

AEJMC Student Magazine Contest 2008

Judges' Comments

Articles—Places

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

First Place

“Paradise Lost “

For *Midwest Current*

Why it won: This piece won because it so deftly made a “quiet” (i.e., boring) destination interesting to read about. The article explores Idlewild, Michigan, a once popular resort town for African Americans rendered obsolete by the Civil Rights movement. The layout—featuring mostly historical photos—was a put off, suggesting snoozy reminiscence. But the text, through the use of descriptive detail and narrative, demanded to be read, taking us into a ghost town coming back to life. The writer boldly used a contrivance that played out surprisingly naturally: He, presumably not black himself, enlisted an African American friend to come along on the trip to discover Idlewild in person. The writer discussed how well beloved this place would've been to his friend, who'd never even heard of it, if only he'd lived 50 years earlier. But the real meat of the adventure was encounters with locals who live there now, who articulated fresh dreams for Idlewild's future. The writer connected passages of exposition, including relevant chapters of Civil Rights history, with narrative movement that kept us readers grounded in the journey. We wanted to stay on board till the end.

Second Place

“48 Hours: Phoenix”

For *National Geographic Traveler*

Why it won: This writer did what 99 percent of query writers (and contest entrants) don't: He precisely targeted his story not just to a magazine but to a specific department within a magazine. And he hit the target. But the article didn't just ape the format of the department—intro followed by subheaded sections offering service information of various types. He also came close to matching the quality of the department's content, with good quotes from appropriate insiders and concisely written descriptions of must-sees, activities, hotels, and restaurants. In fact, you wouldn't want to submit an article like this on spec. But once you got the assignment, based on a targeted query, your ability to match the magazine's format and style so closely in your finished manuscript would put you in good stead with the editors for possible future assignments.

Third Place

“The Sound of Eastie”

For *Boston Globe Magazine*

Why it won: In this entry, the featured place was not a travel destination but rather an inner-city arts center. Yet the writer successfully creates a sense of being in this special micro-world, where urban kids develop their nascent talents in music and the fine arts and make new friends. The piece successfully blends description of the place

with interviews of the people who founded and run it, and more importantly, of young people who use the facility. There's good, solid reporting here from start to finish.

General strengths of entries: Overall, the pieces were written grammatically and clearly and demonstrated knowledge of journalistic conventions, such as handling quotation and attribution. Most were tight as well.

General weaknesses of entries: Criticizing student writing is like shooting interns in a barrel, but I think it's a worthy exercise, because some of the mistakes I saw in this year's entries are the same ones some professional writers make. Better to stop you now before you get into a lifetime of bad habits.

That brings us to the personal essay. Please restrain yourself here. The market for this is limited. Unless yours is a household name or your insights are truly novel, paying readers don't much care what you think about anything. Your epiphany when you left the farm that country life wasn't so bad after all is not novel, no matter how colorfully you write about moonshine and vomit. If you really think a finely tuned magazine like *Southern Living* is going to bite on that, then make brevity and pithiness your strengths. Don't go on for 3,000 words. For their money, readers want good reporting, not a view into you, not navel gazing. Leave that to your blog.

Now, about travelogues. Don't write them. By travelogue, I mean a more or less blow-by-blow account of your trip somewhere. One entrant started off with what spawned the idea of going to the place to begin with, then emailing his parents about it, then picking up a guidebook to start his research. I feared we'd learn what he had for lunch the day he booked the flight. Let me repeat: *Nobody cares*. Bring a place to life not by prattling on about you but by digging into the place itself and writing about the people there. Use your movements through the place as a connective, narrative thread. But don't go interior on us, and don't give us your opinions. Your head is not the place we are interested in. Let the destination speak for itself through your reporting.

Finally, on a smaller scale: Several entries this year, somewhere in the article, introduced a character and described the person at some length and even attributed something to that person, but never quoted the person directly. This is maddening. Get a direct quote, a good one, or we're going to think you cobbled that passage together off the Internet. To write a good article, you've got to haul the water. Sorry, there's no way around it.

Articles—People

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

First Place

“The Keeper of Peacocks”

For *Bitch Magazine*

Why it won: This piece about a businesswoman who decides to become a nun is told with such straightforward clarity that it becomes a universal tale of longing and

transformation, not an odd story about a strange and obsessed human being. The woman is dealt with head on; the writer's questions must have been put to her gently but directly because her answers are immensely revealing, as are those of other members of the Order. The story is superbly reported and written. The reader comes to know Sister Helen and to want to wish her God speed—so to speak—in her new, difficult but carefully chosen profession.

Second Place
“Anorexia: Beyond the Scale”
For *Seventeen*

Why it won: Anorexia has been written about so often, what more is there to say? Well, this story is the answer. It provides information about the disease that will be a revelation to most readers, I think—how it can strike a girl as early as age 9, and then return in her teens, and how a desire for personal control is as major a culprit as food. Michelle's tale is heartbreaking, but this is far more than a sob story. It is buttressed by excellent interviews with medical experts, and all of it is woven into a fascinating account of personal battle and in the end, fragile success.

Third Place
“When a Body Betrays”
For *Phoenix*

Why it won: A little-known disease with a tongue-twisting name, fibromyalgia, struck a little girl 20 years ago, and this account brings the reader her history of early medical confusion over what was wrong with her, eventual diagnosis, what treatment exists, and both her history of pain and depression and her courageous if only partial conquest of the insidious ailment. It is impressively researched, but the medical reporting never gets in the way of a very human story. And it ends on an appropriately ambiguous note: should Sonya Pacheco volunteer for trial drugs in hopes of finding one that would cure the illness or could these untested medications make her feel even worse?

Honorable Mention
“Dumpster Diving”
For *Folio Weekly* (Jacksonville)

Why it won: This is an entirely new take on what to most of us has been the repellent habit of the homeless to dig into restaurant and supermarket garbage containers for their next meal. A college-educated young man does it for “fun and adventure” and because it provides him both with edible (but carefully selected) food and other prizes, like a rice cooker, a backpack and an antique lunch box. The story is surprising and fresh.

Honorable Mention
“Raised Up Family”
For *Boston*

Why it won: We all know the singer James Taylor, but I, for one, was ignorant of the fact that he comes from an overwhelmingly musical family, with sibling performers and a

classically trained soprano for a mother. This story is particularly impressive for its research; the only family member not interviewed was Sweet Baby James himself. And the story clears up the origin of that famous song title: It wasn't the performer himself, but a son born to his sister, Brent. This is a big subject well handled.

General strengths of entries: There were fewer obvious stand-out stories this year compared to other years, but that was because the general level of entries was, in my view, clearly better than in the past. The story subjects were more interesting. There seemed to be fewer efforts to make an inherently dull person seem fascinating with the application of intensive reporting and lavish writing: A dull subject is dull, no matter what varnish you apply. Most entrants understood that more clearly this year. The level of reporting was very good, and the writing seemed livelier. And miracle of miracles: the grammar and spelling were infinitely improved!

General weaknesses of entries: Having complimented the entrants on their story subjects, there still were too many efforts to make a dull person compelling. The overall reporting, although usually good was too often superficial; the entrants need to dig more. I get the impression they are reluctant or afraid to ask embarrassing questions. Readers are not simply interested in what the subject does; we want to know how they feel, what worries them, what their personal lives are like and how they affect their careers or whatever you're writing about, their relationships with their families, their intimate selves, sex lives, their finances, etc. Remember the old adage: If you've got the story, tell it. If you haven't, write it.

Articles—Investigation and Analysis

Judge: Ken Collier, editor of Reader's Digest's *Family Handyman*

First Place

"The Embeds"

For *Columbia Journalism Review*

Why it won: Important topic, well organized by subheads and paragraphs, excellent interviews and quotes give human faces to subject, explored multiple aspects of topic, engaging lead, kept good pace to the end. Would have been improved by shifting balance to more analysis, less anecdote. I know more about personal histories and motivations than the underlying questions.

Second Place

"Playing with Fire"

For *State Press Magazine*

Why it won: Straightforward, concise and clear investigation of problems leading up to a recent news event. Strong beginning and ending. Well organized by subheads. Strong sidebar. Would have been improved with better pull quote.

Third Place

“Investigating Harvey”

For Ryerson Review of Journalism

Why it won: Depth of detail; excellent quotes and interviews; important topic. Well organized by paragraphs. Would have been improved by following through on promise of deck: “Accused of inventing a scandal” was not really covered in article.

Honorable Mention

“Healthcare without Borders”

For Modern Healthcare

Why it won: Engaging lead, concise writing, interesting statistics, balanced analysis of pros and cons. Would have been much improved with a stronger ending than “worth considering.”

Honorable Mention

“The Russian Enigma”

For Ryerson Review of Journalism

Why it won: Colorful details, ambitious topic. Took good advantage of reporter’s knowledge of Russian. Topic was too broad and obvious (of course it’s hard to understand another country’s “soul”); would have been improved by narrower focus on problems of access, or shift in priorities in coverage, etc.

General strengths of entries: A more mixed bag than last year. Harder to generalize. Writing is clear and smooth. Interviews are used well. Leads are engaging. Technical proficiency is high. Particularly strong in description of people and empathetic reporting of the personal side of topics.

General weaknesses of entries: Analysis. Almost all entries over-emphasized the personal history, the anecdote and the experience, at the expense of reporting and analyzing viewpoints, opinions or context. Some of the longer pieces had trouble carrying momentum through the middle, especially in the absence of strong internal subdivisions.

Articles—Service and Information

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

First Place

“Spring Tune-up”

For Jayplay (weekly student life magazine)

Why it won:

- Practical information delivered with a fun and engaging voice.

- The author strikes an excellent balance of clear how-to information and fun stories. Both engage the reader, but together they make the article all the more effective.
- The author presents a variety of advice: on bicycle tune-ups, both his/her own firsthand knowledge and that of local experts.
- The introduction also strikes a great balance: an engaging hook mixed with a clear thesis that clearly conveys the reader benefit of the article.
- The topic isn't groundbreaking, but nevertheless has wide appeal. The article enlivens the subject through humor and interaction between the writer and reader.
- The tone is excellent in how it interacts with the reader: edgy and witty, but informative and motivational at the same time.
- Useful DIY advice is relayed in an easy-to-understand manner.
- The entire package is just the right length for the subject: enough to provide real reader benefit, but not so much as to come off as overly complicated or challenging.
- Both sidebars are compelling and effective and provide a variety of advice, whether for the "mechanically challenged" or the veteran biker. I can imagine many readers saving this article for repeated reference.

Second Place

"How to Act Swell in Every Situation"

For 515

Why it won:

- Informative and welcoming voice without being didactic (which could be all too easy given the subject matter).
- The question/answer format is engaging and makes the article feel more like conversation than reading.
- Great variety of topics effectively woven together—there's something almost every reader can relate to. Decent variety of experts quoted.
- Useful information that's applicable to the audience. I can see this article being saved and passed around among friends.
- Good transitions between direct quotes and paraphrased advice. This strikes the right balance for the article, taking advantage of the question/answer format without making it too instructional.
- The format allows readers to easily find the sections that are most relevant to them and digest the whole article at their own pace.

Third Place

"Culture Shock"

For Jayplay

Why it won:

- Comforting and engaging tone mixed with expert advice and reliable tips.
- Draws readers in, whether they have experience the subject for themselves or not.
- Effectively simplifies what may feel like a complicated problem for some readers.

- The introduction take a little while to get to the point, but the story and the thesis combined help the reader understand the problem, and know that the article will present solutions.
- The quotes and stories from experts and students enrich the piece.
- Presents real value to the target audience: Any student considering studying abroad would probably save this and/or pass it along to friends

Honorable Mention

“Political Quiz”

For *Panorama*

Why it won:

- Interactive and engaging piece that proves a good article doesn’t have to be 2,000 words.
- The voice in the introduction is fun and captures the reader’s interest. The introduction is exactly the right approach for this kind of piece: It’s light-hearted and welcoming, and it conveys the importance of being aware of politics without being imperative.
- The definitions of liberal, centrist and conservative are presented well—with examples of everyday issues without being opinionated about one view or another.
- Any article that is this interactive with the reader is great for a magazine. And the piece tells the reader how to explore the topic further with Web links.

Honorable Mention

“Selling Science to Young People”

For *Child*

Why it won:

- Good balance of compelling narrative and practical advice, all weaved together. Kept me interested through the entire article.
- The “lessons” for the reader are conveyed through the writer’s voice and the quotes in a motivational but not overbearing manner.
- Through the writer’s voice and the quotes, the article passes on a degree of confidence to the reader: that he/she can enjoy science with children, that children can enjoy science, especially with their parents’ help.
- The sidebar, although a little too long, relates an easy way for readers to get started with showing their kids science.

General strengths of entries:

- Almost all entries were good article ideas, with clear reader benefit and relevance to the audience.
- Among the best of the best, it was hard to choose the winners. Of the handful that stood out, all were quite good.
- Many articles had several people quoted in them and a variety thereof.

General weaknesses of entries:

- Several entries had minor typos.
- Some entries were better suited to other categories of the contest.
- Too often the writers assume too much of the readers' opinions and/or circumstances. Don't tell readers how they feel or assume the majority is on the same page as a few. That's a fast way to lose the interest of your audience.
- Too often the writers had overly creative or esoteric language in their articles that felt forced into the piece. Too often it seemed that the writers were trying too hard to sound smart, witty or compelling. Simple and to-the-point writing is not by its nature ineffective or boring writing, quite the contrary usually.
- The writers should take advantage more often of organizational strategies and provide more entry points for readers, such as subheads, infoboxes, decks, lists, etc.

Articles—Features

Judge: Michael Hall, senior editor at *Texas Monthly*

First Place

“Brain Freeze”

For *Men's Health*

Why it won: Funny, smart look at the "science" of cryonics. Uses memorable lead character and hopeful resurrectee to walk us through the theoretical process, lays out what cryonics is supposed to do, puts it in the context of every society's attempt to deny death, and brings up the obvious and not-so-obvious drawbacks and criticisms. Snappy intro pulled me right in, and breezy, vaguely skeptical tone kept me reading. Full of great lines such as, "Why would someone choose to have his head removed and stored in a freezer?"

Second Place

“The Story of Los Ninos Mejia”

For *Phoenix*

Why it won: The most compelling article of the bunch, the story of three kids who were born in the U.S. but are now growing up in a rural Mexican orphanage. How they got there is sad and disturbing: Their El Salvadoran father was deported from the U.S. and their Mexican mother, escaping drug charges, fled the U.S. with them in tow, heading back to her hometown, where she abandoned the kids a year ago. The story could have use some editing, for length and melodrama, but it is well structured, going back and forth across the border, as the kids lose their parents and their country. The writer did some solid first-hand reporting, contacting five orphanages, venturing to the rural orphanage where the kids live, talking to child welfare workers in the U.S. and Mexico. His/her conclusion: This is not an isolated instance; it's part of life along the border. An important story that no one else is telling.

Third Place

“The New News Race”

For *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

Why it won: Excellent profile of publisher of Canadian newspaper trying to figure out how to keep papers alive in the digital age. Good writing, great transitions, and I liked the running metaphor (however obvious) for the way it moved the story. By the end, the story is both a thorough profile of a man and a nuanced look at how old media are having to adapt to survive.

Honorable Mention

“Healing the Battle Scarred Brain”

For *The New York Times Magazine*

Why it won: In-depth profile of a soldier recovering from massive blast in Iraq that also explains traumatic brain injury and PTSD. The character is sympathetic, and I loved how he dies at the end of the second section, then describes his death at the start of the third, then dies twice more. The reader is made aware of the stakes here, which makes the story more compelling and the hows and whys of the subject more entertaining. A perfect NYT mag story—complex, detailed, but also very writerly.

Honorable Mention

“All’s Fair in LARP and War”

For *Jayplay*

Why it won: Funny story of grown-ups playing like kids—playing role games in costume. The writer puts him or herself in the story and pulls the reader along for funny exploits and strategy, using whimsy, charm, and alternating long sentences with short staccato bursts (“Beats drum. Lights match.”).

General strengths of entries: I cut the 42 down to 11 pretty easily but had a hard time getting down to five. The stories in the top quarter were quite good—sense of humor, a lot of detail, few clichés. The medical stories were particularly strong.

General weaknesses of entries: I wish there had been more investigative stories or, for lack of a better term, “social justice” stores—articles about people in trouble or institutions that are damaged or corrupt. I would have liked to see more stories with a real point of view, or agenda—the writer taking a stand and then backing it up. There wasn’t a lot of experimentation with structure.

Articles—First Person

Judge: Alison Gwinn, executive editor, *Women’s Health*

First Place

“The Place to Be”

For a consumer magazine

Why it won: This is the rare personal essay that manages to hold the reader’s

interest from beginning to end without seeming self-important, trivial or mawkish. The writer tells the story of her very close relationship with her dad, a bond made even tighter by the nine-year decline in health of her mom (his wife) from brain cancer. Through vivid details (her dad's weakness for chick flicks, his daily vow to "get back into the habit of running," his Saturday morning coffee ritual with his brother and dad), and a lovely, subtle sense of humor, her portrait of her dad is both affectionate and knowing. The subtext of the essay—dealing with the grave illness of a loved one—could have become overly sentimental, but the writer is able to convey the sadness she and her dad feel, as well as the weight of worry they carry around with them all the time ("my dad hasn't slept well in nine years"), without seeming self-pitying; in fact, the section in which the writer and her dad visit her mom in a nursing home and try to get her to talk is painfully frank and poignant. This piece could easily run in a national magazine.

Second Place
"One Identity"
For *The Atlantic Monthly*

Why it won: The writer does a skillful job of interweaving her own personal story, as the child of Nepali immigrants in Austin, with a broader piece about the three waves of Nepali immigration to Texas, beginning with the arrival of grad students like her father in the mid-1970s and continuing up to the present. When her dad arrived, he was the only Nepali in Austin; now there are 150, and they form a tight-knit community of people the writer describes affectionately as her "aunties and uncles." What makes this piece strong is that it is so rich in observation and detail: She describes the material success some immigrants have found in the U.S. (one convenience store owner has a "home theater, marble countertops and chandeliers: symbols of the American dream he came searching for") but also the "strange hyphenated world we live in" (daughters with the traditionally rhyming first names of Neeva and Beeva who are into IM-ing and sport large Chanel sunglasses). And she talks about marriage and relationships and how the culture clash has affected her personally: For many Nepalis, arranged marriages are still customary, so it shocks her parents when she first dates an American boy. In sum, the writer gives a wonderfully nuanced portrait of life as an immigrant (neither Nepali nor American, but "both") in America in the early 21st century.

Third Place
"Party Like It's 1399"
For *Akron Life and Leisure*

Why it won: When the writer infiltrates the Society for Creative Anachronism, a group whose members get together to dress up in medieval outfits and develop old-world skills like archery and blacksmithing, he says he wants to "walk a mile in their belted tunics." It is that kind of wide-eyed appreciation and wit that makes this piece stand out. The writer infuses humor throughout his story and approaches the group's activities with the requisite raised eyebrow but also a "join in the fun" spirit, even leaving his watch at home so he can be "period correct" and then laughing at his own "cluelessness" and "belt problems" as he attempts to don his own medieval robes.

Clearly this world is foreign to the writer (as it would be to most of us), but he seems to delight in the scenes that unfold, whether it is trolling the merchant booths filled with woven goods and other handmade crafts, or watching a round-robin tournament of fighters fitted out with armor and maces. He makes the entire scene come alive and seem like riotous fun, and skillfully gets the participants to open up about what they get out of the activities (honor, chivalry—and a lot of great friends).

Honorable Mention
“Eating the Pyramid”
For O

Why it won: The writer started with a really clever but servicey story idea—to spend one week strictly eating only those foods allowed in the USDA food pyramid. The piece then follows her day by day as she feels alternately stuffed and deprived, deals with such side effects as uncontrollable belching, learns that whole-wheat buns are more satisfying than regular old white ones, figures out correct portion sizes, and in general feels energetic and content. With a nice sidebar of nutrition tips. Great premise, nice writing, and real service for the reader.

Honorable Mention
“Eating With Your Hands”
For Saveur

Why it won: Eating with one’s hands—it’s a surprising and intriguing topic. The writer skillfully weaves in the personal (early memories of licking cookie dough off a grandmother’s fingers), the social (when is it correct in our culture to pick up ribs to eat them? How about asparagus?), and the naughty (“pilfered pecan pie cannot be eaten from a plate,” the writer declares). The writer then digresses to other cultures: It is while watching a Sri Lankan roommate dine without utensils on a plateful of curry with chutney and rice that she truly learns to appreciate “the noble art of hand eating.”

General strengths of entries: Energy, wit, passion, nerve—those are the traits that shine through in many of the entries. A number of the pieces have a vivid, conversational voice, and many of the writers also understand the need to infuse real supplemental reporting and to find broader themes in their personal experiences.

General weaknesses of entries: It’s very tricky to write a good first-person piece—much harder than most beginning writers realize. If a piece feels too narrow, and too much like a “me, me, me” story, then the reader will lose interest. The writers of some of the weaker ones chose small or cliched topics, and then failed either to add in enough interesting detail or to make the “personal” feel “universal.”

Specialized Business Press Article

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

First Place

“Ostrich-The Other Green Meat?”

For *Progressive Farmer*

Why it won: I loved this article about ostrich meat as a healthier and “greener” alternative to beef, pork and chicken. It effectively weaved in nutritional facts with other environmental livestock stats, making a compelling case for why ostrich may become the healthy meat of the future. It also effectively explained why ostrich breeding has fallen on hard times and what needs to change in order for the market to take off.

While the author clearly spent some time gathering the news and information and interviewing sources, I was disappointed in the number of grammatical errors contained in the story. The lead contained a fragmented sentence. There were typos, contraction problems and punctuation errors. Ultimately, however, I felt this was the most compelling entry of the 10 and could be cleaned up before being published.

Second Place

“Punch Pizza”

For *Nation's Restaurant News*

Why it won: This article was a very interesting feature about a Neapolitan pizzeria located in Minnesota. It was very well written—with the exception of the author's liberal use of colons and semi-colons rather than periods. It contains all the right facts and left no questions unanswered.

Third Place

“Veterinarian Shortage”

For *Arizona Business Magazine*

Why it won: This article was a great news feature about the shortage of veterinarians in Bullhead City, Arizona and rural areas in general. The writer did a great job of gathering relevant information and narrowing it all down into an easy to read, concise piece. The quotes from the sources interviewed were excellent.

Despite the fact that the article has already been published, it, like the other entries, contained some typos.

General strengths/weaknesses of entries: In general, the business press entries were interesting topics that were focused and geared to their target audiences. Appropriate facts and statistics were used and there were no one-sourced stories this year. Some of the articles included small sidebars or graphic ideas that worked nicely.

More often than not, however, I found myself saying that the articles had good potential in terms of the concept and information gathered, but were not yet worthy of print. One article, for instance, quoted a bunch of experts who were quoted in other stories, but not interviewed by the actual writer; other articles were long and wordy and needed tightening up; while others left me asking questions that were not addressed

in the article. One article had loads of sources but relied too heavily on quotes—not much sustenance. Another one focusing on the difficulties the Canadian lawn industry is facing because of new pesticide regulations, didn't give the location of any of the sources quoted. While that may not seem to be a big deal, I had to question why an expert was being quoted from Weed Man USA about Canadian issues, unless it had a Canadian unit.

The biggest issue I found with almost all of the articles was the grammatical errors. Many stories lacked proper paragraph separation, making the articles more difficult to read. Others contained typos, incorrect punctuation, fragmented sentences and the wrong use of contractions (the whole its vs. it's issue).

It wasn't easy picking out winners this year. I wavered between the more compelling, error-ridden article that had a lot of potential vs. the less compelling, more cleanly written article that was still interesting. Ultimately I decided to go with the more compelling article, with the thought that a good copy editor would clean it up.

Online Magazine

Judge: Michael Martin, freelance writer and editor, and print and online magazine consultant, and former editorial director of nerve.com and babble.com.

First Place

Horizonlines.org

I probably should have chosen something with more interactive elements, blogs, or the like, but I'm prejudiced toward content, and the total package here was superior to the rest of the field.

Navigation was creative. Photography was well composed and nicely integrated into stories. (Multiple-photo galleries are playing a larger and larger part of stories online, from *The New York Times* to local papers, and this is the only site that utilized this approach.) I appreciated the use of Flash, and especially of video — video is increasingly essential in online magazines, and this site incorporated it better than the rest. One demerit was design: font choices, sizes and resolution could have been better, and the overly literal nature of the layout—with text displayed as if on pages of a book, with a vertical scrollbar—was onerous. Open things up next time. Take advantage of increasing computer-screen sizes—many online magazines now are 1,000 pixels wide. But overall, this effort had sweep, scope and emotional impact. It tried to make a difference. It is more than a cute student-lifestyle magazine or an entertainment guide—it is a dynamic piece of journalism.

Second Place

Ryerson Review Online

Design—elegant, clean, smart use of illustration—is top of this field. Articles are sharply observed and well edited. Display copy is compelling and of professional quality. The prominent inclusion of a blog is on the mark for what's happening in the industry right now. But why not make it more prominent and move to homepage? A true review of journalism should feel more topical, even immediate. Content-wise, rattle more cages,

take more risks. The *Review's* elegance and tastefulness simultaneously earned it a place in the top three but kept it from the top spot.

Third Place Vox Magazine

Features are well written and edited. Interactive elements are good—the polls are clever—and the service elements are well targeted to the audience, including events calendar, movie listings and Web exclusives. Bonus for Web 2.0 elements such as most-read articles. (How about adding most-emailed and most-commented? Work on building your community.) Design needs work—homepage could be better organized; there is no clear visual hierarchy; heads/decks of supporting features must be more compelling, and the “past features” section could be fresher and more descriptive. Challenge yourselves to present a more dynamic homepage—for an entertainment Web site, energy is essential.

General strengths of entries:

- Use of personal voice
- Customization of features to audience
- Reporting basics

General weaknesses of entries:

- Overly literal translation of print magazine to online—two entries were just a .pdf of print pages posted online. An online magazine must use available tools.
- Oversight of Web 2.0 elements—video, interactivity, community building, viral content. This is crucial. Employers are seeking these skill sets—they don't want people who just want to write or edit.
- How can reported pieces be adapted/extended into the above? Reporters must be prepared to publicize their content, and respond to/guide the discussion of their stories. Reporters should be trained to bring videographers along to get footage that supplements their stories.
- Lack of user tools. The reader is more essential and more active a partner than ever before—every publication should have commenting functions, at minimum. Editors may want to nominate “editors's choice” comments to each article. Most popular/most commented/most emailed lists are essential.
- Search-engine optimization. Readers should be able to nominate stories/posts to Digg, Reddit, StumbleUpon—every post/article. These tools are crucial to traffic and survival. Search engine optimization principles should be taught.
- Design. Overall, it's antiquated. Study the *NYTimes*, *Slate*, *Salon*, *Washington Post* and see what they're doing in terms of engaging and serving the reader; emulate it, push it forward. Don't accept less than clarity and innovation — it doesn't do students any good otherwise.
- Immediacy. Blogs or regularly updated content are the cornerstone to any journalistic venture going forward. Just publishing a semester's worth of written

content and some occasional blog posts are not going to cut it. Every publication should have a blog or several blogs; every student should be assigned to blog on a regular schedule or beat throughout the term, and graded on such.

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—Design

Judge: Bob Gray, design director of *Science News* and former design editor at *National Geographic*

First Place

Panorama

Why It Won: The designers once again burst out with a heady, exciting and surprising magazine. They held to the previously established design approach creating sections that cover the school, the community, and a collection of creative works—short stories, poems, and both photographic and written essays. They understood that once you have successful design architecture, you only need to work creatively within it.

Highlights:

- Strong conceptual photography beautifully executed. Cropping is the pièce de résistance.
- Lively, bold color palate fits perfectly with the design.
- Inventive backgrounds—both graphic and photographic—for effective layering and pacing.
- Strong yet controlled typography. Once again, they use only two traditional type families but nicely extend the characteristics of them into fun treatments, filling, shadowing, outlining. Plus the creatively hand-drawn type is a nice accent here and there. Much improved text type, but a little more attention to widows and character/word spacing would have brought them close to perfection.
- Very effective use of the 10-inch by 13-inch trim size. Scale of images both contained and going off the page adds to good pacing.

Cover: Once again a strong, provocative concept. I immediately turn inside to read the explanation of why people have boxes on their heads so no need for cover lines. And again, this cover sets the stage for the themes of the issue. This year's front/back cover is a better execution as well—no hint of possible connection, just reflection. Still wish the name of the school could find its way on to the cover, at the very least on the spine.

And again this year... Bravo!

Second Place

515, Think, Drake

Why (they) Won: They didn't win on a "volume" entry, but each of these magazines is solid. Each employs best design practices, excellent use of white space, first-rate typesetting, margin space, comfortable column widths and leading. Photography, both conceptual and literal, is creative, informative, surprising and fun. This is my fourth time to judge this contest and each time Drake has been a top contender. This year *515* and *Think* join the ranks.

Cover: All three covers are delightful. They're bright, simple, well designed and provocative.

Front and Back of the Book: The conceptual photography and design solutions are excellent. Successful use of white space keeps the design loose but not out of control. Good pacing in all three. Pages are accessible and the design allows for large illustration.

Highlights:

- Lost No More feature in *Think*.
- *Think* cover
- Contents page in *Drake*
- Outstanding departments design in *5/5*

Third Place

The Planet

Why it won: Nice clean layout and well-balanced use of black-and-white and color photography. The layouts are well thought-out and deliver on the concepts. Nice consistency in the typographic styles for text and equally nice mix of styles for display. The strong grid and understated design help reinforce the editorial tone of this magazine about preserving our world.

Cover: The cover is specifically about one story (pharmaceutical waste in our water) but the other cover lines plus the logo leave no doubt about the message of the magazine. The simple, strong image forces the reader to stay with the cover and get the editorial message.

Front and Back of the Book: The magazine is a series of short articles so there is no conventional front and back of book. The pacing for 10 stories in 26 pages works nicely as does the positioning by subject.

Highlights: Beautiful opener for Compromising Consent. The type design reflecting the photo composition shows a good eye. If there had only been one photo on p. 25 instead of two this story would have been perfect. Also a nice opening spread for Liquid Gender Blender. Another successful reflection of type and image working together to convey the concept.

Honorable Mention

Vox

Why it won: Nicely done full issue devoted to the "Summer of Fun," a retrospective of the summer of 1967. The cover nails the look of that time with "psychedelic" type and illustration. The visual theme continues inside with bright color tints, vintage photography and whimsical layout. I only wish they had given the visuals a little more play. Otherwise, a successful venture.

Honorable Mention

Jayplay

Why it won: *Jayplay* continues to deliver its readers a well-organized, informative and visually fun publication. The design motifs work to keep edit separate from advertising and the photography and illustrations present well. My only advice would be to make

the text type a little larger and avoid image type wrapping as per the food review. The apocalypse feature and the Turkey-Day review are standouts.

General strengths of entries: Strong visual concepts—in a few cases equal and superior to successful consumer magazines. Many of the covers working at all levels even when interior design falls off.

Good quality photography and in many instances used effectively.

General Weaknesses of entries: The entries this year are more polarized than I've ever seen. The weak entries were very weak and more than ever displayed poor to no design structure and a great deal reliance on gimmickry.

- Inferior text typesetting.
- More tendency to ape bad Web design.
- Over the top to almost impenetrable graphic tricks

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

Why it won: From the setup of the departments to the features and overall layout, the *Ryerson Review* looked professional and intriguing. Each page was set up to engage readers with topical information without losing them in fussy design. The cover wasn't the most attractive of the bunch, but it still followed the principles of a successful cover—a single, dominant image, clean cover lines in effective positions, etc. Most important, the stories were engaging, and it was clear that solid journalism had been practiced with each one. The use of illustrations also was unique, professional and very artistic. This magazine combined the feel of several of my favorite professional magazines—*Economist*, *Esquire*, *The New York Times Magazine*. Well done!

Second Place

Think

Why it won: From the cover to the inside layout, this perhaps was the most attractive magazine of the bunch. It was bold, poppy, clean and current looking. The departments were well defined, and the features stood out as strong, separate stories. The double-truck openers on all the features, in fact, were exactly what professional magazines aim for—they were clean yet bold and mixed striking photography with illustration very well. The stories were topical and useful, but some did leave me wanting more...they could have been fleshed out a tad more, but I did love the use of sidebars and info-graphics that were carried throughout most features. Adding some meat to the stories—at least the features—may have garnered a first-place position.

Third Place

515

Why it won: This was one of the most fun, modern and current layouts I saw out of the bunch, mixing unique stories (loved “Party Like a Rock Star”) that had a worldly importance but still appealed to college students in a very effective way. The graphics were fun, the Table of Contents was very readable and clean (one of my pet peeves with most magazines), and there was a lot here to keep the reader flipping through the magazine. The weakest points of this were perhaps the cover (the placement of the cover lines didn’t grab me as well as others did), and the fashion spread in the middle of the book took away from the strong stories that sandwiched it. Otherwise, great job.

Honorable Mention

Burr

Why it won: By far one of the best covers, and this nearly grabbed the third-place title, but the inside layout and structure could be streamlined and cleaned up a bit more. It didn’t match the clean, attractive cover .

Honorable Mention

Panorama

Why it won: I love this book simply for its images, photography and artistic layout. It’s a wonderful book to flip through or to keep on the coffee table... it instantly brings a smile to my face. But because there’s so much going on, and with what seems like little organization, it’s difficult to read. It’s hard to tell where one story begins and other ends. Still, this is the most visually appealing magazine of the bunch and definitely deserves kudos for its creativity.

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—General Excellence

Judge: David Kaplan, senior editor at *Newsweek*

First Place

Think

Why it won: Combining sleek and accessible design, the magazine contained the range of news and features that its targeted audience might find appealing: short and long, serious and light, with different entry points on the longer pieces. I also was impressed with much of the photography and graphics.

Second Place

Burnt Orange

Why it won: This single-topic (mostly) issue demonstrated particularly strong reporting across a range of topics. I also thought the profiles of faculty (which I assume is an ongoing feature) was especially strong.

Third Place

O+B

Why it won: I like sass and attitude, when it's well harnessed and fun to read. As much as I think student-run publications ought to steer in the direction of campus life and student issues, I thought this issue was well executed and entertaining.

Honorable Mention

Vox

Why it won: This single issue on gay life offered a range and breadth of articles on a subject that's clearly controversial in that community. I applaud the "degree of difficulty" factor and the attempt to cover many topics.

General strengths of entries: If you took the dates off the magazines, any reader would still recognize that these 15 magazines occupy a particular time and space in the country's cultural, social and political life. Whether the issues are about gender, sex, the environment or a presidential election, the magazines reflected an impressive diversity of perspective. I also thought the magazines, in differing degrees, showed sophistication and creativity in the use of graphics, headline writing, illustrations and photography.

General weaknesses of entries: It's always a challenge to evaluate a form of expression and creativity that one is far-removed from. I haven't been in a student publication for many years (alas), whereas I work for a venerable print publication that's often nonpareil at writing, design and photography. Trying to take into account that bias, I would still say I was sometimes disappointed by writing and photo-selection that I thought could've been crisper. I guess that's called editing—and that's always a judgment call. And I recognize these are student-run publications that face constraints of time and resources; nonetheless, I found myself hoping for bit more selectiveness.

Start-Up Magazine Project—Team

Judge: Nick Fauchald, senior associate food editor at *Food & Wine*

First Place

That Girl!

Why it won: From the business plan to the design and editorial content, this magazine successfully identifies and caters to a very specific, very difficult audience: 7- to 12-year-old girls. The students displayed an astonishing handle on their projected readership, and it showed through especially on the playful, actionable design; I especially liked the "Just for You" page of cut-and-save content. The articles are perfectly geared to *That Girl!*'s young readers, and the advertisements are appropriate and easily distinguishable from editorial. Promotion strategies were innovative, especially the viral marketing and online opportunities.

Second Place

Midwest Current

Why it won: Although *Midwest Current* would face some competition, the magazine does a great job of knowing its position in the marketplace. Its business plan is incredibly thorough and honest, from audience insight to prospective roadblocks in selling advertisements. It builds a strong base for growth and online crossover. The FOB is dynamic and contains a great mix of short and mid-length stories, as well as many fetching design elements. The feature well includes both service-oriented pieces and longer, in-depth stories. In short, *Midwest Current* looks and reads like a great city/regional magazine.

Third Place

BJH Giving

Why it won: *Giving* serves a very specific, targeted purpose, and does it well. The design is clean and consistent, and stories are engaging and accompanied by appropriate artwork and design. The magazine is actionable and compelling but not one big sales pitch. And I love the smart, simple slugs: Events, Care, Hope, Thanks.

General strengths of entries:

- Many of the business plans were especially thorough and realistic; I appreciate seeing a start-up that acknowledges it won't make a profit until 2-3 years into its existence.
- Many of the promotion strategies were very innovative.
- Print-to-Web strategies and symbiosis were also strong across the board, stronger even than those used by many mainstream magazines.
- Most of the magazines understood their target advertisers and selected ads that agreed with their editorial concept.
- Many of the entries displayed a strong understanding of editorial architecture and did a great job of integrating advertising placement throughout the book.
- Most of the entries created or filled a niche in which there would be little marketplace competition. Most also took Web-based media into account when selecting their competition.

General weaknesses of entries:

- Many of the design concepts were too cluttered. Layouts contained too many photos and typefaces. Some entries lacked continuity and flow; each spread was drastically different than the next.
- Some of the circulation projections were unreasonably high, given the tiny marketplace niche the magazine aimed to create/fill.
- Many of the business plans budgeted for large editorial and small advertising/marketing staffs. In reality, the opposite is more common with start-ups.

Start-Up Magazine Project—Individual

Judge: Gary Johnson, president of MSP Communications, Minneapolis, Regional publisher of *Mpls.St.Paul* and *Twin Cities Business* and custom publisher and content provider for corporations and associations

First Place:

Stella

Why It Won: Low competition. Double niche (young female/color). Substantial Web community opportunities. Great title (needs a more descriptive tag line). Plays effectively off of indigenous group's needs and shared values. Fun, whimsical-looking design with tpestyle counterpoints. Corinne Rae Bailey perfect type of cover subject. Only paid circulation analysis that made sense. If the magazine was supported by a very strong Web site, it would likely be an acquisition target for a larger publisher. Nicely packaged. Well done!

Second Place

LeSport

Why It Won: Deftly identifies a growing psychographic niche in America: non-traditional sports fan. It addresses our nation's morphing diversity of population and culture merging brought on by increased immigration, but is also recognizes that America's traditional sports have worn thin on many citizens buoyed by interests in lacrosse, soccer and increasing competition from international stars in tennis and golf.

Nice editorial plan, great title (says what it is without being terse), design needs some energy. Circulation plan assumes an impossibly high rate of response, thus the financials are not representative of the cost involved. Competition appears indirect and Web opportunities are huge for timely news and community. Good idea. Very enterprising.

Third Place

Entracte

Why It Won: The third place winner did what the other two did, found a real niche that was not populated by a lot of like magazines and formidable competitors. Where it went wrong was the assumption that the readership would be young. In order for this magazine to have a shot at success, the audience needs to include, in a big way, the Broadway dowagers and elite musical theater faithful who have the money the time and the interest to attend multiple times during the year. *Entracte's* audience would not the feed the monster, as they say. This is a great niche, almost hobbyist like crafts or fly-fishing. It has the potential to have a big-time upscale audience, all across the nation. It also has a lot of New York local advertising opportunities, i.e., "when in NY." Clearly this is not an actor's magazine, though they'll all subscribe. Lots of behind-the-scenes perspective and interviews necessary for this to differentiate from other New York magazines that cover theater.

Honorable Mention

Worldwide Student

Why It Won: Good affinity group but unfortunately it has the lifespan of a monarch butterfly. The readership on this magazine would be short term, but a solid Web site has the potential to hold the audience much longer and establish an interesting social network that could have legs in areas of relationships, shared world interests, etc. This could be an effective single-sponsored publication, given that its distribution is primarily free through schools, etc. Wondered about zoning ads in regions so ads could be sold but that problematic and inefficient. Lots of competitors....too many. With that in mind, the Web seems like a better and more effective core product than the magazine. The most impressive thing about this entry was the sheer analysis and depth of thought that went into the project. The direct mail piece was very clever but the business concept not very viable. Whoever submitted this proposal has a gift for packaging.

Honorable Mention

Dulcinea

Why It Won: This entry had a lot of flaws, not the least of which was its lack of differentiation from its many competitors. I would have proposed a Stella-like concept and gone after a younger target, 18-24 Latin females. That would open up a wonderful Web community opportunity. Or you could go *Dulcinea at Home* and do a shelter book that would open up food, design, furniture, entertaining and lifestyle. The name of the magazine is very good, plays off a famous Spanish author/story, wonderful metaphor that connects with the zeitgeist of the female culture. Circulation expense numbers way low.

Other entries:

Amethyst: (name too cryptic), good idea but needs differentiation from a hugely crowded competitive field. Good Web ops for social networking and e-commerce. Love the concentration on accessories. How about Swag or Sparkly for a more descriptive title? How about a Web site with do-it-yourself videos, product features and reviews, links to retail sites, videos of girls in store trying stuff on? Might become an acquisition target if enough scale is developed, particularly if it's around commerce or community.

southern charm: Demographic target way too downscale to compete with regional and city magazines. Arrangement with newspapers for distribution brilliant way to circulate. Possible fatal flaw is the prohibition on selling ads within newspaper inserts. Did the arrangement include a profit share with newspapers? Did you consider selling the newspapers on financially supporting this magazine and calling it a Sunday supplement. They do something similar to that in Annapolis, around the Chesapeake Bay. This magazine does not have much financial potential as a stand-alone magazine, given its audience.

General Strengths: This year there were more Web extensions. No magazine brand can exist anymore without a serious Web site accompanying it. Stronger ideas this year. Good niches served. Better thought and analysis went into most entries. Strategies accompanied passions this year. Only weakness were consistently low circulation expense estimates.