

AEJMC Student Magazine Contest 2014

Judges' Comments

Articles—Places

Judge: Scott Stuckey, editor of *The Science Teacher*, author of National Geographic's *Ultimate Field Guide to Travel Photography* (<http://amzn.to/11u2yl9>) and former managing editor of *National Geographic Traveler*.

First Place

Article title: "City Limits"

Target magazine: *Urban Plains*

Why it won: This piece is a model of thorough reporting, careful observation, economical writing, judicious use of quotes, and delightful figures of speech. The writer profiles 88-year-old Elsie Eiler and the Nebraska ghost town where she is the last remaining resident. The article covers the wider trend of the depopulation of America's rural areas and offers other examples of dying towns. Several times the writer takes us into the moment through the use of dialog in narrative scenes, rather than just serving up quotes gathered during sit-down interviews. Near the end we visit the country cemetery where Eiler will be buried before we return to one more scene of her serving patrons of her bar, frequented by bikers "with beards thick as a gob of cotton candy."

Second Place

Article title: "From the Ashes"

Target magazine: *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

Why it won: The article examines disaster journalism, focusing on the 2013 train derailment and explosion that wiped out much of a small town in Quebec. The writer points up advantages to using narrative techniques that humanize and add context to the story, going beyond hard news accounts. The article was impressive for its own use of narrative to recount the movements and strategies of reporters in the field. The horrific event itself lends drama that keeps the reader interested, demonstrating that what you write about matters, apart from how well you write about it.

Third Place

Article title: Silenced: "A Peek into Singapore's Censored Press"

Target magazine: *Smithsonian Magazine*

Why it won: This one, written in the first person, reads like a long essay, based on the writer's two stints as an intern at *The Straits Times* newspaper in Singapore, a city-island-nation in Southeast Asia. Here, where newspapers operate under government license, censorship is often passive and ultimately imposed by the newspaper on itself. The government maintains implicit control by applying an ever-changing range of "out of bounds" markers that newspapers steer around. The writer describes a series of situations in which this passive censorship exerts itself, and by the end of the article, the reader feels an ominous sense of repression. With tighter editing, this article might indeed be worthy of placement in *Smithsonian*.

General strengths of entries: This category continues to catch a wide range of articles, from travel pieces to an article on the video game industry to one on government surveillance. Quality varies widely, too, but I was impressed by the number of entries that were long, heavily reported pieces.

General weaknesses of entries: A number of students submit roundup articles each year, and I'm not sure why. Roundups, unless done very cleverly, are usually dull. Magazines seem to like them because they can be cobbled together by junior staffers or interns, but rarely do roundups rise to the level required to win a competition like this one.

Another recurring weakness: Starting an article with the background information that should rightfully come later, after you've grabbed us with a strong lead. This year, an article on Cuban art waited until the ninth paragraph to name a Cuban artist. Another article, on the Biosphere 2 project, starts out with the backstory, already familiar to many, before moving on to the present, tiring us at the outset with an already tired subject.

Articles—People

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

First Place

Article title: "Sex and (dis)Ability"

Target magazine: *Vox*

Why it won: What might be thought of as a taboo subject – sex among the disabled – is handled with great reporting and proper restraint. A quadriplegic man, a paraplegic woman and an occupational therapist talk with amazing candor about what is and is not possible and the psychological and physical comfort that ensues. Persuading these courageous people to discuss their intimate lives cannot have been easy. And the discretion with which their sexual confessions are written about results in an amazing piece of journalism.

Second Place

Article title: "It's a Sting Operation for Bug Professor"

Target magazine: *Arizona Alumni Magazine*

Why it won: Entomology—i.e., the study of bugs—hardly ranks high on anyone's list of humorous subjects. But a smile, and maybe even a laugh, is guaranteed by this story on an entomology professor who is compiling a scientific index of how much insect bites hurt. Justin Schmidt has been stung 150 times in researching the Schmidt Sting Pain Index. The worst: the Brazil bullet ant. The story is filled with fascinating details, e.g., a honeybee is, drop for drop, more toxic than a western diamondback rattlesnake.

Third Place

Article title: "Life After Near-Death"

Target magazine: *The Atlantic*

Why it won: "Pop culture is rife with near-death experiences," as this story says at the beginning, also known as "the fabled light at the end of the tunnel." But such NDEs have ignited a fascinating intellectual battle between those who say they are spiritual and those who insist they are biological. At least five percent of Americans have experienced an NDE, and that numbers increases with cardiac arrest survivors. The story presents compelling examples and arguments for both sides, a debate that is monitored by the International Association for Near Death Studies. One thing seems clear: an NDE has an unmistakable biological, spiritual, psychological and social impact on an individual for the rest of his or her life.

Honorable Mention

Article title: "City Limits"

Target magazine: *Urban Plains*

Why it won: This is the heartwarming story of Monowi, Nebraska, and its population of one—yes, that's one—person, and how Elsie Eiler, the last resident, lives in a trailer and operates the

Monowi Tavern in an otherwise deserted and falling-down village. She serves drinks and food to curious tourists who come from all over the world to inspect this unique bit of Americana.

Honorable Mention

Article title: “Addicted”

Target magazine: *Christianity Today*

Why it won: A young man and woman, both only 22 and both hopeless drug addicts, are headed for death. And then miraculously, they discover God and are saved physically and spiritually. This could be a sappy story of salvation. It’s not. The details are grim and unsparing. Their discovery of a higher power is riveting and believable. “Both of them are still growing, still learning...” is how the story ends. The reader has learned a great deal too.

General strengths of entries: The breadth of subjects seems encouragingly broader than in other years. We encounter unusual topics like the enthusiasm for parkour, the search in the Southwest for meteorites, the battle for gender equality as carried on by men, a black, bisexual female rapper, the campaign for women in the Catholic priesthood.

The entries generally seem to have recognized the golden rule of journalism: start with an interesting subject, and then make it more so with your reporting and writing.

General weaknesses of entries: One of the problems in judging is the disparate length of stories. Some are simply too short to do any kind of justice to the subject. Longer stories have a decided advantage.

As in the past, proper grammar takes a beating too often. Examples: “those kind,” “looks like,” “a pair which had,” “gave my sister and I,” etc. Cliches appear — “every trick of the trade”—but not in such abundance as in previous years. Hooray.

Articles—Investigation and Analysis

Judge: Kurt Chandler, editor of *Milwaukee Magazine*

First Place

Article title: “The Fire”

Target magazine: *Boston Magazine*

Why it won: In “The Fire,” the writer digs deep and pieces together a riveting narrative that tells the story of a community tragedy but also explains in stark detail why tragedies such as this one occur -- and how they might be prevented. The reporting is thorough, the choice of sources spot-on, the writing compelling. A top-notch piece of journalism.

Second Place

Article title: “From the Ashes”

Target magazine: *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

Why it won: With a fresh angle, the reporter uses the post-mortem of a devastating train wreck to demonstrate the power of narrative journalism—and the value of thoughtful, in-depth reporting after the TV news trucks have moved on. A revealing and inspiring story.

Third Place

Article title: “Life Sentence, De Facto”

Target magazine: think-mag.com

Why it won: With solid reporting, exceptional storytelling, and a firm grasp of the legal system, this reporter makes a very complex story accessible to the casual reader. It’s an important topic that certainly warrants scrutiny. Well done.

Honorable Mention**Article title:** “The Credibility Gap”**Target magazine:** *Ryerson Review of Journalism***Why it won:** The use of first-person reporting helps to show, rather than tell, how manipulative some corporate communication experts can be when attempting to stretch the boundaries of journalistic standards.**Honorable Mention****Article title:** “Pumped Up Kicks”**Target magazine:** think-mag.com**Why it won:** This is a very smart report on a lingering issue that bears renewed examination. Excellent writing instantly pulls the reader in.**General strengths of entries:**

- The topics are impressive and very well chosen, seldom predictable.
- The majority of the reporters exhibit excellent reporting skills. They know how to dig, and how to zero-in on just the right sources.
- For the most part, this set of reporters/writers does a very good job explaining and analyzing complex topics. And they don’t dumb down nor over-complication their explanations.
- Overall, the skills and talents demonstrated by these young journalists are very encouraging.

General weaknesses of entries:

- Many writers have not yet mastered the art of the narrative flow. Often missing is the all-important narrative arc, which results in flat prose, and newspaper-style organization.
- A number of stories are a bit long-winded, with an over-emphasis on data. Could have used more discerning editing.
- On occasion, reporters drift into the zone of advocacy journalism when it isn’t appropriate or necessary.
- Occasionally the sourcing is incomplete or weak.

Articles—Service and Information**Judge:** Travis Jennings Brown, associate editor at *Esquire***First Place****Article title:** “Doc Dynasty”**Target magazine:** *Vox***Why it won:** This article is almost excessively thorough. I’d expect something like this for a preview of an event on the scale of South by Southwest. It’s impressive that the team was able to think of so many different ways to introduce a film fest of this size. The attention to details and creative sidebar treatments keep it an enjoyable read throughout. Just really well packaged. It shows a lot of hard work and creativity, and ambition that I frankly wouldn’t have expected from a university magazine.**Second Place****Article title:** “Tech Junkies”**Target magazine:** *The New Yorker***Why it won:** The writer shows a strong understanding of the style and information needed for a *New Yorker* service article. There is a good balance of personal experience, research, expert sources and *New Yorker*-esque literary-ness. I would have preferred the writer did a more drastic personal experiment—she provided very little nuance to a topic that has already been extensively covered (I remember a *New York Times* article that covered a float trip where a

bunch of researchers on both sides of the cell phone addiction debate left their phones behind for a week). I think if the writer applied this much work and thought to an untouched topic, then I could see a *New Yorker* editor considering the piece.

Third Place

Article title: “Not Your Mama’s Manicure”

Target magazine: *Glamour*

Why it won: I (and a lot of editors I know) are suckers for fresh takes on topics that might initially seem boring. I would not have guessed that I would have become so interested in manicures by the end of the first read. And that all comes down to the fact that the writer probably put in more research than is probably common for a *Glamour* article. I like that it goes into the origins and history of nail art, but also covers Instagram and Reddit’s connection to the recent boom. If I were their editor at *Glamour* then I would probably have to do some fairly heavy editing (some of it is a little fragmented and since this is a national magazine it’s a little odd that there are two sources from Northwestern), but the article contains everything necessary for a really smart, enjoyable, educational service piece.

Honorable Mention

Article title: “How Merlot Can You Go?”

Target magazine: *Vox*

Why it won: From the annotated bottle on the opener to the showcase of the different country connections of each winery to the timeline sidebar, this is some great packaging. I’ve read several why-this-wine-region-that-you-might-think-isn’t-cool-actually-is articles and this one is the first that actually makes me want to check the area out.

Honorable Mention

Article title: “Varicose Veins: Not All Vanity”

Target magazine: *Health*

Why it won: Good topic and well researched. This article would spread awareness about an issue that I assume very few people are aware is this dangerous and this easy to fix. The writer shows a strong command of the subject but also makes it very easy to understand.

General strengths of entries: Overall these were very well researched and well packaged. Few young magazine writers and editors think about the reader experience. In the current climate where we’re competing with digital and social media, it’s more important than ever to make sure the packaging is visual and multi-dimensional. All the extra layers help provide even more service by presenting extra information in easy-to-consume ways. This all comes down to hard work. As a reader I don’t want to waste my time reading something that the writer didn’t put much effort into. As an editor I don’t want to work with a writer who makes me do unnecessary extra work.

General weaknesses of entries: Some of the writing could have been better crafted. Better flow, smoother transitions, more captivating headlines, more surprising literary techniques. These are simple things that come over time as you read more, write more, and figure out what works and what doesn’t. It’s also very beneficial to put the article away for a couple days then read it with a fresh mind. You’ll be amazed at what you originally thought read really well that is actually a little awkward to a first-time reader.

Articles—Features

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

First Place

Article title: “City Limits”

Target magazine: *Urban Plains Issue 5*

Why it won: A wonderful old-school profile about a colorful character with great detail, heart, background, and nuanced writing. To me these are the ultimate stories, little getaways that bring something or someone unusual to life, like watching a little movie....except the only tools available for the storytelling are the basic 26 letters, well employed.

Second Place

Article title: “iWitness”

Target magazine: *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

Why it won: A polished and professional offering that stood head and shoulders over other entries. This is prime-time ready. Many in the contest were not. Year after year Ryerson writers catch my attention with professional-feeling work. Well done.

Third Place

Article title: “Free to be Me”

Target magazine: *Vox*

Why it won: Great aggregation of people who together nicely illuminated the difficult experience of coming out. The writing is professional; the tendency in these types of stories is to become an advocate and this piece stays clear.

Honorable Mention

Article title: “They’re Not Fine”

Target magazine: *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

Why it won: An important subject for our people to be aware of and to constantly discuss. Janet Cooke, Jason Blair et al were not fine either.

General strengths and weaknesses of entries: Overall, the stories presented represented a wide range of material, from religion, to issues faced by transgender people, to violence over tennis shoes, to the life and legacy of America’s greatest stud bull. The greatest part about journalism is the assigned experience of life’s many facets. At the end of a long career, it is hoped, a journalist finds a measure of wisdom.

Students should remember that their voice of advocacy on certain subjects can be a turn off to readers. Let your facts do your talking. Presumably you will write about a zillion different topics before you’re done. You can have a horse in the race, just keep it to yourself.

Articles—First Person

Judge: Seth Porges is freelance writer who contributes to *InStyle*, *Fast Company*, *Forbes*, *Men’s Journal*, *Maxim*, *Rolling Stone*, *Popular Mechanics* and *Mashable*.

First Place

Article title: “My Upright Life”

Target magazine: *The Burr*

Why it won: Grim, funny, true to the point of being hard to read at times. Also extremely well written. An immersive account of going through a serious medical ordeal. The best first-person

stories allow the reader to experience something they wouldn't otherwise, through the eyes of the writer. That is done here. The writer is very effective with her words, rarely veering into overblown or purple prose. Great story.

Second Place

Article title: "Head Games"

Target magazine: *The Burr*

Why it won: I'm almost hesitant to give this second place because it is thematically so similar to the winner, but I couldn't resist. An eye-opening account of what it's like to undergo head trauma. To forget who you are, what you were talking about, etc. We hear a lot about concussions and sports injuries, but precious little from the POV of the folks who endure them. This story does so in a very effective and straightforward manner. It is almost shocking at times, and worth reading.

Third Place

Article title: "I Was A Teenage Anti-Abortion Apologist"

Target magazine: *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

Why it won: First person stories are a great venue for showing personal growth and change. This story does so, while shedding light on a serious subject that I honestly knew nothing about (the bizarre world of religion-funded journalism). Super interesting.

General strengths of entries: The stories were actually better than last year! The writing was sharper. The topics generally more interesting.

An ideal FP story informs the readers about a subject while making them empathize with the writer's journey. A few were quite successful in this regard.

The writing was pretty sharp. Some was actually quite funny. And the choice of subjects was good.

General weaknesses of entries: Some of the entries felt like they were exploring well-trodden topics without adding much new. It's a common sin of young journalists to lead with the obvious. Good writers should be able to talk about well-known subjects while adding something new.

Last year a few stories didn't feel like "first person" pieces at all, other than the occasional use of the pronoun "I." While that trend has reversed, there were still a few guilty parties.

Specialized Business Press Article

Judge: Sandi Wendelken, editor at RadioResource Media Group

First Place

Article title: "Coffee Fungus Affects Small Farms"

Target magazine: *Barista Magazine*

Why it won: In coffee-dependent Costa Rica, an outbreak of fungus is making a strong impact on the coffee plantations, their owners and the country as a whole. Local family-owned farms are taking a hit from the roya fungus. The article delves into environmental changes behind the problem, treatment options—none of which are inexpensive—and the help offered by the Costa Rican government and a local coffee producers' cooperative. Yet local farmers and agricultural officials are optimistic the problem can be prevented long term and are working to ensure best practices for future productions. "We expect to recover," says one co-op official.

Second Place

Article title: “Solar Power Along the U.S.-Mexico Border”

Target magazine: *Solar Today*

Why it won: Solar power could be a boon to Mexico’s economy but several factors have hindered its development. The country’s geographic position in a “sun-favorable” belt makes it a prime target for solar development, yet expensive build-out costs and unfavorable regulation have stymied growth. The potential for solar energy in Mexico is brightening as new projects and collaboration along the U.S.-Mexican border are driving the market. With continued education, cooperation and investment, Mexico is likely to become a leading producer and user of renewable energy.

Third Place

Article title: “Wrong Numbers”

Target magazine: *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

Why it won: Readers love numbers, and journalists report poll statistics often without thoroughly researching and revealing important details or margins of error. Newsrooms do far less custom surveying than in the past, instead relying on pollsters and jumping on “clickable” numbers and headlines. Journalists should do more—report polls with skepticism, scrutiny and thoroughness. Asking hard questions of the polling company about a study and better understanding political party polling in particular would lead to better and more accurate reporting and writing about numbers.

General strengths of entries: The winning entries were well researched, and each one was highly targeted at a specific business-to-business publication. Each writer took the time to understand the publication’s audience and wrote an article that fit within the format of the targeted magazine.

General weaknesses of entries: Several of the entries were not true business articles. They did not target publications that would likely publish the types of articles submitted. Although the writing was strong in several of the entries, tapping a niche is the key to being published in a business magazine.

Online Magazine

Judge: Abby Gardner, web director at *Cosmopolitan* and *xoJane*

First Place

Magazine title: *Powerless*

Why it won: I loved that this staff took a singular event (a terrible winter storm that left hundreds of thousands without power) that deeply affected their community and built the issue around it. It reminded me of what *New York Magazine* does so well. Instead of just straight reporting, they used six stories of real people and families to tell the whole story. It’s much more compelling and shareable and personal, all things an online magazine should strive for. The reporting was excellent and they mix was just right taking me inside what this community had gone through. The infographic telling the timeline of the story was well done and a very web-savvy approach. The layout and design for the site was smart and easy to navigate. I was highly impressed with what they produced in a fairly short period of time (February–April, as noted in the authentication letter.)

Second Place

Magazine title: *The Second Wind: Aging and Sports*

Why it won: While many entries aim to serve their college demographic (a totally valid choice), this entry also stood out for its choice of content and its aim at aging Boomers; though I think the appeal is much broader, really any fan of sports both recreational and competitive. Aging and sports is a unexpected, but fascinating, topic to explore. They took a good, journalistic look at the myriad topics that fall under the broader category—and they did it well. The name was so clever and I loved the font treatment of the header. They also produced a LOT of content and strong content at that. They even produced video, which every site out there these days is trying to figure out how to do well. Very smart to think of adding that to the content mix. Well done all around.

Third Place

Magazine title: *Think*

Why it won: “The Wasted Edition” is a fantastic them for an issue and I think they covered its many meanings in countless interesting ways. From the first moment you see the homepage, you’re intrigued by the design, photography and typography. It grabs you and reels you in. There were lots of great, clicky headlines all over the issue, which is key, but it’s also important that you don’t feel disappointed once inside the story proper, and I never was. Strong writing and reporting found in abundance here. The layout lets you see how much content is being offered but it’s not cluttered at all (a huge pet peeve of mine). I wasn’t exactly clear on what content was repurposed from print and what was online exclusive, but overall a great job.

Honorable Mention

Magazine title: *Drake Magazine*

Why it won: This is beautifully designed site, from the layout to the font choices. It’s modern and sleek and clean but not pretentious. Though I believe this has probably evolved over time as it is the online arm of the print publication. There was so much excellent content. I love the “Secret Life of Models” and “A Slice of the Quad Cities” and “Weird Beer.” I think each of the verticals is really well curated and are exactly what a college student wants to be reading about. Loved seeing Fashion and Music in there.

General strengths of entries: Really strong reporting, writing, and content choices in all the entries. I think the ones that were more successful in my eyes took on a topic/theme and dove deep into that. I was also very impressed with the design/layout of a number of the sites, especially those that were built in a shorter period of time.

General weaknesses of entries: A few of the entries were just uploaded versions of a print magazine, which isn’t interactive in the way a true online magazine should be. I think that a number of the entries could have benefited from some more thoughtful image selection and size. Also, thinking about share tools is really important and would be a great added feature on many of these.

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—Design

Judge: Roger Black owns Roger Black, A Narrative Design Studio, which designs and redesigns print and digital publications. Most recently he was at Edipresse in Hong Kong, redesigning the Asian *Tatler* magazines

First Place

Magazine title: *Klipsun*

Why it won: Here is a consistent, well-branded design. The typography and color choices are simple and elegant. An intriguing cover. Excellent and consistent design throughout, and just enough variety to keep a reader's attention. It feels like the staff could use this platform to produce an interesting magazine, issue after issue.

Comments:

- Nice opening spread, with a delicate all-type TOC
- Level of photography is maintained throughout
- One criticism: There is no big-bang visual spread

Second Place

Magazine title: *Echo*

Why it won: A good cover—really like a book cover, which makes sense for the biannual frequency. Really fun front-of-the-book and back-of-the-book. A delightful illustration style, which becomes the brand for the magazine.

Comment:

- Features lack scale change—or even anything big!

Third Place

Magazine title: *Vox*

Why it won: Good, comprehensive design, with excellent photo direction. Strong cover. And simple typography that works!

Honorable Mentions

Magazine title: *Fourteenth Street*

Strong cover illustration, and good main feature—the hotel article.

Magazine title: *Southeast Ohio*

Professionally done. Good pacing. Nice front of the book.

Magazine title: *Housing Guide 2014*

Good cover, and a nice effort to hold editorial style against a hodge-podge of real estate ads.

Magazine title: *The Annual*

Good effort at branding. And good typography.

General strengths of entries: A lot of effort has been put into the concepts for most of the entries. Thus, some good content, but it doesn't often come to the surface. Over all, photography is quite good.

General weaknesses of entries: Most of the entries were suffer from bad pacing, terrible headlines, weak (or no) display copy for decks, subheads and captions, and jumbled typography.

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—Editorial

Judge: Peter Moore, editor of *Men's Health Magazine* and *Men's Health iPad edition*

First Place

Magazine title: *Echo*

Why it won: It's a time-honored criterion for the best magazines that one should be able to tell exactly who their readers are simply by flipping through the magazine pages. Columbia College's *Echo* is stylish, funny, quirky, and a bit obsessive, and I personally would like to go have a drink with all 25,000 of its readers. From the magazine's unique (and funny! And quirky!) organizing principle of beginning with ODDS and ending with (what else?) ENDS, to the fascinating city characters we meet in the feature well (love, love, LOVE, the first anecdote about sign-language screw ups), to the variety of ways the editors/writers/designers choose to tell stories of the Chicago demi-monde, I felt engaged and amused and surprised all the way through. You get the sense that the editors and designers and illustrators were having a blast as they collaborated on new ways to tell new stories, and that they understood their responsibility to the readers: NEVER BE BORING. And that dictum is especially important in a world where we have plenty of other alternatives to capture our attention if it begins to wander. Mine was locked in from the cover through page 80. Kudos also to the advertising department, for filling the issue with advertisers who were every bit as interesting as the editorial they ran next to. I want to go to at least three of the diners interleaved in your pages. *Echo* is the editorial equation fully realized: great edit paired with \$12K of relevant advertisers. So get it out of the red next year, OK?

Second Place

Magazine title: *Two*

Why it won: There were any number of themed magazines entered in the AEJMC contest this year, but none of them were as successful as *Two*. And when you think of it, dating is the perfect idea for a themed issue. Publications from lots of schools took on Weighty Themes, as the editors tried to prove to themselves and the world that they are Serious Journalists. And yet, those efforts always came off as a bit self-indulgent—more about the editors than their audience. But *Two* was launched straight at the yearning hearts of the Brigham Young University's student body. They looked at dating from every possible angle, and employed a sense of humor and poignant first-person reflections to really tell the story. And not only tell the story, but improve the ending by providing useful tips and strategies, plus 210 specific date ideas. If I were a student looking for love in SLC, TWO would be the one place I'd go for help. Also, a BIG shout out to the awesome advertising sales team for reaping an astonishing \$29,400 in ads, which more than doubled up the editorial expenses. Student publications often neglect the business side; not so at BYU. An extra bouquet of kudos to *Two's* sister publication *Housing Guide 2014*, which raked in \$70K. I hope you all threw yourselves a great party with these profits, or donated to some deserving charity—like your student loans. You all deserve great credit for your solid work editorially and on the business side. Next year: perhaps a bit more love to the design side? Take a look at *New York Magazine*, and steal from it liberally.

Third Place

Magazine title: *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

Why it won:

From *Hamlet*, act 2, scene 2

POLONIUS: What do you read, m'lord?

HAMLET: Words, words, words.

Maybe the brooding Dane was a depressed journalist, caught up in the latest issue of the *Ryerson Review of Journalism*? There is certainly plenty in there to maintain and perhaps

heighten his dark mood. Of the six cover lines on the magazine, five point to places where journalism or journalists were failing. The sixth seems to offer hope...until we reach the TOC, where we learn that the retiring journo Armstrong took all the good stories with her. And, yes, these are indeed tough times in journalism, as the acerbic end matter “Post Mortem” points out. And, yes, journalism needs watchdogs who bark just as loudly as those sniffing around the NSA and the banking industry. I applaud and welcome and thank you for such serious scrutiny. But I had to laugh when the RRJ’s edlet lamented the loss of print space for the magazine; Hamlet and I discerned no shortage of words words words. And they were damn good ones, too.

But perhaps the editors next year could take a cue from the designer/writer of the back page, and find new ways to engage readers on the serious topics you care so deeply about, and spend so many words on. There’s an infographic revolution happening out there, and many photojournalists and artists and graphic designers who want to tell their stories with dramatic images. There are flashes of great imagery in RRJ—like that terrific opener for the phone-survey takedown—but mostly the magazine is an unbroken succession of very high-quality gray pages. I bet your reader engagement would soar if you brought equal passion to visualizing topics that you do to writing about them. And more humor/less self-seriousness would help, too. The *New Yorker* publishes some of the most depressing and wordy pieces I’ve read anywhere, and yet they leaven it with witty images and funny words. You can, too.

General weaknesses of entries:

Truly, I have sympathy for college journalists, especially the people at the top of the masthead. Those EICs have to corral the enormous egos of their contributors—many of them people who feel they need to see their names and words in print to really, truly exist. Journalism is filled with those egos, and I have one myself. And yet, the measure of a publication’s success is the degree to which the editors and writers can sublimate their desire to show off, and instead beam their attentions on what their readers really need and want. And also those editors need to urgently consider what’s competing for the attention of their readers, and successfully attract them to your publication.

This year a lot of college mags “bravely” took on the subject of gay athletes on campus, and I understand why. Michael Sam was making headlines at the time most of you were drawing up your story lists. So there was a headlong rush to be gayer than you were last year. It was the serious topic du jour, and almost everybody but BYU (hmmmmm) covered it in some way. But did you all rush to that topic because your readers demanded it, or was it to demonstrate how brave and culturally aware your editorial boards were?

Very often when reading the award nominees, I saw instances where the journalism was more about the journalists than it was about reader need or preference. To truly serve readers you need to check your ego at the door, and find the unique thing your publication can do for its community. Bonus points if you can do that in a variety of voices (serious reporting, scalding humor, first-person, essays, narrative, crazy stuff) and formats (infographics, photo essays, quizzes, charticles, listicles, facebook posts). Those of you who are not yet publishing digitally: why not? I can’t think of one good reason I only read two of this year’s batch on my iPad. It’s not the only format for magazines, but it’s a useful one, especially with printing and paper such an expense.

Note to photo editors: Just because there’s an article about a human being, it doesn’t mean you absolutely have to run big photographs of that person, especially when those photographs don’t flatter the subjects.

And lastly, a bit of a smackdown for those of you who failed to secure advertising dollars to back your work. Money is the lifeblood of the journalistic enterprise. Those cool kids from BYU made tons of it with their publications, and they probably had a much nicer year-end journalism banquet than the rest of you. As professionals, you’ll want to be paid. Figure out ways to introduce \$\$\$\$ into the equation before you graduate and you’ll already be

professionals by the time you receive your diplomas. Or maybe you'll quit early, like Zuckerberg, and just go be rich.

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—General Excellence

Judge: Sara Austin, deputy editor of *Cosmopolitan*, winner of the 2014 National Magazine Award for service journalism

First Place

Magazine title: *Think*

Why It Won: From the arresting cover image on, the magazine engages with witty visuals, a narrow-but-deep theme that is meaningful to a broad range of readers, and clean, professional writing. The editors impress by addressing "do gooder" topics without every feeling preachy or overly earnest, but also without resorting to the crutch of snark or sarcasm. The iPad-only format is designed cleanly, easy to navigate, and reinforces the theme of sustainability.

Second Place

Magazine title: *SkyView*

Why it won: This unique collaboration between scientists and journalists provides not only a fascinating teaching model, but a great read. The deep dive into the wildlife, research, plants and scientists of the Catalina mountains proves immersive. In tone, articles find a good balance between scientific detail and accessibility. I especially enjoyed the essay by Josh Workman, a charming look at one student falling in love with his future career in the sciences.

Third Place

Magazine title: *Vox*

Why it won: While this newspaper insert lacks the glossy production and flashy design of some competitors, it nevertheless stands out for the professionalism, cleanliness, and quality of its writing, editing, and layout. The issue celebrating the True/False film festival covers the personalities, the spirit and the practicalities of an event that is special to the campus. It gets readers excited to attend and enhances their experience once they do.

Honorable Mention

Magazine title: *Echo*

Why it won: Gorgeous modern design—particularly the sometimes dazzling, often humorous illustrations—make this magazine stand out from the crowd and give it a young, adventurous vibe. The text is not always to the level of the design, but always represents worthy collaboration between text editors and designers.

Honorable Mention

Magazine title: *Two*

Why it won: It is a truth universally acknowledged that college dating is an utter mess. To the rescue, the student journalists of BYU, who have produced a charming, super-service-y guide that promotes the old-fashioned institution of one-on-one dating without ever feeling old-fashioned.

General strengths of entries: The photographs and design, given limitations of the student journalists and their projects, are to be admired. Many entries also showed interest in important subjects that are in the public interest but that too few consumer magazines focus on, such as life in prison, veterans' issues, and poverty.

General weaknesses of entries: Many magazines felt unfocused, even those with a professed theme. Each individual article may have had its strengths, but taken together they create a muddled impression. The best magazines picked narrow topics and dived into them deeply using all their tools--reporting, writing, photos, illustration, design. The writing in some cases felt self-consciously "magazine-y" rather than letting a good idea and strong reporting tell the story. Magazines are being reinvented daily, and the industry is in dire need of fresh ideas, so students should feel to break the mold and not feel they have to copy outdated models that came before.

Start-Up Magazine Project—Team

Judge: Nina Elder, deputy food editor, *Every Day with Rachael Ray*

First Place

Magazine title: *Union*

Why it won: In this challenging magazine market, it's tough to come up with editorial concepts that feel fresh and relevant to consumers and that also appeal to a broad range of potential advertisers—but *Union* has hit that sweet spot. Gay men planning their weddings are a growing, engaged and underserved audience. Despite the still-sputtering economy, people are still willing to spend money on big life events, which makes advertisers' ears perk up. But this promising business model has to have solid editorial to back it up. Luckily, the editors of *Union* have created a sleek, engaging magazine with a solid editorial voice, a wide range of engaging stories and a clean, spare design. One small quibble: For this kind of audience, it wouldn't hurt to have a few more male names on the masthead or in the stable of contributors.

Second Place

Magazine title: *Vintage Now*

Why it won: If Instagram filters and the Mason jar movement are any indication, everything old is new again. *Vintage Now* taps into this desire to honor old-school aesthetics, while still embracing everything we love about the present. The *Vintage Now* staff elegantly integrates the old-new mashup into one stylish magazine. The blend of fashion, beauty, home and broader lifestyle coverage with a nod to the people and personalities of the past makes this concept feel richer and deeper than your standard fashion and beauty glossy. One tip: Flip the order of "Now" and "Vintage" in the logo for a more instant read of the magazine title.

Third Place

Magazine title: *True North*

Why it won: *True North* stood out from the pack because it's an editorial platform with a larger purpose, something I think consumers are craving these days. Many young consumers are interested in not only how travel can transform them but how their travel can transform the world, even in a small way. This altruistic approach gives consumers yet another compelling reason to get out of their comfort zone and explore what the wider world has to offer, a refreshing point of view for a travel publication. Running the magazine as a 501 (c) (3) is also an interesting way of structuring the publication, but in a lot of ways makes good sense considering the editorial focus and the audience.

Honorable Mention

Magazine title: *Vertical Floor*

Why it won: This innovative, laser-targeted tablet concept is slick and well put together. The navigation is intuitive and the videos and other interactive features built into the publication (like the 360° shoe spinner) offer readers experiences they can't have with a regular old print

publication. Although this was a strong entry, I think it's just a few years too soon for a super-niche, tablet-only publication to be fully viable from a business perspective.

Honorable Mention

Magazine title: *Wander*

Why it won: Giving young consumers a resource for interesting, budget-friendly travel is a worthwhile concept. The current prototype feels a bit familiar, so the challenge here is to find the mix of destinations, writers, visual style and editorial point of view to really make this concept stand out among the competition.

General strengths of entries: In general, I was impressed by the thoughtfulness and thoroughness of the business side breakdowns of the magazine projects. Putting together the actual magazine is the fun, creative part, but having a sense that the publication can be sustainable from a business standpoint is crucial. Also, the creativity and effort put into the entries was impressive. It was clear that these projects were true labors of love.

General weaknesses of entries: As a whole, I think the visuals of the entries could have been stronger and more creative. I noticed lots of readability issues (odd line breaks, column widths that made articles difficult to read) and crowded layouts. As with many things in life, less is often more, which also extends to magazine design. I also can't stress enough the importance of proofreaders and copy editors in the editorial process. Just a few typos can really undermine the power of an otherwise strong editorial product.

Start-Up Magazine Project—Individual

Judge: Kevin P. Keefe, vice president-editorial, publisher, Kalmbach Publishing Co. in Waukesha, Wisconsin. Kalmbach publishes hobby and special interest magazines

First Place

Magazine title: *Minimal Living*

Why it won: I found this proposal to be a serious, thoughtful, and detailed case for a magazine that would have real merit. It goes beyond the usual style-oriented ideas about "simple living" to express a more specific vision of how "minimal living" can be achieved. I think the magazine also stands up rather well as a business case. The tools and methods of the editor's notion of minimal living would seem to appeal to a range of advertisers interested in the magazine's market. To sign on for the magazine's mission, readers would be making a commitment to spend money on the very things that draw them to the publication: the magic formula for endemic advertisers. Kudos also to the editor for doing some meaningful research on some of the basic, underlying assumptions that would drive the magazine.

The look and feel of the magazine also is effective. There is good writing in the proposal narrative, in the editor's column, and in cover hooks. The choice and emphasis of various features make sense. Pulling it all together is a clean, understated design that perfectly matches the theme. Assuming the Energy Star program would be interested in a "brand extension" via a magazine and its digital components, *Minimal Living* seems like it could be a winner.

Second Place

Magazine title: *Beat Scene*

Why it won: This magazine makes a convincing case for itself almost on energy alone. Which is appropriate for a music-lifestyle magazine, especially one so rooted in a specific region not necessarily on the national music map. From the enthusiasm in the editor's column to the exuberance of the design to the editor's obvious familiarity with the subject, *Beat Scene* seems like a magazine that would be embraced by its target audience, and by a regional music scene ripe for the attention.

Even more impressive, perhaps, is the detailed research the editor has put into the proposal, and clear way she explains it. She's covered all the bases: competition, both print and digital; key audience demographics; important statistics about music and concert consumption; social media and reader participation. Even if you're a bit skeptical of the prospects of a specialized regional magazine, the depth of the market analysis might make you a believer.

Third Place

Magazine title: *Simply Political*

Why it won:

This magazine idea gets some credit almost entirely on conceptual merit, rather than its business plan, editing quality, or design. In fact, the business plan here is very thin even while it is exceedingly ambitious, citing such formidable players as *Harper's*, the *Weekly Standard*, and *Foreign Policy* as competition. Finding a revenue-adequate foothold would be difficult.

But kudos to the editor for identifying a worthwhile mission. She honestly assesses the general lack of objective information reaching young adults, as well as their tendency not to seek it out. She points out that many of the go-to media sources for this cohort are social media, a terribly unreliable place to look for useful news. It's refreshing to see someone in this demographic feel the need to reach young people with something they'll actually read, something tailored for them. If she could reach that even loftier goal of presenting everything as objectively as possible, showing all sides, then more power to her.

Honorable Mention

Magazine title: *Esteem*

Why it won: Here is a magazine idea that could actually help people change their idea of themselves, and in a beautifully positive way. It's a frontal assault on the crassness that characterizes how young women are presented and depicted in the mass media. The business plan seems like a long shot, aligning itself with a major consumer-products brand. But the editor's heart is the right place, and perhaps Dove's is, too, with its "Self-Esteem Movement." How wonderful if it could happen. And credit to the editor for presenting some excellent research on the ways today's girls and young women feel about themselves, and why.

General strengths of entries: Although I see less variety in the entries I reviewed this year in comparison with other years, I was glad to encounter a few of the entrants tackle topics that could have real social and personal merit, rather than just emphasizing celebrities and style. Generally well written and well designed, given the limitations of their resources, the best thing about the winners I chose is the fact that they seem interested in subjects of substance, even when aimed at only their own age group.

General weaknesses of entries: Here is the flip side to what's above: still so many entries chasing the familiar and predictable themes of style, hipness, fashion, and entertainment.