



“The Society of Publishers in Asia 2015 Awards for Editorial Excellence”

亞洲出版業協會

「2015 年度卓越新聞獎」

SOPA 2015 AWARDS FAQ

GENERAL ISSUES

Q1 Are online publications eligible to enter work into all categories?

Yes. SOPA regards journalistic work published online including breaking news, feature writing, opinion writing, news and feature photography as identically qualified for entry into categories open to print. The exception is Excellence in Magazine Design, which is only open to newspapers and magazines.

Q2 Is there a separate category for awarding online work?

Yes. The award category “Excellence in Digital News” specifically honors original work that best uses digital techniques to describe an idea, event, trend or personality, or explain a topic of significance.

Q3 What advice do you have for entrants?

Be extremely selective. While some awards have gone to entries with multiple articles or photographs, just as many awards have gone to entries with a single article or photograph. Simply submitting the maximum number of articles doesn't help an entry's chances; in fact, it may hurt if a weak article in the entry pulls the overall score down. This is especially important given the emphasis on multi-article entries showing a clear theme of coverage.

Write a strong, persuasive description of the circumstances behind the reporting for the entry, the topic's importance, the impact of the article(s), and so on using the online nomination form. Judges come from all over the world and will be reviewing work done months ago. While they are all senior, seasoned journalists and ex-journalists, they may not be as familiar with the circumstances surrounding the work submitted. If you don't

explain clearly why the work matters, what impact it had, or how difficult it was to obtain, they won't be able to get a full sense of the quality of the entry.

Presentation matters. If you are submitting online works, list up to five URLs in the description and supply an ID and password if necessary. If you are submitting print entries, include all the parts of each entry as a single PDF file. Make it easy for judges to evaluate your entry by showing the editorial context or how it appeared when it was published.

Q4 Can non-SOPA members enter the awards?

Yes. The SOPA Awards aim to raise journalistic standards across Asia-Pacific and entries from all publications in the region, be they SOPA members or not, are welcome. Assessment is based on the quality of journalistic work.

Q5 When will you announce finalists for the awards?

Finalists will be announced in May and the awards will be presented at the gala dinner. Awards will be presented at the Gala Dinner on June 10, 2015. Complete listing of the Award winners will be posted on June 11, 2015 through the SOPA Awards website www.sopawards.com

THE ENTRY PROCESS

Q1 What are the options for submitting entries?

All submissions will be electronic. No hard copy submissions will be accepted.

Q2 Can we submit files in any other soft-copy format besides PDF?

PDFs only, because other formats can open differently on different computers. For Excellence in Information Graphics, Digital News and Journalist of the Year, works may be submitted in PDF format or up to five URLs as appropriate.

Q3 How should the work(s) for each entry be submitted?

Submit copies of work(s) as a single PDF file in the form they were originally published, rather than as text files reprinted from databases or original photos. This will allow judges to see the entry as it originally appeared. If the submission is in a photo category, the entry should indicate which photos should be considered if more than the maximum are displayed. For the Excellence in Magazine Design entries, the whole book should be submitted. PDFs should be configured to output for the web to reduce file size.

Advertising may be omitted.

Submissions for online works may contain up to five URLs. Entrants may place the URLs in the nomination portion of the entry form. If the entry is behind a pay wall, the entrant should provide an ID and password. The URL should remain active during the judging period, from February to the end of May.

In addition, you **MUST** include any challenge to the fairness or accuracy of an entry as well as the publication's response to the challenge, including published corrections and clarifications.

Q4 What do we need to submit with each entry?

Each individual entry needs to include the following items:

- The nominated work(s) saved in PDF file(s). (URLs are permitted for Excellence in Information Graphics and Journalist of the Year; and required for Digital News);
- A completed online entry form;
- A completed online nomination form;

Q5 What should the nomination form include?

In the nomination form you should explain why the entry deserves consideration, the publication's editorial objectives and how the entry helped fulfill those objectives. You may also provide additional information about the entry to assist the judges in placing the entry in context.

In the case of entries with multiple articles or photographs, you must explain the unifying theme of coverage the articles or photographs collectively address. Entries will be judged against how well they fulfill the objectives described in the nomination form. The requirement for a unifying theme does not apply to the Journalist of the Year Category.

The nomination form is of fixed length for all entries.

Q6 Can the entry forms and nomination forms be in Chinese?

Entrants in Group C must complete nomination forms in Chinese. Entry forms in Group C must be in Chinese and English. Note that the English information will be used for presentation of an award.

Q7 What are the criteria for entering in the various groups (A, B and C)?

Awards are divided into three groups: A, B and C.

A – English-language newspapers that circulate widely in three or more countries, English-language magazines with circulation greater than 50,000, English-language wire services, and English-language websites with more than 5 million monthly uniques should enter in Group A;

B – English-language newspapers that circulate primarily in one or two countries, English-language magazines with circulation under 50,000 and English-language websites with 5 million monthly uniques or below should enter in Group B;

C – Chinese-language publications, including Chinese-language websites and wire services, should enter in Group C.

Note: online publications that are affiliated with, or part of, a print publication, should enter in the same category as their affiliated print publication. Independent online publications should enter in Group B or Group C.

Q8 Can publications in languages other than Chinese and English participate in the awards?

Regrettably, we are unable to accept entries in other languages due to resource limitations. We hope in the future to be able to expand the awards.

Q9 Can publications in Group B apply to be judged in Group A and vice versa?

No.

Q10 How many entries can we submit?

Each publication may submit a maximum of TWO entries per category except in the following categories: Journalist of the Year, and Excellence in Magazine Design. In those categories, each publication may submit ONE entry.

For example, a publication can submit two entries in the Excellence in Reporting Breaking News category, two entries in the Excellence in Feature Writing, two entries in the Excellence in Business Reporting categories.

Q11 How many articles or photos can be submitted as part of each entry?

It depends on the category.

- In the Excellence in Investigative Reporting, Reporting Breaking News, Business Reporting, Human Rights Reporting, Reporting on Women’s Issues, Reporting on the Environment, Opinion Writing, Lifestyle Coverage, Explanatory Reporting, The Scoop Award and Journalist of the Year categories, each entry may include a maximum of FIVE pieces of work, of which more than half must be written articles. That means, for example, an entry that has three pieces of work can comprise two written articles and some other non-written article element, such as a photo, video or graphic. So entries in these categories that comprise a single piece of work must be a written article; if they have two pieces of work, both must be written articles; if there are three pieces of work, at least two must be written articles; if there are four, at least three must be written articles, and if there are five, at least three must be written articles. This is in recognition of the increasing multi-media nature of journalism, while preserving an emphasis on written work.
- In the Excellence in News Photography, Feature Photography, Editorial Cartooning, Information Graphics and Digital News categories, each entry may include a maximum of FIVE pieces of work. Multimedia entries that incorporate interactive graphics should be submitted in the Excellence in Digital News category.
- In the Excellence in Magazine Design category, entries are limited to ONE issue per entry.
- In the Excellence in Feature Writing category, entries are limited to ONE article per entry.

Q12 Do sidebars count against the five-article limit in entries?

Yes, sidebars do count.

Q13 We’re very busy. Can we get an extension on the entry deadline?

No.

Q14 Are there any special rules governing the submission of entries from online publications or independent online media (such as blogs)?

An online publication may be an independent website or part of a print or broadcast organization.

Entries from online publications or independent online ventures should be submitted as

screenshots in PDF format. URLs for entries in Excellence in Information Graphics, Digital News and Journalist of the Year are also acceptable. The work(s) should have been first published in 2014. Entries may be a single item or a continuing project. Websites requiring passwords must provide a single username and password to be used by the judges. It is up to the entrant to ensure that judges are able to access URLs during the judging period (February to May).

Q15 We're a newly launched magazine with only two issues published. Can we enter the awards?

The clause in the rules "Magazines must be issued at least four times a year" refers to the frequency of publication. Entries which have been published or distributed at least four times in the calendar year 2014 are accepted.

Q16 Can we submit photographs that have also appeared in other publications?

No, entries must have been originally published by the publication specified in the entry form.

THE JUDGING PROCESS

Q1 How does the judging process work?

Three-person panels are appointed to judge each category, comprising experienced journalists and former journalists from around the world. The judges assess and discuss the entries and decide on the winner. In the case of questions or a deadlock, they seek the assistance of the Head of Judges.

The Head of Judges is a journalist or a former journalist with minimal ties to award entrants and potential entrants. Judges are chosen so as to ensure there are no conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest with the publications entering the category they are judging.

Q2 Will awards be given in all categories?

If there are insufficient entries in a given category, no award will be given. Also, if in the opinion of the judging panel, the quality of entries does not merit an award, no award will be given.

ENTRY CRITERIA

Q1 Can work done principally from outside Asia-Pacific be entered? What about joint-venture articles where one reporter is in Asia-Pacific and one reporter is outside the region?

Entries must show a substantial emphasis on Asia-Pacific, and substantial journalistic work must have been done in Asia-Pacific. So work done principally from outside Asia-Pacific, even if it has a substantial emphasis on the region, is ineligible. However, articles that are reported partly in the region and partly outside the region are eligible if substantial journalistic work was done in Asia-Pacific.

Q2 Can translated articles be entered in the awards?

No. Articles must be entered in the language in which they were originally published.

Q3 Is work from Afghanistan/Iraq eligible for entry?

For the purposes of the awards, Asia-Pacific is defined to include the region of Afghanistan and the Central Asia republics, in addition to the Indian subcontinent, North and East Asia, Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Islands.

Iraq, Iran and the Middle East are not included in this definition and hence work from those places is not eligible for entry.

Q4 Must entries in the Excellence in Opinion Writing category be written by the publication's staff, or can they be from outside contributors?

They should be from regular contributors, although the authors need not be on staff.

Q5 Can opinion pieces be submitted in categories other than for Excellence in Opinion Writing?

Articles that have appeared on op-ed pages rather than on news pages can be submitted in reporting categories, but will be judged on their standard of reporting and writing.

Q6 What kinds of photos are eligible to enter in the Excellence in News Photography category?

Entries in this category must be directly related to news events.

Q7 What kinds of articles should be entered in the Excellence in Reporting Breaking News category?

Entries in this category must have been written and reported on deadline as part of coverage of spot news. So features cannot be entered in this category, unless written and reported as part of immediate spot coverage.

Q8 What kinds of articles should be entered for The Scoop Award?

The Scoop Award is for an exclusive story on a topic of significance.

Q9 Can entries comprise both online and print articles and photographs?

Entries can contain a mix of online and print articles and photographs. For Excellence in Digital News, only online entries are accepted [whereas for Excellence in Magazine Design, only print entries are accepted.] Please do not exceed the limit on the number of articles and photographs per entry. Also note that, with the exception of Journalist of the Year, entries comprising more than a single article or photograph must demonstrate a clear theme of coverage articulated in the nomination form.

Q10 Has there been a change in approach to the Journalist of the Year award category?

Yes. For the 2015 SOPA Editorial Awards, there will only be one Journalist of the Year award given out across category A, B and C. (For record-keeping purposes, the system will still ask for the appropriate group.)

Q11 Can we nominate three reporters for the Journalist of the Year award?

No. Each publication may nominate only one journalist in this category.

Q12 Why the need for the Editor's contact details?

It has sometimes arisen that individual employees, whether from within a publishing group or as freelancers, apply for an award without knowledge of the editor. The rules for the Awards stipulate that entries must be on behalf of a publication, not an individual entry. Starting in 2015, all entrants will be required to provide the editor's name, email address and telephone contact # acknowledging that the editor is aware of the submission.

In the case of discrepancies between the English and Chinese versions of the FAQ, the English version will prevail.