



ELECTRONIC MEDIA EVALUATION: WEBSITE

May 2014 update
by the NHSPA Board of Directors
Some parts of this critique form were adapted from the National Scholastic Press Association critique scoresheet and guidebook.

Online Evaluation Guide

We hope our NHSPA online judges find this digital evaluation guide user friendly. We want to make our guides to be easily used as learning tools. Although awards are nice, helping our advisers and students gain knowledge in online scholastic journalism is the primary goal of our evaluation service.

The move online is a relatively new one for most schools, and the vast majority of staffs are working to create these sites in addition to the work they are doing with their staff newspaper, yearbook or broadcast, so we want our judges to let schools know what they are doing well by praising the good that is being done. We also want our judges to offer constructive criticism to help staffs grow in practical ways. Just telling a school ‘You need to get into multimedia’ isn’t very helpful. Give them a couple of practical ways they can make this happen – especially in cheap, easy ways.

Please look at the site at least eight times during the contest period.

Each of the five sections of the guide have a bulleted list of specific areas the staff should be working on. After completing these five parts, the judge will rate the overall quality of the section. Once the judge has completed a review of the entire site, he/she will award the site an overall rating of Cornhusker, Superior, Distinction or Merit.

Please send the digital evaluation back by the deadline or sooner. Please save your file using the name of the school name. (Ex: Omaha North High School)

Publication url/year: _____

School name: _____

Adviser: _____

**This critique form was created with permission from the National Scholastic Press Association, using the ideas and standards set forth by NSPA through their critique scoresheet and guidebook, and Aaron Manfull, JEA Digital Media chair and adviser at Francis Howell HS (St. Charles, Mo.). For more information, visit NSPA at: <http://studentpress.org/nspa/>. Thanks to both NSPA and Aaron Manfull!*

Explanation of Evaluation System

- The evaluation is divided into five sections:

Coverage & Content (Variety of ways site gets information to readers/viewers)

Breaking News (Frequent, daily or web exclusive stories)

Design & Navigation (Should be clean and aid readers in moving through the site)

Interactivity & Community (How well site engages audience in multiple ways: polls, galleries, blogs, etc.)

Rich Media (How well site uses variety of media — stories, photos, audio and video — to disseminate information)

- Each division in each section is rated as Superior (Always), Excellent (Frequently), Good Usually, Average (Sometimes), or Needs Improvement (Never).

- Judges will include comments relevant to each division and therefore each section in the space on the pages provided. In addition, they will include supplementary comments explaining their overall impressions.

- Judges will award one or two Golden Kernel Awards to a staff for any special strength they see in any one or two bulleted items of the evaluation.

- Publications will be awarded one of the following class ratings:

Cornhusker

Superior

Distinction

Merit

- If a publication receives no official rating, the judge will provide specific recommendations along with a detailed evaluation.

Part I: Coverage and Content

The strongest sites should have a variety of ways they are getting information to their readers from stories and photos to video and multimedia. Sites should also strive to have a variety of content and coverage from opinion and news to sports and features. Sites should be updated frequently and not seem to simply be updated once a month with stories from their print product. Having said that, please remember that most staffs have added products. With all content and coverage, journalistic legal and ethical standards should be followed. (Please note any site that you think may have infringed on copyright violations, ranging from audio to photos on the site. Any site infringing on copyright is ineligible to gain the top ranking.)

- Coverage is comprehensive, focusing on many aspects of the high school community it serves, including academics, school activities, faculty and administration and student affairs.
- The site includes Web-exclusive content, such as blogs, interactive elements, video, audio and breaking news.
- Coverage reflects the diversity of the school population and aims to be inclusive.
- Content is well coordinated, with different media contributing different parts of the story rather than repeating the same information.
- Stories are thoroughly reported; multiple points of view are represented.
- Coverage is accurate, fair and balanced.
- Writing is engaging, informative and to the point.
- Opinion pieces, including columns, editorials and blogs cover issues and events of interest to the school community.
- Opinion pieces are well researched and well argued, citing factual evidence to support views expressed.
- Special reports and in-depth coverage is well planned and includes multimedia components.
- The site maximizes the capabilities of the Web, making use of multiple media and interactivity.
- Controversial issues are included and reported thoroughly.
- All stories, except for editorials, opinion columns, blogs and analysis pieces, are free of the writer's opinion.
- Headlines, captions and teasers are accurate and engaging, drawing readers into the material.
- The site demonstrates a spirit of experimentation by taking risks and trying new things.

COVERAGE AND CONTENT strengths

COVERAGE AND CONTENT weaknesses/recommendations for improvement

SCORE FOR OVERALL COVERAGE AND CONTENT

0 100 140 170 200

Needs improvement Average/Good Very Good Excellent

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 200.

Part II: Breaking News

Sites should be updated frequently with stories of interest to the school population. Schools should strive to post something new daily and have a way to let their readers know what content is new and fresh. The website should not just be a regurgitation of the printed newspaper and should have a different focus than any other student media outlet at the school.

- The site is updated regularly, daily if possible.
- Breaking news reports are updated as information comes in.
- Important news events are reported in a timely way.
- A variety of media—which may include photos, graphics, text, audio, video and interactive elements—are used to report breaking news events.
- News is covered in a fair and balanced manner and is of interest to the school community.
- Coverage includes useful information for readers, such as notification of school closing in the event of bad weather or an emergency.
- Coverage of national and international events is related to the school community.
- News is accurate, even if the information is incomplete.

BREAKING NEWS strengths

BREAKING NEWS weakness/recommendations for improvement

SCORE FOR OVERALL BREAKING NEWS

0 100 140 170 200

Needs improvement Average/Good Very Good Excellent

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 200.

Part III: Design and Navigation

Sites can be created using a variety of content management systems – Dreamweaver and Wordpress for example. Using templates to create sites is fine. However, staffs should strive to use templates simply as a starting point and then make the necessary modifications to the templates to best suit the staff’s needs and set their website apart from other sites.

- The site is visually appealing, drawing readers into stories.
- Navigation is easy; readers can effortlessly find what they are looking for.
- The home page is simple and uncluttered.
- The site provides links to relevant resources, such as the high school website.
- A dominant piece of art, at least twice as big as anything else, anchors each page.
- Visual elements, such as photos and graphics, are used to enhance content, not as decoration.
- News is presented in a clear hierarchy, with the most important and/or newest stories prominently displayed.
- Tabs clearly direct readers to different sections of the publication, such as news, sports, entertainment and opinion.
- Multiple elements of a story are packaged together into an integrated unit.
- Design elements – bullets, fonts, boxes and other elements – are used to facilitate reading and navigation.
- Links provide access to related content on the site.

DESIGN AND NAVIGATION strengths

DESIGN AND NAVIGATION weakness/recommendations for improvement

SCORE FOR OVERALL DESIGN AND NAVIGATION

0 100 140 170 200
Needs improvement Average/Good Very Good Excellent

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 200.

Part IV: Interactivity and Community

Interactivity is an essential element of 21st century journalism. No longer can you simply give information to the reader. Now you need to create a dialogue between the website and your readers.

- Readers are able to interact with the site in numerous ways. These ways may include comment functions, discussion boards and polls.
- Social networking and community tools, such as links to other information and guides to community services, are used to empower the reader.
- Games, polls, quizzes, interactive maps and other interactive tools are used to engage the reader with the news.
- Readers are invited to submit story ideas and are provided with instructions on how to do so (either a story submission form or an email address).
- Contact information is provided for readers who want to write a letter to the editor, buy and ad or contact the adviser and staff.
- The site makes use of reader-generated content, which may include stories, photos and videos.
- Links on stories direct readers to other sites with useful and credible information that enhances the story. entertainment and opinion.
- Multiple elements of a story are packaged together into an integrated unit.
- Design elements – bullets, fonts, boxes and other elements – are used to facilitate reading and navigation.
- Links provide access to related content on the site.

INTERACTIVITY AND COMMUNITY strengths

INTERACTIVITY AND COMMUNITY weakness/recommendations for improvement

SCORE FOR OVERALL INTERACTIVITY AND COMMUNITY

0 100 140 170 200

Needs improvement Average/Good Very Good Excellent

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 200.

Part V: Rich Media

Websites should be utilized to disseminate information in a variety of ways from stories and photos to audio and video. Multimedia and other non-traditional storytelling components should be utilized to help relay information to readers.

- The site uses a variety of media including, but not limited to audio, video, slide shows and/or audio slide shows, text and graphics.
- Media are used to enhance and supplement content and help tell stories rather than simply add flashy elements to the site.
- Each media element—slide show, video, podcast, etc.—tells a story.
- Photos and video are adequately lit and well composed.
- Photo illustrations are clearly labeled.
- In photos and video, a variety of shots—action, candid, long shots, close-ups and detail shots—are used.
- In audio and video reports, sound quality is clear; voices are easy to understand.
- Audio reports make use of ambient and natural sound as well as interviews.
- Graphics are clear and easy to understand.
- Special projects and packages are well organized and designed to help readers navigate through the content.
- Copyright laws are understood and respected; only original content or copyright-free material (music, photos, videos, etc.) is used.

RICH MEDIA strengths

RICH MEDIA weakness/recommendations for improvement

SCORE FOR OVERALL RICH MEDIA

0 100 140 170 200

Needs improvement Average/Good Very Good Excellent

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 200.

SECTION	RATING
COVERAGE & CONTENT	_____ /200
BREAKING NEWS	_____ /200
DESIGN & NAVIGATION	_____ /200
INTERACTIVITY & COMMUNITY	_____ /200
RICH MEDIA	_____ /200
TOTAL	_____ /1000

Cornhusker (850-1000)

Superior (700-849)

Distinction (550-699)

Merit (400-549)

OVERALL EVALUATION RATING:

_____ CORNHUSKER

This is NHSPA's highest evaluation rating. This site demonstrates excellence in all areas of scholastic journalism website production. This site effectively integrates coverage and content, design and navigation, breaking news, interactivity and community and rich media to give users an excellent record of the school and up-to-date information.

_____ SUPERIOR

This site demonstrates excellence in most areas of scholastic journalism website production. This site integrates coverage and content, design and navigation, breaking news, interactivity and community and rich media into the site fairly consistently but lacks at least one area of overall execution.

_____ DISTINCTION

This site demonstrates a basic understanding of general scholastic journalism standards for website production. However they are lacking in two or more of the five areas of coverage and content, design and navigation, breaking news, interactivity and community and rich media that makes for a Superior site.

_____ MERIT

This site meets some general scholastic journalistic standards for website production but lacks execution of three or more of the five areas coverage and content, design

*** If a publication receives no official rating, the judge will provide specific recommendations along with a detail evaluation.**

Golden Kernel Award

Judges will award one or two Golden Kernel Awards to a staff for any special strength they see in any one or two bulleted items of the evalutaion

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ADDITIONAL EVALUATION COMMENTS:

Name of School: _____

School Size/Number of students: _____