
“The Society of Publishers in Asia 2023 Awards for Editorial Excellence”

亞洲出版業協會
「2023 年度卓越新聞獎」

SOPA 2023 AWARDS FAQ

GENERAL ISSUES

Q1 Are online publications eligible to submit their work under all categories?

Yes. Categories are open to both online and print publications. The exception is Excellence in Magazine Design, which is open ONLY to print magazines.

Q2 We are a small media outlet and can't afford the entry fees for the SOPA Awards. Is there any financial assistance for us?

Yes. In line with its mission to support editorial excellence, the Google News Initiative (<https://newsinitiative.withgoogle.com>) will subsidize entries by small media to the SOPA Awards 2023. If your organization employs 20 full-time staff in total of which 50% are full-time editorial staff, you can apply for this subsidy. You can submit up to two entries and pay only HKD\$200 for each. There's a cap on the subsidy, so entrants are encouraged to apply early. Go to www.sopawards.com for all Award entry submission requirements. Once your nomination letters and entries are ready, email us at mail@sopasia.com by **February 11, 2023** with the Entries' unique reference code and we will be in touch!

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 necessarily help an entry's chances. It is especially important for entries with multiple articles to show a clear theme of coverage; in fact, the submission of a weak article may pull down the overall score of a multi-article entry.

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 letter. 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 work, list up to three URLs or, for the Excellence in Photography category, upload a compressed package of up to 5 photographs 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 the Asia-Pacific region. Entries from all publications in the region, be they SOPA members or otherwise, are welcome. Assessment is based on the quality of journalistic work.

Q5 I am a SOPA member entitled to a discount on my submissions. Can I also apply that discount to entries made by sister or affiliated publications?

No. Each SOPA member can use its discount for multiple entries across the various categories. But the discount applies only to the official SOPA membership, not to any other associated publications.

Q6 When will you announce finalists for the awards?

Finalists will be announced in May, and the Awards winners announcement is scheduled for June 2023. Follow our social media channels or join our mailing list at www.sopasia.com for the more updated info. A complete listing of the Award winners will be posted on the SOPA Awards website www.sopawards.com.

THE ENTRY PROCESS

Q1 What are the options for submitting entries?

All submissions must be submitted electronically - <https://sopawards.awardsplatform.com>. No hard copy submissions will be accepted. No submissions will be accepted on Google Drive or non-official YouTube channels.

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

Yes. Up to THREE URLs may be submitted.

Exceptions are:

Excellence in Feature Writing, which is limited to ONE article per entry;

Excellence in Video Reporting, which is limited to ONE video per entry;

Excellence in Audio Reporting, which is limited to ONE single episode OR ONE series of up to three episodes; and,

Excellence in Magazine Design, which is limited to ONE edition of a print magazine only.

Excellence in Photography, which allows up to FIVE photographs.

SOPA Award for Public Service Journalism and SOPA Award for Young Journalists, which both allow up to FIVE pieces of work.

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

Submit only PDF or web versions for entries. Do not submit both PDF and web versions.

For copies of work(s) as a PDF file, submit in the form they were originally published, rather than as text files reprinted from databases. This will allow judges to see the entry as it originally appeared. If the submission is in a photo category, submit photos as they were published. For entries displaying more than the maximum number of photos allowed, indicate which photos should be considered.

For the Excellence in Magazine Design entries, the whole book should be submitted as a PDF and is limited to ONE edition of that magazine.

For the audio category, entries can consist of one single episode OR a series of up to three episodes totalling under three hours. The submission must include active URLs, a brief description of content, and a list of timestamps outlining key points.

PDFs should be configured to output for the web to reduce file size.
Advertising may be omitted.

If the entry is behind a paywall, the entrant should provide an ID and password. The URL should remain active during the judging period, from February to the end of June.

All submitted URLs should be hosted on the website where the work was initially published.

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 should the nomination letter include?

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 to contextualize the article.

In the case of entries with multiple articles or photographs, you must explain the unifying theme of coverage they collectively address. Entries will be judged by how well they fulfill the objectives described in the nomination letter.

The nomination letter for all entries must be within 3,000 characters.

Q5 How do we submit all the documents required for the Young Journalists Award?

The entrants should upload a zip file with the nomination letter, the journalist's personal letter and the nominated articles (up to 5). Please put all the articles in one single PDF with clear labels (Article 1-5) and remove any ads that scanned copies may contain.

Q6 What are the criteria for submissions in the various groups?

Awards are divided into three groups – Global (English language), Regional/Local (English language) and Chinese language – and a standalone Bahasa Indonesia language award.

Global (English language): Publications with original news coverage of an international nature and marketed to a worldwide audience. Some examples include: *The New York Times*, *CNN International*, *The Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *Bloomberg*.

Regional/Local (English language): Publications that are regional or local in both audience and news coverage. Some examples include: *The Australian*, *Rappler*, *Hong Kong Free Press*.

Chinese language: Publications in Chinese that are local, regional or global in focus.

Bahasa Indonesia: Publications in Bahasa Indonesia that are local, regional or global in focus.

Note: online publications that are affiliated with, or part of, a print publication should enter in the same group as their affiliated print publication.

Q7 Can the entry forms and nomination letters be filled out in Chinese or Bahasa Indonesia?

Entry forms for the Chinese-language Group must be in both English and Chinese, with the headlines and titles of submissions translated into English. Only the Nomination Letter part for entries in this group must be completed in Chinese.

Entry forms for the Bahasa Indonesia News Reporting category must be both in Bahasa and in English, with the headlines and titles of submissions translated into English. Only the Nomination Letter part for entries in this category must be completed in Bahasa.

The English information provided in the other parts of the entry form will be used for the presentation during the Awards ceremony.

Q8 How many entries can we submit?

Each publication may submit a maximum of TWO entries per category except in the following categories: SOPA Award for Public Service Journalism, SOPA Award for Young Journalists and Excellence in Magazine Design. In those categories, each publication may submit only ONE entry.

For example, a publication can submit two entries in the Excellence in Reporting Breaking News category, two entries in Excellence in Feature Writing, two entries in Excellence in Technology Reporting, two entries in Excellence in Video Reporting and so forth.

Q9 How many articles or photos can be submitted as part of each entry?

It depends on the category.

- In Excellence in Investigative Reporting, Reporting Breaking News, Business Reporting, Technology Reporting, Human Rights Reporting, Reporting on Women's Issues, Reporting on the Environment, Opinion Writing, Arts and Culture Reporting, Explanatory Reporting and The Scoop Award each entry may include a maximum of THREE pieces of work, of which at least one must be a written article. That means, for example, an entry that has three pieces of work can comprise at least one written article and some other non-written article element, such as a photo, video or graphic (video must be under 15 minutes; audio must be under 35 minutes). Entries in these categories that comprise a single piece of work must be a written article; if they have two pieces of work, at least one must be a written article. This is in recognition of the increasingly multimedia nature of journalism, while preserving an emphasis on written work.
- In the Excellence in Photography category, each entry may include a maximum of FIVE pieces of work.
- Multimedia entries that incorporate interactive graphics should be submitted in the Excellence in Journalistic Innovation 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.
- In the Excellence in Video Reporting, entries are limited to ONE video per entry.
- In the Excellence in Audio Reporting, entries are limited to one single episode OR a series of up to three episodes totalling under three hours.
- In the SOPA Award for Public Service Journalism as well as the Award for Young Journalists, entries can consist of a single piece or up to a maximum of five works of journalism. Examples can comprise a single package of written work/photos/video or a series of written works/photos/videos.
- In the Excellence in Bahasa Indonesia News Reporting, each entry may include a maximum of THREE pieces of work, of which at least one must be a written article. That means, for example, an entry that has three pieces of work can comprise at least one written article and some other non-written article element, such as a photo, video or graphic. Entries in the category that comprise a single piece of work must be a written article; if they have two pieces of work, at least one must be a written article.

Q10 Do sidebars count against the three-article limit in entries?

Yes, sidebars do count. Videos embedded in an article do not count as a separate submission.

Q11 We're very busy. Can we get an extension on the entry deadline?

No. This is a strict deadline.

Q12 Are there any special rules governing the submission of entries from online publications or independent online media?

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

URLs and web versions are acceptable for all categories except Excellence in Magazine Design. The work(s) should have been first published in 2021. 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 June).

Q13 We're a newly launched magazine with less than four published issues. 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. Only entries that have been published or distributed at least four times in the calendar year 2022 are accepted.

Q14 Can we submit photographs produced by other publications?

No. Entries must have been taken by, or exclusively for, the entering publication.

Q15 For Excellence in Photography, if I am submitting five photos from a series of 10, how should I submit it?

If you are submitting the photos as a packet, upload the photos as a compressed zip file.

For PDFs depicting photographs that are part of an article, clearly indicate which five photos you are submitting. In the past, entrants have drawn a red highlight or red rectangle around the images for consideration for the award.

THE JUDGING PROCESS

Q1 How does the judging process work?

SOPA judges are experienced journalists, academics, and former journalists from around the world. Because of the large number of entries, the SOPA judging process has two stages. HKU Journalism administrators will conduct an initial vetting procedure to ensure that entries adhere to the competition rules and regulations, primarily using Award Force's filtering features. During the vetting process, entrants will be automatically alerted whenever there are changes to be made to their entries, and they have 48 hours to make the requested changes. For the Bahasa Indonesia category, experienced journalists and scholars in Indonesia will carry out the initial vetting round.

In that second and final round, specialist panels of three or more judges will determine a shortlist of three entries in each category, including a winner and a runner-up. In the case of a deadlock among judges, the Head of Judges will be responsible for breaking ties and resolving any disputes.

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. We may also merge the English-language local and global submissions in any given category if there are insufficient entries. 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 the Asia-Pacific region be entered? What about joint-venture articles in which one reporter is in the Asia-Pacific region and one reporter is outside the region?

Entries must show a substantial emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region, and substantial journalistic work must have been done in the Asia-Pacific region. So work done principally from outside the Asia-Pacific region, 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 promotional or advertorial or other paid content eligible to enter?

No. The awards are not open to paid content materials. In-house newsletters are also ineligible.

Q4 Is work from Afghanistan/Iraq eligible for entry?

For the purposes of the awards, the Asia-Pacific region 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.

Q5 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.

Q6 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 cannot be submitted in reporting categories.

Q7 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 Journalistic Innovation, Excellence in Video Reporting and Excellence in Audio Reporting, only online entries are accepted, whereas for Excellence in Magazine Design, only print entries – in PDF format – are accepted. Please do not exceed the limit on the number of articles, photographs and audio episodes per entry. Entries comprising more than a single article or photograph, or an audio series must demonstrate a clear theme of coverage articulated in the nomination letter.

Q8 Why do freelancers need to obtain approval of their supervising editor when submitting an entry on their own?

The rules for the Awards stipulate that entries must be made on behalf of a publication, not an individual journalist. As publications are limited in the number of entries they may submit in each category, unauthorized entries could lead to a publication inadvertently exceeding the allowed number of entries in a particular category. All entries must include the supervising editor's name, email address and telephone contact number, acknowledging that the editor is aware of the submission.

Q9 What kind of stories are suitable for the SOPA Award for Public Service Journalism?

Any journalistic work that has a significant impact on public affairs in the Asia-Pacific region. Some examples of past SOPA Award entrants that would be suitable for submission in this category are:

- Reuters, [Erasing the Rohingya](#) (2019 Award for Excellence)
- VICE Indonesia, Jakarta Post, Tirto, BBC Indonesia, [#NamaBaikKampus](#) (2020 Award for Excellence)
- 天下雜誌 | Commonwealth Magazine, [揭開廢棄物黑幕 Tracking Down Taiwan's Industrial Polluters](#) (2021 Finalist)

Q10 What kind of media outlets are qualified for small media company subsidy?

Any media outlet with a maximum of 20 full-time staff in total, of which at least 50% are full-time editorial staff, can apply for this subsidy. SOPA reserves the right to reject applicants not deemed to be small media companies.

Q11 Can I get a refund?

No refunds will be made.

Q12 Are there any cash prizes given out as awards?

No. The awards confer international prestige on the journalists, editors and publications involved. But there are no cash prizes in any category.

Q13 Where can I see the Winners lists and articles from past years?

<https://sopawards.com/the-sopa-awards/awards-finalists/>
<https://2021.sopawards.com/the-sopa-awards/awards-finalists/>
<https://2020.sopawards.com/the-sopa-awards/awards-finalists/>
<http://2019.sopawards.com/awards/awards-finalists/index.html>

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