip through and you're hooked. Bold, daring, fun...thoughtful without being overworked. Excellent merging of color, photographic, graphic and typographic styles. The rules—grid, readable text, and consistency of layout—are present but not so they get in the way of a fresh, surprising feel. I really liked the staff shot, and the "perfed" recipe cards are tasty treats. Overall, the design team hit the right notes with smashing results.

Cover—While the logo design sets the right tone, and the type elements do their job, I found myself looking for a small explainer line to tell me what *515* is. Also, while "Des Moines Graded" makes a good cover, I wonder if one of the black-and-white shots from the photo essay would have made a killer cover.

Front of the book—All about service. Each page is lively, informative—stuff a reader could use and a magazine to save. Good contemporary photographs, skillful cropping, and hip color palette engage the reader and work well to convey content. Thoughtful hierarchy for multiple elements yields strong consistency. One note: FYI-DYI—Good idea, but given this approach, I would have held fast to color-coded signposts. The contents page promised this, but the color tabs throughout the front seem to work only with the pages they're on rather than as an organizing concept.

Features—The photo essay, "Capturing Classics," is nicely juxtaposed with the rest of the magazine style. It's beautifully photographed and the design lush. Amusing concept and perfect design execution for "Green." I applaud the non-traditional concept for "Des Moines Graded"—it pulled me in immediately.

Second Place

Drake

The design is strong and the layout fast-paced. Like *515*, *Drake* knows its audience. The distressed display type is intentionally edgy and perfectly reflects the content. The text typesetting is solid—good margin space, comfortable column widths and leading—but just a little too much contouring. Photography throughout is dead-on. With a little better pacing and slightly more controlled design, *Drake* would have captured first place.

Cover—Clean, edgy and fun. Nice design of cover lines, but could have used a line to billboard the picture/cover story—the one used on the story would have worked nicely.

Front and back of the book—The creative conceptual photography and its placement and size on the pages are excellent. Design conventions are addressed and the edit speaks through the presentation. But every page is at the same visual volume. If they had changed two departments—"Rock, Paper, Scissors" (Feature just pictures of hands making rock, paper, scissors.) and "Avant-Garde For The Trendsetter" (Show one picture of jewelry and one piece of Rodney White's art.)—and made these pages very clean and strategically placed them that might have helped.

Features—Smart, inventive and fun. Pictures, photo-illustration, and type come together in each piece with some stunning results. Skillful integration of sidebars. The only feature that falls short is "Travels to Another World"—the pictures need captions, less design, and more size. It could have been a nice counterbalance to the other features. Overall, the level of attitude is just right.

Third Place

The Burr

Well organized with good interplay of type and photography. It's clean, smart and engaging while using only two typefaces. The design is tightly formatted for consistency. I'm attracted to its clarity, control and crisp, clean presentation. Nice use of black-and-white pictures and type due (I assume) to budget

limitations. A little more attention to consistency of the grid would have made the whole presentation stronger, but overall, very impressive.

Cover—The type design and color choice work well. Good photograph, but I wonder if the picture on p. 38 would have been a stronger choice and one made for cover lines.

Front and Back of the Book—The front section is understated with only three departments that actually are more like features. The understated design maintains continuity, but I'm curious about the editorial decision to avoid a traditional department approach with a few more pages and shorter items.

Features—They comprise the body of the magazine. Nice layering and thoughtful design approach to highlight well-written headlines and provocative pull quotes. Sure to capture the browser. The photography is strong and mostly well cropped and appropriately sized. "An Inspired Life" needs a stronger unified opening spread, but that's the only one that falls short.

Honorable Mention

Jayplay

Nice tight design. Came within a whisker of third place. I really like the cover logo. It's distinct, contemporary, and surely stands up well in many situations. Good conceptual photograph and deft treatment of cover lines. The front section design is really well done, the info graphic top drawer, but underlying grid design needs to work harder to help edit stand away from the ads. The feature has ample attitude and will stop a browser. The design team should reconsider justified type on narrow columns. (Hint: note how much better the type sets on wider columns and when it's flush left.)

Honorable Mention

Vox

Well thought-out theme issue. Good consistency throughout. Great cover photograph. Edit stands away from the busy and varied advertising. Feature type design is a bit dated and lacks refinement. Photo and illustration quality a bit uneven overall, but the spread graphic, "Finding Your Figure," is ambitious and well executed. With some minor attention to illustration style and more effort with display typography, *Vox* can place next year.

General strengths of entries:

This year's entries were overall stronger than last. The proficiency of design is stronger and more attention is being given to legible, well-set typography. There is a little less reliance on design gimmickry and decoration and more attention given to effectively communicating editorial content. All incorporated strong organizational structure and underlying grid. I would advise those designing the next crop of magazines to continue to experiment, pay attention to details, try many variations of structure in the early stages but most of all think about who's going to read your magazine. How do you engage them, keep their attention, and effectively convey the editorial content vis-à-vis the mission of the magazine?

General weaknesses of entries:

- Loss of control of design.
- Use of inferior photography or illustration at inappropriate size.
- Inattention to quality typesetting such as appropriate face, size, character spacing, leading and color.

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—Editorial

Judges: John Bradley, Dispatches editor, Aaron Gulley, special issues managing editor, Will Palmer, copy chief, Stephanie Pearson, senior editor, at *Outside*

First Place

Ryerson Review of Journalism, Ryerson University

Choosing a winner took us less time this year: The *Ryerson Review* was a unanimous top pick. It was a step up from the others in its sophistication: a solid front of book; a smart lineup of features on serious subjects; mature, witty writing throughout; and an engaging, confident voice (described as "sort of

chummy, conspiratorial, we-know-better-than-they-do“) that makes this feel more like a professional magazine than a college one. The reporting is solid and substantive (two examples: “The Girl Next Door” and “Riding with the Right”). The editors and writers have a clear sense of their audience, and their conceit holds together much better than the others. Display is strong—for the most part, doesn’t depend on cliché, and gets the point across in a way that draws readers in. Good use of pull quotes, but might have taken more time to choose snappier quotes; also could have been helped by more sidebars and other elements to break up the large text blocks. The parodying cover drew mixed reactions: Some found it amusing, others thought it lent an immediate tabloid impression that didn’t represent the magazine. But the complaints are few, and the reasons to admire this journal are all over the page.

Second Place

Drake, Drake University

This magazine was a very respectable runner-up. It scored high points for its design and concepts, but tended to be received as less serious, overly trendy, and ultimately not as substantive as *Ryerson Review*. But taking it out of this head-to-head comparison, the content is still quite strong. The editors are clear about their audience, approach the reader with more youth and attitude, and reach their goals. It holds together better than most of the other entries. The table of contents is cleverly organized into conceptual departments, but some judges thought this made it difficult to know where to go for what they want—as well as what to expect. The service writing—short, focused, and to the point—was deemed the strongest, while the more in-depth stories tended to get a little ponderous and needed more editing. But overall, the editors at *Drake* show a great deal of real-world talent and flair, and the ability to collaborate with the designers to conceive and carry out a highly readable publication.

Third Place

Vox, University of Missouri

Both of the newspaper-style weeklies got serious consideration, but *Vox* edged out *Jayplay* only because we found it to have more substance and variety. The stories are well thought out and on point. The feature, “Passion for Progress,” is especially strong, a solid package story with a nice hook and good reporting. We get here some good service that would make readers want to pick it up every week, along with original ideas (like the quiz on geniuses), all bolstered by weightier content, and held together most of the way by the science theme. A good use of sidebars adds value to the stories. Display could have been handled better: needs to do a better job of selling the story, and needs more consistency. But overall, a very good outing.

Honorable Mention

Jayplay, University of Kansas

This one outscored *Vox* in some areas—a more irreverent, alt-weekly tone, and a better grasp on its reader and consistent hold on that reader. Does an equally good job with service copy. But in the end, the range of material, the depth of reporting, and the ambition fall short of the other weekly. The table of contents is hard to even find. The main feature, on Jasons, is entertaining but frivolous. Still, the editors don’t try to do more than deliver to a readership that they obviously count themselves a part of. The writing is snappy, the subjects are offbeat, and there’s some serious talent shining through.

Honorable Mention

The Burr, Kent State University

This one showed some of the most skillful, magazine-oriented writing in the batch. The stories have voice, are well reported, and are relatively nuanced. A good magazine for college students. Perhaps its biggest downfall is the lack of organization and pacing: All the stories seem about the same length, and there’s no sense of structure. But the story selection is solid: plenty of good, serious pieces to appeal to the readership. Would be more appealing if the editors had spent more energy on shorter and more

upbeat subjects (lip balm doesn't quite cut it). A very respectable publication, with promising writers and solid story editing.

General strengths of entries: As always, the students producing these magazines impressed us with their ability to come up with original stories and write, edit, and package them in interesting ways, on what is usually a very limited budget. They should all be proud of their work. This year there seemed to be a stronger sense among most of the publications of how to create a smorgasbord of pieces of varying lengths and tones, which made them more entertaining to read. This knack for thoughtful up-front planning of how an issue will unfold as a rich, multi-hued creature will be a valuable asset in the magazine world.

General weaknesses of entries: Given that the editorial content tended to be strong across the board, we looked more this year at whether a magazine had a clear editorial mission, a knowledge of its reader, and an ability to carry these things through. In many cases, there was too little attention given to laying out this mission in the first few pages (contents and editor's letter), so that as readers we were plunged right into the material. Other magazines tried to change speeds and mix things up more, but often this was done without enough planning. In order to create a really astounding product, the students should spend more time poring over successful magazines out there in the market, picking apart the formulas that work and don't work, and emulating the ones that seem appropriate for drawing in the audience each one is after.

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—General Excellence

Judge: John Walsh, executive vice president and executive editor at ESPN

First Place

Vox, University of Missouri

Meeting the challenges of weekly magazine deadlines with a superb mix of departments, features, sidebars, consumer information, commentary and packaging of long features makes *Vox* the first place winner. The magazine connects the university community to the city and gives thorough coverage to a very worthy topic—growing up. There was nothing not to like here, although the use of photography could have been better. There were no standout photos or significant space devoted to photography. Illustrations and icons were used sparingly with good effect. Headline writing and mixture of story topics were very well received. Most impressive for a weekly magazine.

Second Place

Burr, Kent State University

Selection of stories and presentation, both layout and photography, and the first-rate reporting and excellent writing gave readers of the *Burr* a magazine to dig into. The seriousness of subject matter, from Rwanda to religion to the working poor, combined with lighter side fashion statements, an interview with the university president, dating advice for college women and an in-depth look at internet gambling all make this a fascinating issue. Especially noteworthy is the connection of serious issues such as African genocide to Kent State classrooms. I can't say enough about the penetrating photos from start to finish. One critical void is the absence of departments and commentary. The magazine could use an opening warm up section as well as a better closing and final page.

Third Place

515 Magazine, editor, Drake University

This is much more of a city consumer magazine and a superb one at that. From the top cover lines—recipes secrets, travel clues and workplace hints—the magazine displays a lively, fetching presentation that lures readers to wonderful short bits of useful and entertaining information. There is something here for everyone: Round-the-clock decor, everything you want to know about fondue,

lifestyles of the young and urban and nostalgia. The two superbly written and researched feature pieces in the back of the magazine on ecology and poverty are both standouts. I was especially struck by the reporting and writing and the piece about Des Moines poverty. The last page is what a magazine's closing page should: lasting, interesting, with images that leave a reader satisfied and smiling. One important critical comment: too much consumer content. I would have gladly traded off four to six pages to feature pieces to replace overwhelming amount of consumer information. Overall delightful experience both browsing and reading.

Honorable Mention

Scoop

Start-Up Magazine Project—Team

Judge: Roger Tremblay, Media Networks Inc.

First Place

Dad's Life, Northwestern University

This is a concept that actually should be published because the market is clearly there to be had. I like a lot of things about *Dad's Life*. The art direction and design are very strong. The editorial is a nice mix of service journalism, reporting and presentation of issues that are relevant to the target audience. I think the business plan is reasonably solid and in fact, might be a little on the conservative side. This is a magazine that would flourish at Rodale where it could be packaged with *Men's Life* and *Best Life* and get a running start on ad pages.

There's a lot of very good, thorough work here. This team clearly understands a lot about the magazine publishing business and would be welcome assets at any publishing company.

Second Place

Boston Biz, Boston University

It's hard to believe that a market like Boston doesn't already have this kind of magazine. Conceptually, this is right on target, but the key is the execution. It also helps if you have some people in the market who are actually interesting for whatever reason (Ken Lay, etc.). But it sounds like this team has a good understanding of how to differentiate their magazine from other publications in the marketplace. This could be Manhattan, Inc. done right.

I would have liked to see more detail in the business plan but I also believe that often less is more and everything in here looks to be accurate. This team seems to know exactly where they're going and how they're going to get there.

Third Place

LOAF, University of Missouri

This comes under the heading of "Guilty Pleasure." When I picked this up I thought to myself, "Are they kidding?" But then I started reading the prototype and ended up spending a lot more time with it than I would like to admit. This might just be hitting home with a significant market.

The total execution of the project was great. These people really did a great job from start to finish. I was tempted to give it first place just on the merits of the execution. I just can't imagine anyone having the guts to actually publish it.

General strengths of entries: Having looked at these projects for several years, I can say unequivocally that these are the best ones ever. It's obvious that the students have learned an amazing amount of what goes on in the magazine publishing industry and will be way ahead of the game if they choose to make their careers in the business. I was particularly impressed with the understanding of the business side. Either the teaching is very good or the students have gained access to seasoned professionals or both.

On the editorial side, I thought the entries this year showed a greater understanding of engaging the reader over a long period of time and I was also impressed with a lot of the art direction and design.

General weaknesses of entries: As always, there are a lot of magazine ideas that basically represent what the students think they themselves might want to read without an understanding of economic viability. It's not easy to reinvent the wheel and I always wonder when I'm looking at the entries: Does the world need another travel, epicurean or young women's service magazine?

Maybe there really is a market for LOAF.

Start-Up Magazine Project—Individual

Judge: Jerry Okabe, vice president / audience marketing of Prism Business Media

First Place

Stems, Jillian Baco, University of Kansas

One of the most important things in a magazine start-up/launch proposal is coverage of all the key areas of focus: purpose and proof of need, editorial content, advertising opportunities, audience development, staffing plan, and thorough financial analysis. *Stems* provided an excellent presentation that was thoroughly researched and adequately covered in all these areas. It appears that even though there are competitors in this space, there is an opportunity for a business-to-business product that could be successful. The mock-up of the product was well done and the smaller size seems appropriate and useful in the environment of a florist shop's sometimes cluttered and limited counter space. Audience development is targeted, identifiable, and realistic. Although the financial data is complete and thorough, there are a few areas where additional "realistic" costs might have been researched (such as fulfillment expenses and list rental for circulation promotion). Overall an excellent job! Congratulations!

Second Place

Home Again, Heidi Fedak, University of Kansas

This entry was very well done and it was a very close second place. Like the first place entry, key areas of focus in making a magazine successful were thoroughly researched and adequately covered. The mock-up of the product was well done. The concept of a home design magazine for renters is unique, especially where decorating must be done in a less permanent way than if the property is owned by the decorator. However, from a reality standpoint, one question that seemed to be left unanswered was whether or not renters, (who generally speaking have less disposable income) would have a propensity to purchase a publication and have the means to implement the magazine's ideas. Perhaps a one-shot on the newsstand might do well or this idea might work well as an online product that generated its revenue from sponsorships and product links.

Third Place

Presence, Jacky Carter, University of Kansas

Similarly to the first and second place entries, this entry was thorough in its research, analysis and presentation of all key areas of the magazine. The area that could have used more development was proof of need. The proposed audience universe is relatively large, and as a general interest consumer magazine, it's sometimes difficult to establish the unique selling proposition that differentiates this publication from other lifestyle products. In the consumer-publishing marketplace, this uniqueness is critically important to success.

Honorable Mention

Matrimony for Southern Brides, Elizabeth Chapman, University of Mississippi

This entry was well done and thorough in its presentation. As in the winners above, there was thorough and adequate thought given to each of the areas of the publishing operation that contribute to the success of a magazine product. The glaring omission of this presentation was in the competitive analysis. How does *Matrimony* differentiate itself from the existing (and apparently successful) *Southern Bride*? It was almost as if *Southern Bride* didn't exist, or that it was not an important consideration, when in fact it

appears to be very direct and threatening competition. More could have been done in the presentation to address this direct competitor, how *Matrimony* would differentiate itself; what uniquely would attract readers/subscribers that Southern Bride doesn't offer, etc.

General strengths and weaknesses of entries: There were many good presentations in this year's entries. Congratulations to all the submitters. The most important thing in this category is to cover all the bases. Editorial, advertising, circulation, staffing and financials are all vitally important contributors to the success of the publication, and each of those areas must be given proper attention. A great idea with a definable audience alone is not enough to guarantee success. The advertising environment and the financials must be analyzed to recognize the opportunities and potential pitfalls. Several of the entries did an excellent job of focusing on one or two areas, but then were very skimpy on other aspects of the publishing operation. Several entries had very minimal information on financials. This is not the most enjoyable topic to focus on, but it is extremely critical to success and needs adequate attention.