

## Sikuvile Awards receive quality entries despite challenges

This year's Awards saw 328 entries from 31 publishers and 145 journalists, which was an increase in the number of entries from publishers. This is encouraging says Mathatha Tsedu, convenor of the judging panel, as it includes entries from publishers from outside the traditional base of this competition, which is just print.



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Moving from quantity to quality, the judges are mixed in their reactions. The lead adjudicator in “Popular Journalism” and “Presentation (layout and design),” Tim du Plessis says the quantity and quality of the Popular Journalism entries in this category was down from last year. “Too many entries were just straight reporting that appeared in tabloid papers. Tabloid journalism is a very specific genre.”

The opposite is true of the Presentation category which garnered excellent entries. “Any of the top three could have won.” The poor journalism in some categories is a concern, says Tsedu. He believes this is something that can be directly attributed to the lower staffing in many, if not all, media houses.

“Also playing a role in this is the very fluid economic setting we are in, as well as the changing consumption patterns of consumers which is changing from legacy media such as radio and print, and to some degree television, to digital. Unfortunately, this is occurring without the movement of advertising revenue following these eyeballs.”

These dynamics have led to staff cuts, he continues. “If we continue this way and do not change, then the South African

media will not be able to fulfil its mission as it's still managing to do at the moment.”

Categories that also disappointed were the photographic category, in particular sports photography.

## **Overall quality exceptional**

This year is the last time that the Multimedia and Multi-platform categories will be judged. These categories were created at a time when newspapers were starting to dabble with the web. Since then technology has moved so fast that these categories have evolved and need to be converted into one category, digital.

Despite this, another judge, Mary Papayya, feels that the overall quality was exceptional. “The Popular Journalism and Hard News categories as well as Features category received a good response and were highly contested.”

As such she says the convenor had his work cut out. “As judges we also applied our minds to making certain that the criteria in the various categories were strictly adhered to.”

“Judging is a huge responsibility but the judges are all professionally competent, well versed and experienced in the different fields that are judged. The judging was robust with much discussion,” adds Tsedu.

## **Media has its work cut out**

All in all, Papayya says the entries reflect a society where media has its work cut out. “This highlights the importance of the role of the fourth estate in our country and democracy.”

Mathatha Tsedu is the adjunct professor in the School of Journalism at Wits University and a member of the board of the SABC. Mary Papayya is a media consultant, editor and news specialist at Papayya Media, and Tim du Plessis is a well-known journalist since 1976.

The judging panel also comprises of Dinesh Balliah, Gus Silber, Henry Jeffreys, Mike Siluma, Tyrone August, Phil Mtimkulu, Pippa Green, Liesl Louw-Vaudram, Thabo Leshilo, Ryland Fisher, and Neo Ntsoma.

All finalists will be awarded a Standard Bank Sikuvile Journalism Finalist certificates. Winners will receive a Standard Bank Sikuvile Journalism Award of R15,000 cash, a trophy and a certificate. Commendation certificates may be awarded at the judges’ discretion.

The Standard Bank Sikuvile Journalism Awards will be presented at a prize-giving function on Thursday, 19 October 2017.

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