

CASE V Awards 2008

Iowa Alumni Magazine

Category 7c: Most Improved Alumni/Institution Magazine, 10,000 FTE and up

University of Iowa Alumni Association

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General description

Iowa Alumni Magazine is a bimonthly publication produced by the UI Alumni Association (UIAA) exclusively for its members.

Mission statement:

Iowa Alumni Magazine aims to add value and interest to its readers' lives, to make them proud to be associated with the University of Iowa, and to connect them to each other.

Guiding philosophy:

Iowa Alumni Magazine staff strive to continue the tradition of critical thinking that our readers—a diverse group of alumni, faculty, staff, students, and friends with a myriad of interests and beliefs—embraced during their years at the University of Iowa. Through thoughtfully selected words and images, we seek to advance our university's future and goals by engaging our readers' intellect and emotions.

By adhering to the highest standards of compelling writing and design, accuracy, balanced coverage, and ethical behavior, *Iowa Alumni Magazine* staff aim to foster in readers feelings of pride and connection. Our goal is to add value and interest to readers' lives through articles that reflect not only the intellectual, cultural, and social life of the university but also relevant national or global issues.

We hope that readers will view *Iowa Alumni Magazine* as a trusted friend—warm, inviting, credible, vibrant, honest, intelligent, accessible, tasteful, funny, and sometimes outspoken. *Iowa Alumni Magazine* is not afraid to tackle controversial issues—nor to have fun. Like any magazine of substance, our publication will present inspired content that challenges, uplifts, and entertains. While that content will not appeal to or resonate with all people at all times, our stories will ensure that readers look forward to the magazine's arrival and remember it long afterwards.

Goals and Objectives

In 2008, the UIAA launched a totally redesigned *Iowa Alumni Magazine*. The magazine's format, design, and content changed significantly.

Rationale for the redesign:

- **It was time.** In 2000, the magazine was re-launched as a bimonthly publication with a new design. Even though we made some subsequent minor editorial and design changes, it was time for a fresh new look to retain our readers' interest.
- **Our readers have changed.** Or rather, their reading habits probably have, thanks to the proliferation of news and information from a host of sources, including the Internet and other new technologies. Even our readers who still prefer to sit down with a printed magazine have many other demands on their time and attention, including from commercial magazines; we need to be sure that our magazine can compete with these other publications.
- **A new strategy.** With a new focus on attracting and retaining young alumni, the UIAA's strategic plan has implications for the magazine's look and content.

Overall aim:

To freshen and improve the magazine's overall look and feel, as well as its editorial content, to ensure that it keeps up with cultural, design, industry, and readership trends, as well as the UIAA's own goals—particularly in terms of attracting and retaining younger alumni.

How the project fits into overall institution goals

Iowa Alumni Magazine is consistently rated by UIAA members as the prime benefit of their membership; they indicate that they value it highly as a way to keep informed about their alma mater and their fellow alumni. The magazine is also the UIAA's most important way of communicating with all its members on a regular basis. It is imperative that the magazine continues to provide value to members and to meet their needs and interests. The publication is also a vital component in achieving particular UIAA strategic goals, such as increasing membership and retention of young alumni.

Audience

Iowa Alumni Magazine's audience consists of the 56,000 members of the UI Alumni Association. Members range in age from 20 to 100, live in every U.S. state and various foreign countries, and embody a vast spectrum of beliefs, opinions, and interests.

Staffing resources

Editor Tina Owen, Art Director LeaAnn Randall, Associate Editor Kathryn Howe, Editorial Associate Shelbi Thomas, and Editor-in-Chief Carol Harker plan, research, write, edit, and design *Iowa Alumni Magazine*. Freelance writers occasionally provide features or profile stories. Photography and illustrations are obtained from a variety of sources, including freelance photographers and illustrators, stock image agencies, and as reprints from other publications.

Program budget

The total annual budget for *Iowa Alumni Magazine* (minus salaries and postage) is \$203,800. The cost per magazine is \$0.82.

Special circumstances

Magazine staff undertook and completed the redesign project entirely in-house; no outside consultants were employed. The year-long redesign project was carried out without extra staffing or budgetary resources. At the same time, staff continued to publish the existing bimonthly magazine and to work on multiple communications projects for the UIAA. In addition to improving the quality of the printed magazine, magazine staff were also required to achieve substantial cost savings.

Measures of effectiveness

- The redesigned magazine definitely succeeded in attracting readers' attention. Dozens of alumni wrote or called to praise or take issue with the new look.
- The redesign definitely achieved its goal of attracting younger readers. Many young alumni reported that they would be much more interested in reading the new-look magazine, which several of them described as "fresh" and "lively" compared to the "staid" design of the previous publication. One recent graduate wrote in to say: "I just wanted to let you know how much I loved the latest edition of *Iowa Alumni Magazine*. I've enjoyed the magazine since I started getting it last year, but this by far was my favorite issue. It was fun, it was relevant to recent grads, and it gives UI alumni a glance at what campus life is really like, whether they were there just last year or decades ago. The fact that the alumni association decided to cover some edgy topics within the issue is even more exciting. I know now that I can look forward to a fun read each and every time the magazine arrives in my mailbox. Thanks for taking the time to make a change!"
- The redesigned magazine increased members' engagement with the UI Alumni Association: it generated a flood of letters and calls over a period of several months from members, and it provided impetus for an ongoing, lively discussion by alumni via the magazine's letters section.