

AEJMC Student Magazine Contest 2015

Judges' Comments

Articles—Places (16 entries)

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

"Our Blue Highways," by Vox Staff, University of Missouri. John Fennell, Sara Shipley Hiles, Heather Lamb and Erica Mendez Babcock, advisers

For *Vox*

This entry was a triumph of concept and packaging—two areas that can still set magazines apart from daily journalism. "Our Blue Highways" paid homage to author William Least Heat-Moon's bestselling 1983 book, *Blue Highways*, borrowing its main conceit: that small towns along the nation's back roads are rich in culture and color. Executing the project involved sending reporting teams out in all directions from their home base in Columbia, Missouri, to explore small towns. The journalists returned with first-person narratives, photographs, and video, which were deftly edited. The writing was tight and varied, and the design inviting, pulling you into a rural world you scarcely knew still existed. The videos were under two minutes each, leaving you satisfied but wanting more, which was also true of the online slideshows showcasing professional-level photography. Multimedia worked well in this package with the digital components enhancing the print edition but also strong enough to stand alone.

Second Place

"Lessons in the Outdoors," by Ali Herman, Northwestern University. David Abrahamson, adviser

For *Outside*

The strength here was the article's narrative arc and sense of immediacy. The writer used description and action in the present tense to take us along on a wilderness expedition in Baja California conducted by the famed National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS). The sense of immediacy came from staying in the example of this particular outing rather than filling the article with summary information about the NOLS experience in general. The narrative arc involved the group's student leader deciding to lead the group on a possibly dangerous shortcut. Having a storyline leading to a resolution makes readers stick to the page, wanting to know what happens next.

Third Place

"Stepping Up to a Legacy," by Yuri Han, Northwestern University. David Abrahamson, adviser
For *The Nation*

Cabrini-Green is a public housing project in Chicago, started in the 1940s, that became infamous for crime and decay. Now it's in the late stages of demolition and transformation into a new concept of urban planning. This article explores the project's past and present through the eyes of a long-term resident who suffered during the project's worst years but now clings to what's left. The article is impressive for the personal details that must have come from extensive, multiple interviews. The result is a well-rounded sense of this place, revealing how a person persevered and came to love his home, despite its many faults.

Overall comments: Entries, in many cases, were pleasingly ambitious, demonstrating hard work and competent reporting. Some went the extra mile to include sidebars and fact boxes.

Grammar and syntax were mostly solid. In a couple of cases, point of view got muddled, switching among the first, third, and even second person. A more prevalent shortcoming, however, was structure. Many of the articles, covering a journey or something else that happened over time, were chronological, burying the juiciest bits deep in the story, rather than starting with something strong and circling back to the beginning later to catch us up.

Even worse—and I see this every year in this competition—some articles started out with background information, offering readers a dose of Wikipedia and boredom before even leaving the gate. In one or two cases, the writer served up factoids in the opening passage, assuming that superlatives or big numbers would be enough to grab attention. Sometimes that works; often, not. (Tip: If you find that your article begins with a preamble, try cutting the preamble and see if the article reads better.)

Most of these articles eventually arrived at a narrative element, and that's what they should have led with. Readers, especially of travel articles, love stories. Even the second-place entry, which told the story of an expedition leader who led his group astray, waited until the seventh paragraph to start the narrative. She should have started it in the first paragraph, grabbing our attention; then she could have feathered in the description, biography, and background information that would support, rather than delay, the narrative arc.

Articles—People (29 entries)

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

First Place

“The Girl With the Golden Heart,” by Rebecca Dell, University of Missouri. John Fennell, Heather Lamb and Sara Shipley Hiles, advisers

For Vox

This is the dramatic story of a heart transplant. It tracks both donor—the girl with the golden heart, a star college swimmer who commits suicide in a fit of depression (possibly triggered by an alleged campus rape)—and the recipient—a young man with a genetic history of heart problems. The two families have stayed close since the transplant. The story reads like a brilliant film script.

Second Place

“Notes from the Underground,” by Joey Fening, University of Missouri. John Fennell, Heather Lamb and Paige Williams, advisers

For Vox

This is the fascinating history of rock and punk music in contemporary China, as told by a Chinese woman DJ in Missouri, a Chinese fan in San Francisco and an American DJ in Beijing. From the interaction of their lives, we learn how censorship and bureaucracy have not managed to suppress modern music in an often-disapproving totalitarian country.

Third Place

“Prize Fighters,” by Alanna Kelly, Ryerson University. Tim Falconer, adviser

For *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

This profile of two sports columnists in Toronto tells in surprising detail how their personal take on their specialty in the news is helping save embattled newspapers. The routine game story has been superseded by the web. But a smart, incisive and humane approach to sports is more popular than ever.

Honorable Mention

“All About Andrew,” by Dana Woods, Kent State University. Bruce Zake, adviser

For *Fusion*

Comments

This is an intimate portrait of a girl named Ashley who is so uncomfortable in her gender that she “transitions” to a boy named Andrew. Through surgery, hormones, family disapproval and pain, we learn a lot about about the difficult world of transgenders.

Overall comments: In all my years as a judge in this competition, I think this is the finest overall crop of entries I have seen. The best stories are surprising, even startling. They are well reported and written with intelligent restraint. Much of the hyperbole I've encountered in the past has been avoided. The subjects are often unusual, indicating a broader search for fascinating ideas than in other years. I was very impressed by these outstanding examples of student journalism. Having said all that, I must note that the lesser entries reflected all of the problems of the past: limited story search, lazy reporting, cliched writing, adoring presentation or what I call “a wet kiss,” etc. You know who you are, or you should, at least.

Articles—Investigation and Analysis (19 entries)

Judge: Andrew Putz, executive editor of MinnPost. He is former editor of *Boston* and *Minnesota Monthly*, and deputy editor of *Mpls.St.Paul Magazine*.

First Place

“The Death Penalty in Missouri from A to Z,” by Advanced Writing class, University of Missouri. John Fennell, Heather Lamb and Paige Williams, advisers

For *Vox*

A novel and compellingly comprehensive approach to a controversial topic. The piece was a surprise—both in terms of its structure and the depth of information it managed to convey.

Second Place

“Sticky Fingers,” by Emily Ornberg and Margaret Mahar, Columbia College Chicago. Sharon Bloyd-Peshkin, adviser

For *Echo*

A polished and engaging story about an issue that could have easily led to a snoozy, predictable piece.

Third Place

“Two Seconds in Cudell,” by Chrissy Suttles, Kent State University. Ann Schierhorn, adviser

For *The Burr*

A thoughtful and deeply reported story. The sort of piece that reminds you what magazine journalism can add to even the most scrutinized events.

Overall comments: From the writing to the reporting to the narrative chops on display here—the quality of the entries made me feel both optimistic and jealous. Optimistic for the future of in-depth magazine journalism. Jealous because I was nowhere near as good as these writers.

Articles—Service and Information (13 entries)

Judge: Elizabeth Fenner, editor-in-chief of *Chicago Magazine*

First Place

“Roots ‘n’ Blues,” by Vox staff, University of Missouri. John Fennell and Heather Lamb, advisers

For Vox

This is all that a service package should be: It bursts with helpful, well-reported guidance delivered in creative ways (love the four-part matrix and the scannable callouts throughout). Another plus: A tight intro speaks directly to the reader, telling him/her exactly what benefits the package delivers.

Second Place

“Corn-Fed Comedy,” by Sarah Whaley and Madison Borgmann, Indiana University. Nancy Comiskey, adviser

For 812: *The Magazine of Southern Indiana*

This combination of mini-profiles, info on humor, and plenty of straight-ahead service makes for a highly readable and useful mix. Had the piece been more carefully copy edited, it would have ranked even higher.

Third Place

“Brunch Time,” by Vox staff, University of Missouri. John Fennell and Heather Lamb, advisers

For Vox

When it comes to dining pieces, luscious photos are half the battle, and this package slings them out with style. The accompanying text delivers solid service, too. The most helpful element by far is the table that lets readers scan the recommended restaurants by price, hours, and so on. (Additional creative packaging techniques would make the piece better still.)

Articles—Features (36 entries)

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

First Place

“Dear Dolly,” by Jenna Fagan, Indiana University. Nancy Comiskey, adviser

For 812: *The Magazine of Southern Indiana*

“Dear Dolly” combines historical and contemporary research and a good, professional writing style to bring to life a heartwarming story of a time long past gone but still remembered.

Second Place

“The Midwest’s Traffic Trap,” by Molly Longman, Drake University. Jeff Inman, adviser

For *Drake Magazine*

“The Midwest's Traffic Trap” brings forward an evocative story from a source who lived through difficult conditions, putting a human face on an important issue.

Third Place

“Young MacDonald Has a Farm,” by Maggie Cregan, Syracuse University. Melissa Chessher, adviser

For *Slate*

The author spent time to integrate into the community to bring forth an evocative anthropological study of an interesting sub group tackling real problems of modern life.

Honorable Mention

**“Where the Wild Things Are,” by Aimee O’Connor, Ryerson University. Tim Falconer, adviser
For *Ryerson Review of Journalism***

A well-researched look into the events surrounding the rush to judgment on sea animal entertainment venues.

Overall comments: An earnest group of entries, some of which reached further than others in choice of topic. The best entries explored issues of public concern in a detailed and literary style, eschewing personal editorializing for show-and-tell realism. In all, a good group of entrants.

Articles—First Person (18 entries)

Judge: Jennings Brown, staff writer at *Vocativ*. Former associate editor at *Esquire* and *Popular Mechanics*

First Place

**“Running Toward Grief,” by Kayli Kunkel, Drake University. Jeff Inman, adviser
For *Pastemagazine.com***

There are a lot of entries about coping with death and this is by far the strongest and most moving. It’s one of the only pieces that I got caught up in and forgot I was judging a contest. There’s a definite takeaway—solid advice for coping with death, and it is unique in that it makes the topic appropriate for the publication by weaving the father’s love for music throughout.

Second Place

**“The Hitchhiker’s Guide to Traveling,” by Robert Langelier, University of Missouri. Berkley Hudson and Heather Lamb, advisers
For *Vox***

This is a great, well-written guide. It has a good mix of personal narrative, history of the topic, and the current state of the topic. There are a few articles like this in the contest, which lean towards service journalism and are well-packaged with lots of extra nuggets of info. This one stood out for reading more like a true narrative. You can tell that the writer has a strong grasp of the subject, which is why he can weave personal and research together so well. I also like that he brings up race and class—something that is often avoided when covering this romantic topic.

Third Place

**“Picky Palates,” by Meredith Kavanagh, Columbia College Chicago. Sharon Bloyd-Peshkin, adviser
For *Echo***

This was the first story where I was learning about something completely surprising, picky eaters. I was surprised and intrigued by the writer’s condition and struggle. The story is well researched. Even though it’s the writer’s struggle, she relies more on other anecdotes and research. Too many journalists try and put themselves into their stories when it’s not necessary. This one could have relied entirely on her own experience, but instead she did the extra work and it paid off.

Honorable Mention

**“Nighfall,” by Chrissy Suttles, Kent State University. Jacqueline Marino, adviser
For *The Burr***

Comments

This is a good mix of personal narrative and reporting. You can tell enough time has passed for

the writer to process the traumatic event—a sexual assault—which is usually necessary when writing about such experiences. It’s interesting that she made note of the fact that this is the anti-Upworthy story, with no real resolution, but I wish she'd done it in a way that didn’t make it feel anti-climactic and, well, unresolved.

Honorable Mention

**“Ashes To Dust,” by Taylor Kasper, University of Missouri. John Fennell, Heather Lamb and Paige Williams, advisers
For Vox**

Overall comments: There were several service stories here. Many were very good, but the personal involvement sometimes seemed secondary, unnecessary, or slightly fragmented from the other story taking place. There were a lot of stories about death also. Most of them were touching, well-written, thoughtful eulogies. But most of them stopped there. The one that truly stood out had a lesson that elevated it. Another one stood out because the writer actually spent time with a man who cremates bodies. Personal essays and narratives are a tough breed of writing because you have to convince a reader immediately that your experiences and thoughts are worth caring about. If you’re not a chef or renowned food critic, why should I care about your thoughts on the culinary arts? If you're not an expert on the topic, then do the research so you can be. Show that reporting fairly early in the story so that the reader knows they could possibly learn something new here. While eulogies are moving, almost everyone has experienced death. If it's a topic that many are familiar with, think of ways to enhance the topic. Bring in advice from a therapist or talk to a person who spends more time with corpses than humans.

Specialized Business Press Article (10 entries)

Judge: Sandi Wendelken, editor at RadioResource Media Group

First Place

**“Silenced Spring,” by Amanda Panacci, Ryerson University. Tim Falconer, adviser
For *Ryerson Review of Journalism***

Journalists who cover the environment are being forced to market their services directly to readers who want to stay informed about environmental issues. Because most mainstream newspapers don’t have dedicated environmental reporters and aren’t paying for environmental stories, journalists are turning to crowd funding. Asking readers for funding brings many new challenges for journalists, who now must spend time educating and soliciting subscribers to ensure the future of their craft. Can crowd-funded journalism find a long-term role or force changes in mainstream journalism?

Second Place

**“Just Plain, Please,” by Rachel Mast, University of Akron. Kathleen Endres, adviser
For *Fresh Cup***

Roasting coffee is a passion for Weston Showalter. Although he grew up with a cup of coffee always readily available, a mission trip to Belize is where Showalter realized he could roast local green coffee beans with his personal hot air popcorn popper. When Showalter returned to the States, he turned his passion into a home business supplying freshly roasted coffee to his Mennonite community in Ohio.

Third Place

**“A Lion in Winter,” by Nicholas Camp, Northwestern University. David Abrahamson, adviser
For *Museums and More***

Most visitors to a zoo don't consider the attraction's business implications while visiting their favorite panda. Surviving the winter is not just difficult for the animals, but also for zoos in locations such as Chicago and Detroit. This article delves into the seasonal nature of zoos and the financial implications of long, cold winters. Several zoos around the country have gotten creative to keep visitor numbers consistent throughout the year.

Overall comments: Similar to last year, the winning entries were well researched and targeted at a specific business-to-business publication. Understanding the intended audience and including a true business or industry angle are the keys to business-to-business writing.

Online Magazine (6 entries)

Judge: Benjamin Pauker, executive editor of *Foreign Policy* magazine and co-founder of the Gastronomists, the world's largest adventurous eating club.

First Place

Urbanplains.com, Drake University. Jeff Inman, adviser

Very nicely done. Ambitious journalism, multi-media rich with graphics and video, nice range of topics.

Second Place

The NewsHouse, Syracuse University. Jon Glass, adviser

An impressive, student-run news publication, but similar to a college newspaper with sports, features, campus news.

Third Place

Vox Magazine iPad, University of Missouri. Sara Shipley Hiles and Heather Lamb, advisers

A sharp, alt-weekly-feeling arts and culture publication. Nice iPad design, but the depth and rigor of content could be improved.

Honorable Mention

Scientific Tusconan, University of Arizona. Carol Schwalbe, adviser

A good first attempt at an iPad publication from science journalists, but design could use some work.

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—Design (12 entries)

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

The Peel Literature & Arts Review, Appalachian State University. Allison Dyche, adviser

Really a wonderful literary magazine, with fine visual components. Layout gets a little tricky. (Not sure about making the pull quotes bigger than the headlines, but they help unify the magazine.) Type is strong and simple. The leitmotif of the random rules gets a bit annoying. It would have been nice to see a photo essay. Overall, a consistent and polished effort.

Second Place***Jerk*, March 2015 Issue, Syracuse University. Melissa Chessher, adviser**

A consistent design, with good energy, and a surprising commitment to writing and text! Typography strong, hip and consistent. Some features don't have strong enough openings. No big visual piece. Back of the book is muddled. But nice work!

Third Place***Fusion*, Kent State University. Brittany Rees, editor. Bruce Zake, adviser**

Extremely good use of a grid. Consistent layout and typography. Works well with the limited number of ads. Negatives: Pacing sometimes stumbles. A bit cold. But distinctive, and fresh.

Honorable Mention***Baked*, Spring 2015 Issue, Syracuse University. Melissa Chessher, adviser**

Excellent food photography. Not enough variety of layout. Type is a little weak. But a nice effort in an area that is seldom done as well.

Overall comments: A good year for this competition. More innovation and general success. Photography is good, but there are few photo stories or photo essays. Most of the magazines do not have a "cover story" or other major feature that is set off visually and typographically. There is not a widespread understanding of what you need to do to adjust the reading experience according to the frequency of the publication. If it's annual, then it should be a little grander, a little more bookish. The more frequent publications want more short items, but still have some peaks and valleys. I would suggest more focus on pacing!

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—Editorial (13 entries)**Judge:** Peter Moore, editor of *Men's Health Magazine* and *Men's Health iPad edition***First Place*****Ryerson Review of Journalism*, Ryerson University. Tim Falconer, adviser**

Impressive commitment on the part of the student staff to make sense of the best and worst journalistic work happening in their world, and to harvest the lessons from good and bad examples as they launch their own careers. I've also seen an evolution in the design and photography as the years go by. Still some upside for the editors to consider innovative formats and types of analysis. But this is a strong and comprehensive piece of work that goes deeper than the usual pop culture mash-up.

Second Place***Echo*, Columbia College Chicago. Sharon Bloyd-Peshkin, adviser**

I enjoy reading the *Echo* every year, as the staff maintains a lively tradition of covering Chicago with energy, wit, and explosive design and photography. They make no pretense of exploring The Big Issues, except as they apply to their core audience. I get the feeling that their core audience just wants to live to the fullest, explore some creepy alleyways, and enjoy the bender until adult life ruins everything. And the editor succeeds wonderfully in supporting that life moment.

Third Place***The Peel Literature & Arts Review*, Appalachian State University. Allison Dyche, adviser**

Handsome and provocative showcase for poetry, memoir, fiction, and the visual arts. There is clearly as much passion expended on the words as there is the photography and artwork, and the result is a strong creative statement.

Honorable Mention

***Alpine Living VI*, University of Alabama. Collin Curry, editor. Kim Bissell, adviser**

Such a relief to have a campus publication step far afield of the actual campus, and employ terrific photography and lively, engaged writing in the mission of showing all that the world has to offer, off campus.

Overall comments: It is a curiosity of judging this magazine contest that I so often find student publications to be stuck in ancient magazine mode—the long narrative, the tired explanatory essay, the historical feature (ancient people in ancient buildings explaining stuff nobody does anymore). It’s a liberating fact of media today that there are so many more ways of telling a story than to drone on and on about it. So why don’t more student publications break free of the written word, and tell their stories visually, in podcasts, in three-minute documentaries, in potentially viral video? Why are we stuck with an unvarying lineup of 2,000-word stories about some forgotten student-services office, or the tale of how a vintage clothier got his start in business? I’m astonished at how frequently the student publications turned to historical documentation of local buildings and processes. Isn’t it the privilege of youth to ignore all that has gone before, and reinvent their surroundings?

So reinvent already! Cover the sexual politics, the racial misunderstandings, the terror of the job market, the pressure to invent yourself, the outrage of \$50k tuition, the ugly side of social media, the stuff that only 20-year olds know about, because they're 20-year olds. And for cripesakes you are carrying around amazing media/documentary machines in your pockets. So use your smartphones to do smart journalism. There’s an energy and personality and individuality to media today, so why do you follow the crusty old traditions of the past as you put together your crusty new/old magazines? Are you aware that standard magazines are in stiff competition against smartphone-ready media at the moment? Do you even glance up from your smartphones anymore? Think about why you don’t, and then create original journalistic forms that innovate, energize, reveal, enlighten, and challenge super-boring traditional media. You’re in a passionate, scary, exhilarating moment in your lives, and in a passionate, scary, exhilarating moment in media history. Do your publications represent that passion, those terrors, that exhilaration? Don’t rest until they do! I demand that you put me out of a job!

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—General Excellence (18 entries)

Judge: Michael Caruso, editor-in-chief of *Smithsonian Magazine*

First Place

***Echo*, Columbia College Chicago. Sharon Bloyd-Peshkin, adviser**

Echo magazine is a party in print—wall-to-wall creativity and fun. From the eye-popping cover to the inventive headline treatments through the unrestrained fashion feature, Male Call, these art directors are at the top of their game. And *Echo’s* editors match them idea for idea, from quick hits like definitions of Chicago and snappy comebacks for cider haters to smart larger features on shoplifting and making hit music. *Echo* is a magazine that makes it clear that there will always be a place for print—as long as it's wildly creative.

Second Place

***Vox*, “Death Penalty” Issue, 4-30-15, University of Missouri. Paige Williams, John Fennell, Heather Lamb and Renee Martin Kratzer, advisers**

With a special issue on capital punishment in Missouri, *Vox* magazine performs a tricky balancing act. Can you treat a deadly serious subject that has been debated for decades with originality and even wit? This issue of *Vox* tackles the subject with an A to Z format that is compelling, easy to read and provocative.

Third place

***The Peel Literature & Arts Review*, Appalachian State University. Allison Dyche, adviser**

You don't know what you're going to see when you turn each page of *Peel*, you just know that it's going to be striking and beautiful. The jagged lines of the mosaic on the title page continue through the rest of the magazine and somehow never become predictable. In the hands of this art director, type becomes another art element, often appearing in shapes that set off the eclectic illustrations and photography. Every spread is suitable for framing.

Honorable Mention

***D&M*, Drexel University. Nick Cassway, adviser**

Handsome and stylish, *D&M* provides a smart, well-designed portfolio of art and design subjects.

Start-Up Magazine Project—Team (7 entries)

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

First Place

***Meridian*, Allissa Fisher, Abbie Wenthe, Rachel Rowsey, Shannon Robb, Lihua Yu, Lindsay Pierce and Allison Shapiro, University of Missouri. John Fennell and Renee Martin Kratzer, advisers**

This team deserves a lot of credit for sheer passion and boldness in wanting to reach past the usual content silos. The first thing that struck me was the writing: fresh, direct, uncomfortably candid in some cases. I was struck by one of the editor's stories about her journey to a new last name, for instance. Overall, the team shows an excellent grasp of some of the basics of magazine craft. *Meridian* has an effective mix of narrative stories, short pieces, infographics, and other attractive entry points. I very much like the full-page interludes featuring matching art and inspirational quotes. What a great way to support reader-friendly pacing! While I found the actual financials in the business plan to be extremely optimistic, the document itself was thorough, perhaps the best example of one I've seen in years of judging this contest. And the magazine itself has been given a beautiful, inviting, competitive design.

Second Place

***Bellwether*, Magazine, Newspaper, and Online Journalism graduate students, Syracuse University. Melissa Chessher and Jim Shahin, advisers**

It's refreshing to see one of the magazine entries go all-digital, without a print component. *Bellwether* is a sign of where things are going, and, in foresight as well as execution, the team has done a great job. The mix of stories is exciting and often surprising. The use of key verbs (hustle, taste, etc.) to define the various verticals is a great idea. The best part of all this is the execution: good ideas and good writing, wrapped and delivered in a bold but simple package that is competitive with anything out there on the web. The team made great choices of typefaces and colors. I can imagine a large audience gradually making this an essential part of their cultural digital diet. The business plan is a bit of a shot in the dark—the jury is out on the long-term success of native advertising—but as a state-of-the-art expression of the digital magazine of the moment, *Bellwether* looks like it has an excellent shot at success.

Third Place

***Going the Distance*, Nolan Cain and Jenny Drabble, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill.**

Linda Brinson, adviser

The business plan for *Going the Distance* shows creativity in exploring an unusual niche in the travel-and-sports market. The profit projections are breathtakingly optimistic, however. It's best to focus on the content mix itself: a jam-packed lineup of information and images, cleverly presented in an endlessly surprising, image-driven design package. Everything about the design and text conveys high energy, effectively matching the profile of the potential reader.

Overall comments: I was very impressed with the level of magazine craft displayed in this year's entries. When I say "magazine craft," I probably should amend that to simply say "content craft," given that one of the strongest entries is conceived to be entirely digital. The art direction was uniformly excellent, with a good balance of text, image and white space. Design and typography was at a consistently high level. So was most of the writing. All these elements worked together in ways that indicate the students are receiving increasingly better instruction in the total packaging of content.

I would love to see some of this energy and creativity dedicated to magazine/content ideas that aren't so inward looking. The entries were nearly uniformly concerned with personal improvement, personal adventure, personal advice, and personal experience. There is nothing wrong with these topics, but in the future I'd love to see some student teams tackle something more journalistic: business, politics, technology, history, even arts and entertainment. Something outside ourselves.

Start-Up Magazine Project—Individual (6 entries)

Judge: Lauren Purcell, editor-in-chief of *Rachel Ray*

First, I want to pay respect to the thought and work that went into these entries. As a professional editor for more than 20 years, I'm acutely aware of the challenge involved in finding a market niche and developing a resonant concept for a brand that will capitalize on it. Unfortunately, none of the presentations I was asked to judge succeeded in capturing my imagination editorially or persuading me that they were predicated on a sound business plan. On the strength of the plans and mock-ups offered here, I would not have green-lighted any of these projects.

I want to focus on the editorial strengths and weaknesses in this group, because while there will always be *someone* willing to fund an interesting project (even if the business plan is overly optimistic or its assumptions are flawed), it is equally true that no matter how carefully a potential audience is analyzed or a P&L is crafted, if what you're selling isn't compelling, you won't be in business long. And in a market crowded with content that refreshes daily, talks and moves at the flick of a finger and interacts directly and creatively with its consumers, print must work especially hard to compete. The sample pages I saw here lacked energy and innovation. Layouts were for the most part static; there was a vast overreliance on running text. I appreciated those few prototypes that at least attempted to make use of multiple points of entry, but I was disappointed to find an overall templated, staid, "desktop publishing" feel to the visual concepts. I craved something new and surprising.

In a similar vein, though the business plans paid attention to plans for promotion on social-media platforms, there was very little evidence of that kind of integration in the pages themselves. Readers today don't just expect their publications to exist on multiple platforms; they expect those platforms to acknowledge one another, interact where possible and create

new and exciting synergies. Why so few call-outs to readers of the print version to get involved with the brand on Instagram or Twitter, for instance? Why not more thought as to how each platform could drive engagement with the others via contests, campaigns, clever collaborations? The prototypes I was looking at could just as easily have been created in 1995 as in 2015. I was hoping for excitement, new ideas and unexpected ways to stretch the boundaries of print—that's what *everyone* who helms a print publication is focused on these days. They simply weren't in evidence.

Finally, I want to send a strong message about something so basic I was frankly astounded at how little attention was paid to it: spelling and grammar. Not a single entry had apparently been copy edited and in some cases, no one had even bothered with the rudimentary step of running spell-check. There were typos *on covers*. Had I been approached with any of these business plans and editorial samples in an actual commercial setting, I would have rejected them immediately sheerly because of sloppiness and lack of attention to detail. Why would I hire an editor for a product constructed with words when he or she doesn't even check that those words are spelled correctly?

I'm disappointed to have to deliver these remarks, because I believe deeply that there is a great future for magazines, and thus for future magazine editors. Print is not only not dead, it continues to capture the imaginations of millions and millions of readers every day. My colleagues and I welcome—in fact, count on—the ability of young editors to help keep this uniquely compelling vehicle relevant. Please don't let these criticisms dishearten you; let them inspire you to create something better.