



# Spartan Website Critique

School \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Student Media Outlet Name \_\_\_\_\_

URL \_\_\_\_\_

Year \_\_\_\_\_

**To have your yearbook evaluated, your student media outlet must be a current MIPA member.**

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# OVERVIEW OF CRITIQUE

This Website Critique Form is designed to provide a framework for the judge in evaluating the website, to reward the staff for creativity and accomplishment and to provide suggestions for improvement for future revisions. We have tried to make this guide as open-ended as possible to allow the judge to consider all aspects of the student media outlet.

We want to allow staffs as much latitude as possible in producing websites that fit their school and community as well as reflect sound journalism practices. The website might operate as an independent student media outlet with a unique editorial board, or it may be an extension of another student media outlet, such as a newspaper or broadcast production. This evaluation is designed to provide meaningful feedback and to recognize and reward excellence.

With this in mind, we award the following ratings:

**Spartan Award**

900 or more

**Gold Medal**

800–899

**Silver Medal**

700–799

**Bronze Medal**

0–699

## GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS TO JUDGE

This form may be completed and returned to MIPA as a digital PDF or as a print document completed in pencil. If you have any questions, please contact the MIPA office at [mipa@msu.edu](mailto:mipa@msu.edu) or 517-353-6761. Thank you!

Please review this website several times during the evaluation period. Rank each category according to the scale provided and assign the appropriate number of points. Please use the space provided for suggestions and comments that will help the staff understand concerns and problem areas and how they may be improved.

# COVERAGE & CONTENT

## PURPOSE

- The site functions as a means of delivering information and entertainment for the student body, yet is understandable by the general public.
- The site serves as a community tool for information and an easily searchable archive of past content.
- Stories go through the same editorial process as their print or broadcast counterparts.
- Content is regularly updated throughout the publication cycle. The website contains more than repurposed stories from its print or broadcast counterpart, if one of those traditional publications exist.

## WRITING

- Uses correct journalistic style.
- Is well-written and is formatted to tell the story.
- Strong, varied leads effectively capture the users' attention.
- Tense is consistent within copy and avoids passive voice.
- Shows evidence of proper attribution.
- Shows evidence of complete coverage and research.
- Uses many relevant and colorful quotes.
- Avoids editorializing and clichés.
- Uses proper grammar and mechanics.
- Avoids unnecessary adjectives and adverbs.
- Shows consistent use of person.
- Shows evidence of careful proofreading.

## DISPLAY TYPE

- Headlines and captions add interest and information.
- Headlines show consistency in style.
- Headlines are used with every story.
- Headlines are more than labels — they show journalistic style, avoid editorializing and padding.
- Headlines are written in present tense and active voice.
- Headlines convey the emotion, tone and flavor of the copy.

## BREAKING NEWS / UPDATE FREQUENCY

- Hard news stories follow inverted pyramid style.
- Updates occur in between traditional publication cycles.
- Stories contain additional follow-up material as it becomes available.
- The site is structured to feature frequent updates throughout the publication cycle.

## INTEGRATION ACROSS MEDIA

- The site shows a link between itself and its print or broadcast counterpart, if one of those traditional publications exist.
- Selected stories from the traditional publication are extended with enhanced online coverage.

## CONNECTIONS

- Stories contain relevant links to off-site content when appropriate.
- If available, the site links to primary documents referenced in stories.

# COVERAGE & CONTENT

JUDGE’S COMMENTS ON COVERAGE & CONTENT:

**Score for Coverage & Content**

<b>0</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>250</b>	
Needs Improvement		Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent	

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 250.

# COMMUNITY

## SOCIAL NETWORKS

- Stories are shared on other websites via direct links or RSS feeds. These are advertised as they become available throughout the publication cycle.
- The publication maintains active accounts on social media services such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- Staff members regularly update information and status information as new content becomes available on the publication's website.

## INTERACTIVITY

- Message boards, comment sections, polls and/or other interactive elements allow users to connect with the content.
- No special knowledge or paid accounts are needed to participate in interactive material.

## FORUM STATUS

- The website contains a stated policy for its forum status. A publication can choose to be either an open public forum or a limited public forum. An open public forum allows all comments and discussion without any moderation. In a limited public forum, the staff reserves the right to edit user submissions.

## ADVERTISEMENTS

- Advertisements are varied and relevant for users of the site.
- Advertisements are appropriate for the intended audience.
- The publication's advertising information and policies are accessible on the site.

## STAFF

- Staff information is listed on the site.
- Users can contact staff members via forms or e-mail messages.
- Publication policy is clearly stated on the site.

# COMMUNITY

JUDGE’S COMMENTS ON COMMUNITY:

**Score for Community**

<b>0</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>150</b>	
Needs Improvement		Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent	

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 150.

# DESIGN & NAVIGATION

## CONSTRUCTION

*If the website uses a content management system such as WordPress for uploading and organizing content:*

- The chosen theme is appropriate for the publication.
- There are no placeholder sections for future content.

*If the website is hosted on a template-driven site such as SNO:*

- The site's capabilities are fully utilized.
- Custom graphics distinguish the site from the basic templates.

*If the website is coded by hand or with an application such as Adobe Dreamweaver:*

- The site complies with modern coding and usability standards.
- The coding is simple to understand, commented when appropriate, and easy to modify.

*For all sites:*

- The site uses modern web standards. Obsolete and deprecated elements like frames, animations and blinking text are not used.
- The site looks consistent regardless of web browser or operating system accessing the material.
- A mobile version of the site displays content simply and efficiently.
- Pages load relatively quickly and are of a reasonable length. Rich media files do not begin playing automatically.
- There are no orphan pages or dead links.
- The site is easily searchable and indexed.

## MAINTENANCE / CHANGES

- Updates occur frequently and are not limited to the traditional publication cycle.
- There is evidence of larger staff contributions rather than just one webmaster creating and/or uploading all content.
- The site should be easy to customize, update and change from one issue, semester, or year to the next. Content should not be lost in the update process.

## AESTHETIC APPEARANCE

- An attractive color scheme, graphics, and other visual elements tie every page of the site together.
- Graphic elements like photos, subheads and pull quotes break up large chunks of text.
- Clean, easy to read typography is consistent throughout the site. Sizes and colors do not clash with other graphic elements or backgrounds on the page. Underlined text is only used for links. Reverse type, all caps, italics, and strikethrough font styles are rarely, if ever, used.
- The background complements the content on the page and does not distract a user from it.

## USER INTERFACE

- Content is divided into logical sections that are easy to identify.
- The page loads for the size of a typical monitor, usually 800 pixels wide, without scrolling horizontally.
- Navigation is consistent throughout the site.
- Page titles accurately identify what the content is about.
- Link names describe the content they link to, rather than simply using one or two non-descriptive words.

# DESIGN & NAVIGATION

JUDGE’S COMMENTS ON DESIGN & NAVIGATION:

**Score for Design & Navigation**

<b>0</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>250</b>
Needs Improvement		Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 250.



# **RICH MEDIA**

## **USAGE**

- Some forms of rich media are used to take advantage of the web platform. The type of enhanced content fits the purpose of the story.
- The site hosts content locally or it is embedded on the page. There are no links to missing content.
- Captions are used to describe every photo and media element.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

- Each photo tells a story and enhances coverage.
- Photos have good focus.
- Photos show proper contrast with crisp colors or clear blacks, whites and grays.
- Photos are effectively cropped to the center of interest, show good variety and action.
- Photos are free of dust, scratches and water spots, as well as digital imperfections like graininess and pixelization.
- Photos appear in their original aspect ratio.
- Photos are displayed at the proper resolution of 72 pixels per inch in JPEG or PNG format. Graphics are displayed in GIF or PNG format.
- Captions contain at least two sentences and give five W's and H without stating the obvious.
- Captions give information preceding or following event in photo and show evidence of research.
- Captions are complete sentences that avoid repeating what is stated in the copy or headline.
- Captions do not editorialize.

## **AUDIO**

- Audio clips, interviews and podcasts are chosen that enhance a story or tell a story on their own.
- Sound is free of obvious background noise. There is a clear focus of attention in the audio file.
- Edits are used to effectively tell the story.
- The audio is clear and free of distortion. Volume remains consistent throughout the clip.
- There are no technical problems such as p-pops or microphone hiss.

## **VIDEO**

- Video clips, interviews and features are chosen that enhance a story or tell a story on their own.
- Video image is relatively stable. Tripods are used for stationary shots. Steady hands are used for mobile shots.
- Colors and tones are natural and consistent.
- Shots have good lighting.

## **PDF DOCUMENTS**

- Issues are archived as cross-platform PDF files for viewing and/or download.
- Stories contain PDF documents of relevant primary documents.

## **EMBEDDED CONTENT**

- Relevant content is embedded in stories via specific embed codes.
- Content does not significantly alter page load time.
- RSS feeds are used appropriately to link site with third-party sites.

# RICH MEDIA

JUDGE’S COMMENTS ON RICH MEDIA:

**Score for Rich Media**

**0**

Needs Improvement

**50**

**100**

Average/Good

**150**

Very Good

**200**

Excellent

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

# SITE EFFECTIVENESS

## FEATURED CONTENT

- The site prominently displays breaking news and exclusive in-depth content.
- Repurposed content from the traditional form of the publication falls under the appropriate category. Story enhancements are added to better tell the story in an online form.

## BRANDING

- The site has a clear branding and focus.
- The site has a unique mission and voice that is separate from other sites.
- Design and content decisions are made with the community the publication serves in mind.

## COPYRIGHT

- Information, images and other content does not infringe on existing copyrights.

## PROMOTION

- The site's URL is simple and easy to remember.
- Updates are linked on relevant off-site forums and websites throughout the publication cycle.
- The site employs search engine optimization so it is easy to find.

## JUDGE'S COMMENTS ON SITE EFFECTIVENESS:

### Score for Site Effectiveness

<b>0</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>150</b>	
Needs Improvement		Average/Good	Very Good	Excellent	

Judges: The numbers above are just markers. You may give any number of points up to 150.

# FINAL ANALYSIS

## TOTAL POINTS EARNED

Coverage & Content (25 percent) \_\_\_\_\_/250

Community (15 percent) \_\_\_\_\_/150

Design & Navigation (25 percent) \_\_\_\_\_/250

Rich Media (20 percent) \_\_\_\_\_/200

Site Effectiveness (15 percent) \_\_\_\_\_/150

**Total** \_\_\_\_\_/1,000

## OVERALL RATING

Please select an overall rating based on the total score.

☐ **SPARTAN AWARD**

900–1,000

☐ **GOLD MEDAL**

800–899

☐ **SILVER MEDAL**

700–799

☐ **BRONZE MEDAL**

0–699

## SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Judge's Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Type name if completing evaluation electronically.

Thank you for evaluating student media for the Michigan Interscholastic Press Association!