

**NORTHERN ILLINOIS NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
2016 NEWSPAPER CONTEST RULES**

1. Publication period for the contest is May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2016. Entries submitted must be from newspapers or websites published during this period. **The deadline to submit entries is 11:59 p.m. Friday, July 31.**
2. The contest is open to paid member newspapers and paid individual members. Questions regarding membership status and dues should be addressed to Shelley Hendricks at 815-753-4239, or via e-mail to shendricks@niu.edu.
3. Content of all entries must be original work. See sheet labeled "Contest Category and Entry Information" for specific information about entering submissions for each category.
4. Rules also are available at *ninaonline.org*, which reroutes to *onlinedotorg.wordpress.com*.
5. Most entries must be submitted as PDFs or JPGs – with the exception of a few categories that will request URLs – at <http://www.newspapercontest.com/NINA>.
6. The entry fee is \$6 per entry, per category. Unless otherwise specified, the contest allows four entries per paper/per category. Each individual writer or photographer is limited to two entries in each category. This rule does not preclude an individual writer or photographer from being included in another entry in the same category as a member of a team. Publications are limited to one entry in the following categories: design, special section, news story series and education reporting. (Each category description explains these and other limits.)

Make contest entry checks payable to: **Northern Illinois Newspaper Fund.**

7. Judges will be selected by NIU on the basis of academic and/or professional expertise. Judges typically are NIU journalism faculty, other journalism educators in the region and/or professional journalists not associated with the contest. However, accomplished professionals and/or scholars with relevant subject matter expertise who are not journalists or journalism educators may also serve as judges. Judges will be provided contest rules and relevant category entry information.
8. First-place winners in each category will be awarded a framed certificate. Second- and third-place winners will be awarded certificates. Judges also may designate honorable mention awards.

CLASSIFICATION OF PUBLICATIONS

Contests are divided into two classifications of NINA publications. **Non-dailies** include all newspapers published fewer than four times a week, and online-only publications. **Dailies** include all newspapers published more than four times a week, and all newspapers printed as inserts in those dailies. Sunday editions are eligible for entry. Entrants may enter in only one classification. Multiple newspaper nameplates that share all editorial operations under one roof count as one newspaper; submit entries under the group name.

Sweepstakes: Publications accumulating the most points in all categories will receive the Donald R. Grubb Newspaper Award for those in the Non-Dailies group; and the James Copley Award for those in the Dailies group.

Questions: Please contact Shelley Hendricks, NINA's communications coordinator, at 815-753-4239; shendricks@niu.edu.

CONTEST AND AWARDS SPONSORSHIP

The Journalism Program of the NIU Department of Communication conducts this contest (in cooperation with the Northern Illinois Newspaper Association) and sponsors awards for this contest. The department reserves exclusive rights in determining, in accordance with contest rules, the eligibility of entries, judging of entries, and awarding recognition. A judging fee of \$6 for every individual or newspaper entry in every category must be enclosed along with entry.

CONTEST CATEGORY AND ENTRY INFORMATION

1. BEST DESIGN

Award to newspaper showing excellence in design, including typography, photo/graphics use, and general appearance. Front page will be considered the most important factor, but other news, sports, feature and opinion pages and display of advertising also will be considered. Entries should consist of three issues published during the contest year. Entry should consist of one PDF per issue (three PDFs total); each PDF will have multiple pages. **Do not upload each page as its own PDF.**

Entry: Submit three complete issues. One entry per publication.

2. BEST INFORMATIONAL GRAPHIC

Judged on originality, clarity and ability to illustrate the concept or story. Graphs, maps, charts and original illustrations are eligible. Black-and-white or color. Note: Illustrative photos should be entered a photo category.

Entry: Clearly identify which graphic is being submitted in the “explanation or outline” field of the online entry box. Packages where more than one element is used for same project may be entered as a single graphic. No more than two entries per individual with limit of four entries per publication.

3. BEST HEADLINE WRITING

Judged on imagination, originality and relevance of the headlines to the stories. Display headlines also may be entered and will be judged additionally on how well they contribute to the story-package design.

Entry: Submit three headlines by the same writer. Please write the headlines in the “explanation or outline” field of the online entry box. No more than two entries by each writer with limit of four entries per publication.

4. BEST SPECIAL SECTION *(Note changes to contrast with Best Niche Publication)*

For a one-time section marking a specific event, observance or topic. Judged on quality of writing, editing, design, photography/graphics and local focus. Sections that are published weekly, bi-monthly, monthly or quarterly should be submitted in the Best Niche Publication category.

Entry: Please submit one PDF file containing all pages of the section. One entry per publication.

5. BEST GENERAL FEATURE

For a single feature article, as contrasted with a spot/breaking news story, not covered in the Personality Profile category. Judged on news value, quality of reporting and writing and local focus.

Entry: Submit page PDFs clearly marked. Please write the headline in the “explanation or outline” field of the online entry box. No more than two entries by an individual writer with limit of four entries per publication.

6. BEST PERSONALITY PROFILE

For best single feature article, as contrasted with a spot/breaking news story, profiling a person. Judged on news value, quality of reporting and writing and local focus.

Entry: Submit page PDFs. Please write the headline in the “explanation or outline” field of the online entry box. No more than two entries by an individual writer with limit of four entries per publication.

7. OWEN PHELPS AWARD / BEST RELIGION STORY

For a single story that illuminates issues of faith and/or spirituality in everyday life. Judged on news value, quality of reporting and writing and local focus. Sidebars published the same day may be included as part of entry.

Entry: Submit PDFs. Please write headline in the “explanation or outline” field of the online entry box. No more than two entries per writer with limit of four entries per publication.

8. BEST BUSINESS/FINANCIAL/CONSUMER STORY

May be either news or feature story. Judged on news value, quality of reporting and writing and local focus.

Entry: Submit PDF(s). Please write headline in the “explanation or outline” field of the online entry box. No more than two entries per writer with limit of four entries per publication.

9. BEST TECHNOLOGY/MEDICAL STORY

For a locally developed story reporting, explaining or interpreting a technological subject, including medical or health subjects. Story may be either feature or news but should focus on technological advances as related to people in your community. Judged on news value, quality of reporting and writing and local focus.

Entry: Submit PDFs. Please write headline in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box. No more than two entries per writer with limit of four entries per publication.

10. BEST SPORTS STORY

Judged on news value, quality of reporting and writing and local focus. Single story. Sidebars published the same day may be included as part of entry. No columns.

Entry: Submit page PDFs. Please write the headline in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box. No more than two by each individual writer with limit of four entries per publication.

11. BEST SPORTS COLUMNIST

For the best **three** locally developed bylined sports columns by a single writer. Judged on originality, voice, quality of writing and local focus.

Entry: Submit **three** columns by the same writer. Send page PDFs. Please write the in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box. Limit **one** entry by an individual writer and **three** entries per publication.

12. BEST COLUMNIST

For the best three locally developed bylined columns (as contrasted to unsigned editorials). Non-sports. Judged on originality, voice, quality of writing and local focus.

Entry: Submit **three** columns by the **same** writer. Send page PDFs. Please write the headlines in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box. Limit **one** entry by an individual writer and **three** entries per publication.

13. BEST EDITORIAL

For best single editorial on a local issue. Judged on quality of writing and strength of argument and suggested solution.

Entry: Submit page PDFs. Please write the headline in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box, along with name and staff position of the individual(s) who composed the editorial. No more than two entries by each writer with limit of four entries per publication.

14. BEST SPOT NEWS PHOTO

Judged on urgency/news value of the image, composition, technical quality and cutline information gathered.

Entry: Submit PDF. In the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box, please write brief description of photo. No more than two entries by an individual photographer with limit of four entries per publication.

15. BEST FEATURE PHOTO

Judged on composition, technical quality, emotional appeal, news value and cutline assistance.

Entry: Submit PDFs. In the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box, please write brief description of photo. No more than two entries by an individual photographer with limit of four entries per publication.

16. BEST SPORTS PHOTO

Judged on news value, composition, technical quality, emotional appeal and cutline assistance.

Entry: Submit PDF. In the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box, please write brief description of photo. No more than two entries by an individual photographer with limit of four entries per publication.

17. BEST ONLINE PHOTO GALLERY

Entry should consist of a series of related photos from a single event, presented online with or without related audio. Judged on news value, emotional appeal, composition and technical quality of individual photos, plus cohesiveness of the entire gallery. Cutlines will be considered in judging.

Entry: Include URL of the gallery in “URL” field of the online entry box. No more than two entries by an individual photographer with limit of four entries per publication.

18. BEST VIDEO

For video reporting presented online. News or feature story. Judged on news value, quality of editing/production and selection of a story that uses the medium well. Note: Audio slideshows should be entered in that category rather than this one.

Entry: Include URL of the video in “URL” field of the online entry box. Two entries per individual with a maximum of four entries per publication.

19. BEST WEBSITE

A general-excellence award. Judged on overall content and design, local emphasis, interactivity, ease of navigation and extra features not found in the print edition.

Entry: Include URL of the website in “URL” field of the online entry box. One entry per publication.

20. BEST SPOT NEWS STORY

Judged on news value/urgency, quality of reporting and writing and local focus. Single story. May include related sidebars from the same issue.

Entry: Submit PDFs clearly marked indicating the entry. Entries that represent a team effort should list team members and designate lead writer or editor. Please write headline(s) in the “explanation or outline” field of the online entry box. No more than two entries by each writer or team with limit of four entries per publication.

21. BEST IN-DEPTH NEWS STORY *(Note changes to contrast with Watchdog Reporting)*

Judged on news value, quality of reporting and writing and local focus. Entire story must have been published in one issue. Multiple related stories published the same day will be considered one entry. Stories that reveal wrongdoing in government, nonprofit organizations or private business should be entered in the Best Watchdog Reporting category and may not be duplicated in this category.

Entry: Submit PDFs. Entries that represent a team effort should list team members and designate lead writer or editor. Please write headline(s) on the entry form. No more than two entries by each writer or team with limit of four entries per publication.

22. BEST IN-DEPTH NEWS STORY SERIES *(Note changes to contrast with Watchdog Reporting)*

For excellence in a planned, scheduled series of stories about any one topic. Judged on news value, evidence of investigative work, story and series organization, quality of reporting, writing and local focus, visual presentation, headline writing, graphics, photography and multimedia presentation. Stories that reveal wrongdoing in government, nonprofit organizations or private business should be entered in the Best Watchdog Reporting category and may not be duplicated in this category.

Entry: Submit PDFs clearly marked indicating the entry. Entries that represent a team effort should list team members and designate lead writer or editor. Please write headlines in the “explanation or outline” field of the online entry box.

23. BEST EDUCATION REPORTING

For excellence in education reporting as demonstrated by a single writer's best three stories from the contest year. Judged on news value, variety, quality of reporting and writing and local focus. Supplemental online material also may be entered. Do not enter a series; use category 22 for that.

Entry: Three separate stories by one writer. Submit PDFs and/or urls and clearly indicating the entries in the "explanation or outline" field of the online entry box. Two entries per publication.

24. BEST WATCHDOG REPORTING

For excellence in performing the watchdog function in a single story or in an unscheduled series of stories that reveals wrongdoing in government, nonprofit organizations, private business, education, law enforcement, military or other institutions.

Judges should consider reporting enterprise, barriers to obtaining the information, accuracy, clarity of analysis and writing style. Judges may consider civic impact and evaluate the circumstances prompting the coverage and results achieved.

Entries in this category may NOT also be entered in either the Best In-Depth News Story or Best In-Depth News Story Series categories.

Entry: Submit PDFs. Entries that represent a team effort should list team members and designate lead writer or editor. Please write headline(s) on the entry form. No more than two entries by each writer or team with limit of four entries per publication.

25. BEST NICHE PUBLICATION

For outstanding publications in print and/or online that are published weekly, bimonthly, monthly or quarterly and appeal to a specific audience.

Judging will be based on quality of writing, graphics, photography, page design, headline writing and effectiveness in delivering excellent content to a specifically targeted audience.

Entry: Submit PDFs. Entries that represent a team effort should list team members and designate lead editor. Limit of four entries per publication.

26. BEST USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This award recognizes the most effective use of social media by a media organization. Submissions for coverage of specific news events or a specific social media campaign will be accepted.

Judging will be based on the quality and originality of content on social media platforms, innovation in the use of social media, evidence of audience engagement, integration with other electronic and print content and overall impact.

Entry: Submit a one- to two-page summary of the social-media effort that describes the objective, strategy, results and provides URLs of the social media used in coverage. Entry may also include PDF screenshots of social media posts, print pages, blogs or other media that were used in tandem with social media.

27. BEST USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY AN INDIVIDUAL

This award recognizes the most effective use of social media by an individual. Submissions for coverage of specific news events or a specific social media campaign will be accepted.

Judging will be based on personal enterprise, the quality and originality of content, innovation in the use of social media, evidence of audience engagement, integration with other electronic and print content and overall impact.

Entry: Submit a one- to two-page summary of the social-media effort that describes the objective, strategy, results and provides URLs of the social media used in coverage. Entry may also include PDF screenshots of social media posts, print pages, blogs or other media that were used in tandem with social media.