

Online journalism continues quality gains

October 6 2005

Judging from the recent finalist announced for this year's Online Journalism Awards, the field of online news continues to become more robust and high quality, according to contest coordinators.

The nominees were selected by the Online News Association and the USC Annenberg School for Communication for showing "excellence in English-language Web journalism." Awards cover areas from breaking news to commentary to service news, with separate categories for small and large operations.

Finalist were announced Sept. 30 and winners will be announced Oct. 28 and 29 at the ONA conference in New York.

"This was easily the most varied cross section of finalists in the competition's six-year history. It indicates that the OJAs are being widely viewed as the top online competition to enter, and it also tells us how the quality of online journalism has improved right across all the categories," ONA Executive Director Tom Regan said in a statement following release of the finalists.

Part of that variation included a larger number of small, relatively unknown sites and outlets that are purely Internet-based.

"In the first few years, larger sites dominated. What's happened is that as the online medium has matured and as we've refined our competition, you're seeing a lot more outstanding smaller sites," Regan told United Press International.

Such familiar names as The New York Times graced the finalist list, but Regan also cited less glamorous sites such as New West and Bluffington Today as high-quality finishers. The online magazines Slate and Salon were noted as excellent sites without a print counterpart.

The Internet has steadily become a prominent part of today's news consumption. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press estimates that one-third of Americans over 18 get news online regularly.

"People see online media as another option. In the car, you use radio, on Sunday morning, a newspaper, and at work, you go online. Online media had become an important component because it has become an option. Before it was just an afterthought," said Regan.

One medium online journalism often finds itself in is the blog, the name for online journals kept by millions of individuals worldwide. Many prominent print journalists maintain personal weblogs, and blogs, while often informal venues for opinions and attitude, sometimes take a more journalistic angle, such as Los Angeles Times Editor Kevin Roderick's page, LA Observed.

"I consider it journalism, and try to apply the same standards of factual accuracy and intellectual honesty that I would for anything I write for publication or broadcast," writes Roderick of LA Observed.

Not all bloggers share Roderick's commitment to factuality and honesty, however. Most blogs are kept as journals of opinion, and some critics argue that when readers use blogs for news, they cannot be sure they're getting the truth.

A poll of journalists in June found that less than 1 percent of news professionals believe blogs are credible sources for news. With no editor like their accredited counterparts, many feel bloggers are too susceptible

to misinformation.

"Oh really? Would that be like Steven Glass in the New Republic?" scoffed Regan in response to the idea. "Lots of print reporters have fabricated stories in past. The problems of credibility have nothing to do with the medium."

Both bloggers and academics seem to agree. MSNBC blogger Jon Bonne wrote, "Journalism is a function; blogging is a form."

At a "Blogging, Journalism, and Credibility" conference held at Harvard in January, NYU professor Jay Rosen argued in an essay that "Bloggers vs. Journalists is over," and that "(Bloggers) are closer to the transaction where trust gets built up on the Web."

Online journalism, whatever its relationship with blogs turns into, is sure to have a prominent place in the future of news production and consumption. Said Regan, "It's changing journalism in a way we're just beginning to deal with. It's really exciting to me."

Copyright 2005 by United Press International

Citation: Online journalism continues quality gains (2005, October 6) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2005-10-online-journalism-quality-gains.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.