

**Creative Economy:
Western Living's Development of the
Designer of the Year Awards**

by

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Abstract

Western Living is a regional lifestyle magazine that delivers authoritative information on Western Canadian design, with a focus on the home. In 2007 the new editor-in-chief was given a directive to expand the scope of content and to create an event for the design community. This directive came as the publication began to see an increase demand for multi-platform advertising options. The Designer of the Year (DOTY) Awards presented a practical solution that still fit within the magazine's editorial mandate. The event was designed to mirror the expansion of editorial content in the main publication, and it reflects the inherent struggle within editorial: remaining true to reader expectations (editorial mandate) while working mainly with advertisers to procure profit. This report first provides an overview of the general functionality of magazine publications. It then examines the editorial effects of the 2007 directive on both *Western Living* magazine and within Western Canada, and describes how the DOTY Awards became a solution to the directive without compromising the editorial vision.

*To the late but ever present Georgia Sostar
who always believed in me and
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1. Introduction: Problem Definition

All magazines must come to terms with the fundamental tension between advertising and editorial. By understanding this tension, readers will understand *Western Living's* progression and ultimate establishment of the Designer of the Year Awards (DOTY) Awards. The introduction of a larger, creative economy framework, used to analyze the awards, also provides readers with insight.

Editorial is completely independent from advertising and no special editorial consideration or commitment of any kind can form any part of the sale agreement.¹

-*Western Living* Editorial Policy

Western Living magazine features luxurious Western Canadian homes. The cover aesthetic has become recognizable for this lifestyle magazine that has, over the years, positioned itself as an authority on home décor and design in general in Western Canada. All magazines do the same: position the publication as an authority on a specific subject. Typically, a magazine focuses on a specific domain, and aggregates interesting and relevant information surrounding that topic. A reader interested in natural health may pick up *Alive*; a reader interested in endurance sport might leaf through *Breathe*; likewise, a reader interested in gardening might subscribe to *Gardens West Magazine*. These readers simply want a continuing supply of fresh information about the topics they are interested in.

In the early years of the 2000s, Master of Publishing student Lara Kordic asserted that “magazines create their own worlds, while shaping and reflecting the

¹ *Western Living* Rate Card, 2013, 7.

worlds of their readers.”² Kordic, citing Graydon Carter, editor-in-chief of *Vanity Fair* magazine, argues that when information is organized in an orderly fashion, magazines represent a chaos-free depiction on a given topic. This chaos-free depiction leads to predictable reader profiles. For instance, a magazine that creates a world about snowboarding will know that its audience will consist largely of those who own a snowboard or are interested in the sport. Magazines sustain their audiences by providing content that reflects the values of their readers. This is exactly why magazines appeal to advertisers. Advertisers want to know that their message will reach those most likely to act, and in turn, those most likely to buy.

Nevertheless, the magazine is more than simply a reflection of the reader. As Kordic asserts, the magazine also serves to shape the reader.³ It does this through its editorial, in what it chooses to write about or omit, and in how topics are presented. The editorial also reflects the audience’s interest. Ads in this context gain the power to shape an audience, but they take this shaping one step further. Advertisements are a call to action; they tell magazine readers where to go and what to do after they finish reading about their favourite subject. But in being a conduit for advertisers to reach audiences, magazines have to walk a delicate line in reflecting and shaping their readers. If a publication’s message veers too far from the editorial expectation, it will lose readers. For example, if the same snowboarding magazine begins to cover all other snow sports, the reader will lose the “chaos-free” snowboarding world. In the same sense, if a reader begins to feel that she is only being told what to do (being shaped), rather than being told about her passion (being reflected), she is not likely to remain a loyal reader, either. In the same way that consistency and cohesion draw the right reading audience, a consistent and cohesive reading audience brings a publication credibility. A magazine’s brand does not simply tell you what the magazine topic is. A magazine’s brand also signifies a harmony between the reader and the content that is being published to reflect them, as well as the content that is being published to shape them. This credibility,

² Graydon Carter (introduction), “*The 51 Best Magazines Ever.*” *Good Issue* 003. Mar/April 2007, 68. Cited in Lara Kordic “*What Your Magazine is Trying to Tell You: an Analysis of Language and Discourse in Western Living and The Block,*” 2007, 9.

³ Lara Kordic, “*What Your Magazine is Trying to Tell You: an Analysis of Language and Discourse in Western Living and The Block,*” Master of Publishing Project Report, Simon Fraser University, 2007, 9.

based on the interplay between the magazine's content and its audience, composes the brand.

Branding is integral to a magazine. It is the signal that cues the appropriate reader demographic and entices the right advertisers. Done right, the reading experience is a seamless integration of editorial content and relevant advertisements. Ideally the reader will be as interested in the editorial content as she is in the product information she learns about through advertisements. A great illustration of how this has worked well is *Good Housekeeping*: "The magazine was an early champion of reliable products for its homemaker readers, creating a *Good Housekeeping* Testing Institute in 1901 as a place to test foods and household products for purity."⁴ While most magazines don't explicitly endorse the products being advertised in this way, the message is still there. The reader assumes that the magazine stands behind the advertiser. This assumption is critical because it ultimately influences how the reader views the magazine as a brand. As Mark Whitaker, editor at *Newsweek* and ASME president, put it in 2005, "The reader has to believe that the publication is being edited for the reader, not the advertiser. They're looking for the editor's judgment – when they're not getting it, they'll look elsewhere."⁵

Editorial is not only tasked with maintaining a consistent representation of the world that the reader is interested in, but is expected to do so in a way that preserves the delicate balance of brand. To achieve that, editorial consideration must appear to be separate from advertiser interest. However, advertisers represent an integral source of income and they often fund magazine production. This gives advertisers considerable clout – especially when they are pushing the ethical boundaries of the editorial-advertising relationship. The charge to remain faithful to brand is nuanced, and can be difficult for editors when they are faced with advertiser demands. While all staff members of a publication have the same ultimate goal, to produce a quality magazine, it may appear that the distinct departments have competing motivation. The publisher may

⁴ Sammye Johnson and Patricia Prijatel, *The Magazine From Cover To Cover. Second Edition.* New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 32.

⁵ *ibid*, 51

have a larger corporate authority to satisfy. The editorial team will do its best to remain loyal to the editorial vision. Sales and marketing will work to acquire more advertising revenue. In this structure, editors have to assert the priority of the editorial mandate. But editors must also remain flexible, sometimes allowing for creative implementation of advertisers' needs. And more recently, in order to be successful in the Canadian marketplace, the definition of what their brand entails needs to be scalable.

Scalability means that magazines can no longer be defined only by gauging the interaction between the paper publication and the reader. Tara Schmidt, former Marketing Manager at *Vancouver* and *Western Living* magazines, says that "in today's marketplace it is essential that magazines look at themselves as brands that can cross many platforms to offer clients these types of packages."⁶ Now, more than ever, a magazine's credibility depends on its increasing popularity and gains in brand recognition. In other words, a magazine is only as good as its brand. And advertisers want to become more deeply associated with an established brand and encourage magazines to fulfill that role.

In cultivating that deep association, editors must ensure that the editorial vision of the brand remains intact. For example, while it might make good brand sense for the snowboarding magazine mentioned above to partner up with a highly regarded snowboard retailer and release a special edition product, it probably would not make as much sense to do the same thing with a low-end retailer with a poor reputation. In expanding their brand, a magazine needs to remain true to its original editorial mandate. In fact, the editorial vision is the foundation of the brand; it is the simplest, most direct way that the reader will come to understand the brand.

Part of the reason why any magazine would wish to extend its brand is to increase subscribership. Publications need to reach enough of the population to sustain a lucrative venture. Canadian magazines face the unique national problem of a small population. In the final quarter of 2012, Statistics Canada estimated that the country's

⁶ Tara Schmidt. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. January 2012.
Tara was the Marketing Manager for both *Vancouver* and *Western Living Magazines*.

total population was 35,002,447;⁷ thus the number of readers that any Canadian publication will reach is necessarily less than in, for example, the United States, which has a population of 313,914,040.⁸ Furthermore, working within the population of readers that are interested in specific subject matter continues to narrow the available readership.

While magazines may be inclined to expand or alter content to reach more of the population, a publication also needs to be sure that it does not sacrifice the editorial vision inherent in its brand. Faced with a changing technological environment that has shifted advertiser focus from strictly the print product to the brand at large, magazines need to generate advertising opportunities that honour both their editorial vision and the role that a print publication plays in Canadian culture.

Reader engagement and advertiser satisfaction is only half the picture. Magazines are ultimately cultural objects, meaning that they must be culturally relevant in their field. Like books, which have, according to Rowland Lorimer, the “ability [to] foster an extended discourse and contribute to the mobilization of public understanding and opinion,”⁹ magazines contribute to the collective knowledge of society. The emergence of new technologies has changed reader habits, and print publications must creatively expand their brands in a way that recognizes the cultural value they hold in the first place. When considering the success of a magazine and its brand, cultural contribution should remain at the forefront of the analysis. The concept of the creative economy, and its role within a Canadian context, provides a useful framework in which to work.

1.1. The Creative Economy

⁷ Estimates of population, Canada, provinces and territories Statistics Canada, n.d. Accessed May 9, 2013. <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca>.

⁸ United States Census Bureau. Last modified 2012. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>.

⁹ Rowland Lorimer. *Ultra Libris: Policy, Technology, and the Creative Economy of Book Publishing in Canada*. Toronto: ECW Press, 2012, 3.

In his 2002 work *Rise of the Creative Economy*, Richard Florida argues that today's economy is fundamentally centred on creative endeavours that in turn are the products of the creative class. Florida argues that in recent years more resources are being poured into infusing a sense of creativity into every field, especially in the sciences. These investments can be quantified by looking at the increase in research and development funds since 1950. This paradigm shift in work practices and values has created an economy of creative people who are making a living from their creative works.

But the rise of research and development is not the main indicator of this trend. Florida argues that, overall, companies derive more benefit from encouraging their employees to be creatively engaged. Rather than employees simply being a Fordist step along an assembly line, Florida recommends that they be encouraged to participate actively in the creation of company output. By having contextual vision they might even discover an error that would never have been caught if they had been restricted to thinking only about a single, narrowly defined job function. It is exactly this regard for a more creative workplace that, Florida argues, has contributed to the demand for outsourcing. Often trailed with a negative connotation, outsourcing in the context of the creative economy can be simply seen as freeing up the creative time of employees:

When I interviewed the founders of Fairchild Semiconductor in the mid-1980s, they told me that in their early days they had to build virtually all of the tools and equipment needed to make semiconductor chips. That was necessary at the time because chips were a brand-new kind of product, requiring special manufacturing techniques.¹⁰

Over time, the specialization of the chips became more easily outsourced, even while the product itself became more complicated,. That outsourcing freed up resources that could be poured into innovation, rather than being eaten up by the physical development of merchandise.

¹⁰ Richard L. Florida *The rise of the creative class: and how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002, 55.

This system of outsourcing is not unique to the high tech sector. In fact, the publishing sector also relies on it. In his 2012 work *Ultra Libris*, Rowland Lorimer writes of “two socio-technical processes, one intrinsic to their [book] production, the other to shaping their content.”¹¹ Lorimer describes production as a technical process that has roots in processes as far back as scribal copying.¹² The second of the socio-technical processes is development: the effort that goes into creating and fine-tuning the product. In this way, the publishing sector illustrates the creative economy at work. Authors create content that is then submitted to publishing houses. Editors within these publishing houses work with authors to modify the content and create the final version of the text. Publishers make decisions about the aesthetics of the final package and then work with printers to create the physical document. This final, physical document will be marketed by the publisher, but it is often stored elsewhere. At each step along the way, creativity drives the process of creating a book and the process is not slowed down by the physical development of the commodity.

A key component of the creative economy is that it creates jobs at various levels in multiple sectors and these jobs generate meaningful connections between industries while benefiting the overall economy. With the creative sector employing an estimated “85,000 people (not including volunteers), making it the second largest of BC’s six major industrial sectors in terms of job creation, [and generating] \$4 billion in economic activity,”¹³ it is an issue that should be at the forefront of discussion about publishing and its sister industries. In an analysis of British Columbia policy, Lorimer contends that a shift in focus to encourage the progress of the creative economy would have positive impact even beyond this: it would drive innovation, increase participation in arts and cultural activities, enhance tourism and in and of itself continue to catalyze.¹⁴

¹¹ Rowland Lorimer. *Ultra Libris: Policy, Technology, and the Creative Economy of Book Publishing in Canada*. Toronto: ECW Press, 2012, 4.

¹² *ibid*, 4.

¹³ Rowland Lorimer. *Dreamcatcher towards a creativity/innovation strategic plan for British Columbia: a BCreative 2012 conference report*. Vancouver: CCSP Press, 2012, 5.

¹⁴ *ibid*

This paper analyzes the success of the Designer of the Year Awards (DOTY Awards) in *Western Living's* overall brand strategy and considers its larger role in the context of the Western Canadian culture economy by focusing on the tension between a magazine's editorial mandate, and the constant pressure on a title to meet its advertisers' growing demands.

2. Introduction to *Western Living* Magazine

This section details *Western Living's* operational history and current practices to offer an understanding of how the publication functions. This provides the context necessary to understand the implementation of the DOTY Awards.

2.1. *Western Living* Magazine

Published ten times a year for the urban adult reader (ages 25–54) with a high disposable income, *Western Living* has a total readership of 581,000+ and a total distribution of 165,000.¹⁵ The magazine focuses on aesthetic life in the Western region of Canada. The main subject matter includes design trends – particularly in homes, gardens, and décor – but complementary to this basic coverage the magazine publishes articles about food, restaurants, travel, and real estate. At the heart of the magazine's content is the assertion that it provides leading insight into the unique design community located in the region it represents. *Western Living's* subject matter, tone, and perspective are represented in the following way on their website profile:

It's not that we think you need us to remind you that western Canada is chock-full of fascinating people and places. It's just that since it's our job to keep our radars tuned in to what's new and unusual in this particular part of the world, it's only fair that we share the best of what we discover with you.

As Canada's largest regional magazine, *Western Living* invites readers to stretch their imaginations about living in the West: we share what intrigues, surprises and thrills us about people, places, homes, gardens, food and adventure from Winnipeg to Victoria and everywhere in-between.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Western Living* Rate Card, 2013, 2.

¹⁶ TC Media. "About." *Western Living*. <http://www.westernlivingmagazine.com/ABOUT/index.html>.

Western Living is a modern glimpse into the changing landscape of lifestyle in Western Canada, and while its editorial voice is authoritative – the magazine strongly promotes the notion that there are interesting artistic ventures occurring in this region that others may be missing – its tone is also playful and positive.

2.1.1. Editorial Profile

The evolution of *Western Living*, from its conception to the present day, embodies the concept of creating and defining a “chaos-free world.” The magazine was founded under its current name in 1971, but it grew from another publication known as *Western Homes and Living* that had been started in the early 1950s. This earlier publication was a smaller, paid-circulation periodical with a stronger focus on architecture and design. Its main markets were Vancouver and Victoria, and it ran largely as a niche publication with a strong focus on architecture.¹⁷ It proved difficult to sustain the niche, regional magazine, and in the mid-1960s, *Western Homes and Living* folded and the magazine re-emerged with its contemporary name, *Western Living*.

While rising literacy rates in the mid-twentieth century gave rise to a potential increase in readership,¹⁸ they also served to affect trends in magazine demand. A push toward general interest emerged and the trend continued into the 1990s. Magazines began to mimic the broad strategy of very successful general-interest publications such as *Martha Stewart Living*. *Western Living* similarly emulated this trend with a shift to include homes and décor. For a magazine that was once known as an authority on architecture, this translated into a decrease in circulation and readership, particularly in

¹⁷ Lara Kordic “*What Your Magazine is Trying to Tell You: an Analysis of Language and Discourse in Western Living and The Block*,” Master of Publishing Project Report, Simon Fraser University, 2007, 7.

¹⁸ Sammye Johnson and Patricia Prijatel. *The Magazine From Cover To Cover. Second Edition*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 61.

the male audience.¹⁹ The direction that the magazine took began to move it too far away from the expectations of readers.

By the end of the twentieth century, the magazine experienced a change in parent company: Transcontinental Media (now known as TC Media) took over from Telemedia and with it came the expectation of change. Jim Sutherland was brought in as the Editor-in-Chief, and Sutherland, “saw the need to maintain the focus on shelter pieces that reflect the lifestyle and aesthetic of Western Canada, while appealing to a wider general audience.”²⁰ Recognizing the need for this new editorial direction was the first step in solidifying the profile of the magazine as it stands today.

In spite of the change in editorial content that the magazine has undergone, the commitment to regionalism has stayed consistent. When Charlene Rooke took over as editor-in-chief in 2007 to give the editorial vision of the magazine a focused and intensive overhaul, a regional focus remained a tenet of the magazine. As Anicka Quin, current editor-in-chief of *Western Living* says:

She [Rooke] was hired on her strengths as a lifestyle editor—someone who would change *Western Living* into more of a lifestyle publication from a home’s publication. So it would still have homes features, but it would incorporate more travel and food across the board... a natural progression from that was to broaden the kinds of design that we would cover.²¹

It is in this shift that *Western Living* found its current successful identity. While homes and décor remain at the forefront, the magazine became an authority on an expanded characterization of not just home design but all design under the umbrella of the Western region. Representing Western Canada is as important to the editorial intent of *Western Living* as is keeping up to date on current design trends.

¹⁹ Lara Kordic “*What Your Magazine is Trying to Tell You: an Analysis of Language and Discourse in Western Living and The Block*,” Master of Publishing Project Report, Simon Fraser University, 2007, 7.

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ Anicka Quin. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. March 2012.

Anicka Quin is the Editor-In-Chief at *Western Living* Magazine. I conducted an hour long interview which I have transcribed.

Mission Statement

As distinct as the region it serves, *Western Living* informs and entertains sophisticated, active and engaged urban readers on home design and décor, food, wine, and travel. Combining stunning photography with exclusively Western Canadian sources for living a stylish life in your home.²²

Reader Profile

As key to securing advertiser interest, *Western Living* has a solid grasp on who composes their readership. Based on information derived from their 2013 Rate Card, the *Western Living* reader is:

Targeted

- 147% more likely to have a household income of \$200,000+
- 29% more likely to have travelled by air on one or more vacation trips in the past 12 months
- 30% more likely to have made any home improvements to their principal or vacation home in the past two years
- 64% more likely to spend \$40,000 or more on a household vehicle
- 100% more likely to have visited an art gallery three or more times in the past year
- 230% more likely to spend over \$25 on a bottle of wine
- 62% more likely to have spent \$501 or more average on credit cards each month
- 74% more likely to own a home valued at \$500,000 or more

The *Western Living* reader is not only urban and affluent but more likely to be a consumer of the very industry that the magazine features in editorial pieces.

Exclusive

Of those who read *Western Living*:

²² *Western Living* Rate Card, 2013, 2.

- 67% do not read *Canadian House & Home*
- 72% do not read *Chatelaine*
- 78% do not read *Style at Home*
- 71% do not read *Canadian Gardening*

The *Western Living* reader is not only a “sophisticated and affluent reader,” but one that is “simply not reached by other publications.”²³ This is crucial for advertisers and has a lot to do with their regional target and the circulation strategy they employ to reach them.

Circulation

Reaching a wide but targeted audience is critical to magazine success. It is important to consider which of the various possible circulation strategies is best for a specific publication. One of the most visible ways to sell magazines is through the newsstand. Publications in Canada can choose to go with a national distributor like Magazines Canada, and they can choose to sell issues on a subscription basis. Both methods lack control, via distribution, over whom the ultimate audience turns out to be. They exert control by means of editorial.

An option that addresses this shortcoming is controlled circulation. Through this method a publication delivers its product to a select audience using data gathered through services like the Print Measurement Bureau and Statistics Canada. Using the Print Measurement Bureau, *Western Living* determines the makeup of its readership, that is, the target audience. *Western Living* can then use Statscan to determine the income of various postal codes across Canada and use this information to target the geographic regions in which the data shows their target audience resides. It is often the case that people with similar lifestyles seem to congregate and reside in the same areas,²⁴ which allows publishers to easily and consistently reach their target audience. In

²³ *Western Living* Rate Card, 2013, 3.

²⁴ Melanie Law, “*Perks of Controlled Circ: A Case Study of the Distribution Practices of Vancouver and Western Living Magazines*,” Master of Publishing Project Report, Simon Fraser University, 2007, 8.

many ways, controlled circulation is the method that allows a publication to remain in control of its readership.

Using this rationale, controlled circulation is the method that *Western Living* stands behind, as stated on the *Western Living* rate card (below). *Western Living* uses QuikEx to deliver issues to various newspaper distributors.

Unique among its competitors, *Western Living* is the only magazine to control 95% of our distribution directly to hand-picked consumers' homes based on their affluence and neighbourhood appeal.²⁵

However, controlled circulation only succeeds if these targeted consumers do in fact live in the neighbourhoods that a publication selects, so publications can also employ other methods. At *Western Living*, some magazine dispersal is done via placement at carefully chosen trade shows, as well as in-store placement in design-related shops, and at Chapters locations across B.C. Still, most of *Western Living's* distribution is done through controlled circulation that geographically targets a demographic fitting their ideal reader profile in terms of affluence, education, and lifestyle.

This distribution method allows *Western Living* to offer additional benefits to advertisers. *Western Living* ensures the accuracy of home deliveries through conclusions drawn from a combination of statistics gathered through both Statistics Canada census data and the Canada Post FSA review. For an unbiased analysis of its distribution strategy, *Western Living* uses the auditing services of a third party that specializes in serving the magazine industry, BPA Worldwide, to certify that the correct reader demographic has been reached. By using controlled circulation, *Western Living* is able to define and reach its target audience, as well as verifying the accuracy of its methods for itself and for advertisers. In this way, controlled circulation is a cost-effective approach to distribution. Additionally, by controlling the destination of the publication, *Western Living* is able to ensure that one of its most important mandates is satisfied: populations across Western Canada are invited to engage with the content.

²⁵ *Western Living* Rate Card, 2013, 4.

Western Living distributes a total of 165,000 copies per year and makes sure to do so in a way that coverage is proportionally represented in large cities across Western Canada. A master copy of each monthly issue is created and is then tailored to a region. Certain content is refined appropriately for the area and advertisements might be region-specific. The majority of copies go to British Columbia (Vancouver, 50,000; and Victoria, 15,000) and Alberta (Calgary, 35,000; and Edmonton, 30,000), with 35,000 copies distributed across Manitoba and Saskatchewan (Winnipeg, 15,000; Saskatoon, 10,000; and Regina, 10,000). So while controlled circulation does, in many ways, move advertisers to the forefront of a publication's marketing plan, its success depends mainly on the magazine's ability to create and disseminate editorial content that interests its target demographic.

Advertisement Sales

By opting primarily for controlled circulation, *Western Living* devotes much of its distribution effort to reaching readers that fit a particular profile. In this strategy, advertisement sales becomes critical. Circulation is the foundation of ad sales, as one of the key draws for advertisers is the volume of targeted readership. Under this referent structure, the marketing department of a magazine works closely with the sales and editorial teams. More and more, to maintain and boost ad sales, marketing must come up with creative ways to keep advertisers interested in what the magazine can offer, as Tara Schmidt explains:

The relationship between the magazine and advertisers is like most other client relationships. We have a vested interest in delivering ROI on their advertising with us so we're always trying to ensure their campaigns are successful in achieving their marketing, sales and other business goals.²⁶

Schmidt describes how, at *Western Living*, the marketing department is responsible for a "wide range of activities related to *Western Living*."²⁷ The marketing department handles tasks related to public relations, events and branding, external

²⁶ Tara Schmidt. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. January 2012.

²⁷ *ibid*

sponsorship, contra relationships, special promotions, communications, and a variety of other tasks that may come up.

Changes in technology have contributed to a shift in advertiser expectation. Schmidt acknowledges that advertisers are no longer satisfied simply by static placement in the pages of a magazine. In order to remain successful in the changing marketplace of ad sales, magazines must be able to offer more. Mogel, author of *The magazine: everything you need to know to make it in the magazine business*, describes this phenomena as the “octopus approach.” Under this approach the main goal is still to sell advertising for the magazine, but to do so in a way that aims for cross-media deals involving the other “tentacles” of the “octopus.”²⁸

One way that magazines can offer more to clients is through website advertisements, but the financial case for a larger website presence has not yet been made for *Western Living*. *Western Living* still sees the digital arena as uncertain in its case, and without knowing first whether a website will be lucrative, it cannot commit resources to it. Between screen-based media and traditional print campaigns, companies have a wide range of options in pursuing their goal of gaining consumer attention. If *Western Living* wants to persuade advertisers to work with them, they need to present the most benefit.

Unable to focus resources on digital presence tactics, *Western Living* was challenged to offer meaningful, multi-platform advertising to their clients in other ways. And as mentioned, it is important that magazines have brand representation across platforms. The staff reasoned that the best way to employ the octopus approach was to consider the kinds of projects that fit well within the established *Western Living* editorial brand. The DOTY Awards were a natural offshoot that fit into the editorial calendar of the magazine, based on both concept and timing, and it provided a framework for folding the event into the magazine brand.

²⁸ Leonard Mogel. *The magazine: everything you need to know to make it in the magazine business*. 1997 ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979, 61.

Editorial Calendar

Every year *Western Living* plans its calendar for the ten issues that will be published. The calendar outlines two key elements of an issue: the overall theme, and the specific details that fill the magazine's larger sections. For example, the March 2013 issue had a theme of "Great Kitchens" with the following description: "Everyone's favourite room in the house gets the attention it deserves: page after page of gorgeous rooms, from traditional to modern."²⁹ The longstanding editorial sections of the magazine, such as Food & Wine, also have certain articles planned ahead of time, such as "40 Foodies under 40." The directive change that the magazine underwent in 2007 under Charlene Rooke's leadership affected some of the content and features, but most of the larger thematic elements have remained the same for many years. There is interplay between the goal of the advertiser and the sales staff, as Anicka Quin explains:

[We] make our editorial calendar for the year in the summer... Take our kitchens issue, for example. March has been our kitchens issue for at least ten years if not more. People renovate their kitchens in the Spring so that is when advertisers want to be in front of eyeballs. And that's when ad sales feel they have the most success selling kitchen advertising. We know that our readers like to read about kitchen renovations, that it's a subject editorially that is important to them, but the timing is very advertising-directed.³⁰

By planning the timing of editorial in this way, *Western Living* maintains a sound balance between shaping and reflecting its readers. But the change in advertiser demand for a multi-platform advertising model posed a challenge to that equilibrium. The event model, which was in Rooke's original 2007 proposal, was a solution. An event provides advertisers with more opportunities to gain exposure and also brings out key designers that reflect *Western Living's* brand as a high-end lifestyle publication in the community.³¹ Guided by editorial, the team identified an opportunity to seamlessly introduce an event to the magazine's overall strategy.

²⁹ *Western Living* Rate Card, 2013, 4.

³⁰ Anicka Quin. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. March 2012.

³¹ Tara Schmidt. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. January 2012.

Once an event was chosen to extend *Western Living's* brand, the details were selected by a group that included the publisher, marketing team, sales director, and editorial team.³² The event would need not only to provide advertisers with multi-platform ways to affiliate themselves with the magazine's brand, but also to do so in a way that was consistent with editorial. Moving in a direction that would position *Western Living* as an authority on the design community in Western Canada, the DOTY Awards fit perfectly within the magazine's new directive.

³² *ibid*

3. The Designer of the Year Awards

This section provides a chronological summary of the establishment of the DOTY Awards and the annual planning process. Information is outlined that will later be used to evaluate the cultural relevancy of the awards.

3.1. History

It was not as if *Western Living* had no previous experience with awards events. Prior to 2007, when *Western Living's* editorial focus was more narrow, the magazine held an event called the Residential Design Awards. These awards ran for five years, and the focus of the awards was limited to homes. Taking place solely in Vancouver, the event never did manage to attract significant attendance. Despite one successful year when designer Robert Ledingham was present to accept an achievement award, the awards never grew; at best, the turnout was eighty people.³³ The event itself was not flawed, but the limited scope of what it represented, namely *Western Living's* editorial directive at the time, was not broad enough to draw a large audience.

The Designer of the Year Awards, DOTY, was a natural progression from its predecessor. While Charlene Rooke looked to the Residential Design Awards to provide a base model for the new event, she envisioned a program with a more interdisciplinary approach to design, in keeping with the expanded focus of the new magazine. And much like the print publication, this approach proved to resonate with a larger number of people. With around 250 attendees the first DOTY Awards event was an instant success

³³ *ibid.*

and *Western Living* felt that it had hit on something that resonated with the design community.³⁴

3.1.1. Event Overview

Each year designers from Western Canada compete within eight different design categories:

- Architect DOTY
- Interior DOTY
- Industrial DOTY
- Fashion DOTY
- Landscape DOTY
- Furniture DOTY
- Arthur Erickson Memorial Award
- Eco DOTY

Applicants are invited to submit their portfolios of work to the appropriate category via an FTP server. From there the *Western Living* editorial teams winnow the applications down to a shortlist of six to eight candidates in each category. This shortlist is presented to the panel of judges and is also made public on the *Western Living* website. The judging panels then make final decisions about category winners. Winners are announced at the DOTY Awards event and published in the September issue of *Western Living*. The evening of the event is intended to celebrate the winners, provide advertisers with a unique sponsorship opportunity, and boost the branding profile of *Western Living*.

3.1.2. Preliminary Event Coordination

The magazine prepares in advance for the event by using its own ad space to publicize a call for submissions, and by handing out small cards with key details at industry events. It is critical for *Western Living* to network with the organizations that

³⁴ Anicka Quin. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. March 2012.

represent the designers they are interested in acquiring and to make use of their communication tools to reach prospective applicants.³⁵ In order to reach prospective applicants and entice suitable judges, *Western Living* requires additional assistance. Amanda Ross, who is currently a contributing editor on the editorial staff of *Western Living* and is the current Style editor at *Vancouver* magazine, is brought in to coordinate and organize event details. Ross typically attracts a high volume of architectural, interior and fashion designers, followed by furniture, industrial design, green and landscape. Ross is an essential part of the process as she discovers and contacts designers at the most opportune times in the year to ensure that there is ample representation in each category, and across the regions that *Western Living* serves.

Ross is also in charge of organizing the judging panels. Each category has several judges that can speak with authority on their design categories. Ross emails prospective judges about sitting on the panel and explains that judges are rotated from year to year. About a year out from the awards, the editorial team brainstorms ideal judging candidates for each category. This can range anywhere from a local architect to an academic figure, as long as they are generally recognizable as an authority on the category. Recognition is critical. When choosing who will comprise the judging panel, it is most important that well-known figures are included. This is partially because, as Anicka Quin says, “we want it to be appealing to winners; people to enter because they want to put their work in front of somebody high profile.”³⁶

It is essential that potential candidates feel that their work is being put in front of influential, authoritative people. But it is also important that readers recognize the judges. Ross acknowledges that *Western Living* typically leans toward a Vancouver-based judging panel because those are the names that are most likely to be known to the readership.³⁷ Because *Western Living* is representing such a broad array of designers in the awards, it is important to find judges who will stand out in their category. To achieve these means, *Western Living* opens the judging panel to individuals outside

³⁵ *ibid*

³⁶ Anicka Quin. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. March 2012.

³⁷ Amanda Ross. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. February 2012.

of Western Canada. At times, it can be better that judges are not local, because, as Anicka Quin notes, “there actually is a benefit to having somebody outside the region in that they’re less involved in the politics of who likes whom.”³⁸

The number of applications in each category varies, but if the *Western Living* staff determine that the volume is too high to turn over to the judges, they make pre-judgments and weed out applicants. Judges are made aware that they will be responsible for sifting through roughly six to eight application packages for their category. While the editorial team keeps certain editorial directives in mind, particularly to represent designers throughout Western Canada and not solely within British Columbia, the objective is to determine the best individual in their category for that year.

Early on, Amanda Ross sourced and encouraged potential winners from around Western Canada to apply. Increasing the volume of applicants represented across the Western region is *Western Living*’s strategy for ensuring that the shortlist, and ultimate winners, are representative. Still, there have been times when exceptions have been made during judging to ensure that this occurs, like when there are too many people on the shortlist, but the editorial team feels that more than eight entrants are deserving of shortlist recognition. In these cases the team goes to the judge to ask if he or she would be open to judging nine or ten, and it is usually fine.³⁹ By bringing more applicants forward to the judges, the editorial team can increase the possibility of having a representative winners’ list without compromising the integrity of the competition.

3.1.3. Organizing the Event

Once the judging panel has been chosen and certain other elements solidified, the advertisement sales team can begin planning event logistics and working on securing sponsorship. The DOTY Awards issue has its own rate card that is separate from the standard issue handout. The special issue rate card features pictures from past

³⁸ Anicka Quin. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. March 2012.

³⁹ *ibid*

events, an introduction to the head judges in each category; it also publicizes the names of well-known figures who will be present, and presents a list of specific benefits:

- Brand association with Western Canada's most prestigious design awards event
- Reach almost 1,000 highly targeted design stars and aficionados, all in one place
- Opportunity to display and/or sample your product to this exclusive audience
- Opportunity to attend this exclusive invite-only event and entertain important clients and/or suppliers
- Turn-key event mobilization opportunity
- Multi-media brand exposure through print, event, online and promotion ⁴⁰

Rather than simply choose page advertisements in the print magazine, advertisers are invited to select a level of sponsorship for the event. Sponsorship packages include exposure at the event, in print, and on the web, and during the promotional stage. At the high end of the sponsorship tier is the Platinum package, followed by the Gold package. The main differences between these two sponsorship packages are the amount of visual exposure that they get – for example, a larger sign at the actual event – and the designation as either a Gold or a Platinum sponsor. There is also a Silent Auction Sponsorship category that invites advertisers to donate a product to the silent auction; that product will be on display throughout the event.

These package options only represent the official stream of sponsorship. To run an event as large as the DOTY Awards, many contra agreements are also made. Tara Schmidt describes the process of engineering an event through contra-based relationships:

Contra is the only way we can make an event like this profitable. Hosting almost 1,000 guests at a high-end party is extremely costly and our contra agreements are what saves our revenue. Approximately 20–25% of the total cost of the event is cash and this is mainly spent on labour fees for rental companies, gratuity for servers, licensing and insurance fees, etc. Venues, food, décor, rental equipment, and alcohol is all done on a contra basis and makes up about 75% of the budget.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Designer of the Year Rate Card, 2012, 2.

⁴¹ Tara Schmidt. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. January 2012.

In these contra agreements, vendors are given advertising space in the magazine in return for their contribution. But these contributions are not free to the magazine. Anicka Quin points out that space in the magazine used for contra is page space that cannot be sold, and that it alters the ratio of advertising and editorial.⁴² Adding just a few pages would increase the cost too much, so the original page count cannot be changed. And beyond contra agreements, creating an event of this scale requires many people to invest their time. Beyond Amanda Ross and the *Western Living* full-time staff, interns and volunteers are an integral part of the process and provide help ranging from the initial sourcing of candidates right through to set-up and day-of assistance.

3.2. The DOTY Awards

Even as an invitation-only event, the DOTY Awards need to be held in a large venue that can accommodate the hundreds of guests who attend. The 2011 event, held in the now-defunct Masik Studios, hosted over 700 guests and had over 40 sponsoring clients.⁴³ While the venue may change year to year, the principle involved in the layout of the awards remains the same. This report focuses on the layout of the 2011 Awards to describe the general design of the space.

Masik Studio was a very large space with an artistic ambience that lent itself to the creative energy of the night, and combined with the décor, the feel of the event is both raw and glamorous. The space was split into two sections. On one side there was the main stage with most of the tables of food and drink surrounding the perimeter of the room, and on the other side was the silent auction with the materials that had been donated by Silent Auction Sponsors. Silent auction items included everything from physical sink fixtures to large print-outs that represent services offered. Throughout the room there were sponsorship signs and logo placements, and TVs screening a

⁴² Anicka Quin. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. March 2012.

⁴³ Tara Schmidt. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. January 2012.

slideshow of sponsor information and the winners list. There was also a section that included large, canvas pictures of the winner's works to ensure that the focus was on the winners of the awards. Anicka Quin says:

They're [the marketing department] very cautious that we're there to celebrate the designers – it's not a trade show. They're very cautious about how much space we can dedicate to advertiser displays. We're also really conscious to make sure that we have good space dedicated to celebrating the winning works... We thank the advertisers that have helped support the event by name, but the people who are up onstage are the winners so it's meant to be an awards show for the winners.⁴⁴

The balance between the editorial drive behind the evening, to publicize and celebrate the winners of the DOTY Awards, and the advertisements displayed for the sponsoring clients, is carefully coordinated in the space throughout the evening. The DOTY Awards are “a very targeted, niche market that advertisers are putting their product in. An event like ours is full of influencers in the market and it's the same with the magazine.”⁴⁵ This balance must also be achieved in September's print publication.

3.2.1. The September DOTY-Awards Issue

The September issue of the magazine is dedicated to the DOTY Awards and is published before the event takes place. Though the magazine maintains its normal editorial features, this money-making event becomes the driving editorial force behind the issue. Much of the editorial content is dedicated to summarizing the event, celebrating the winners, and going into detail about the category winners' work. There is also a spotlight sidebar feature on shortlisted contestants called “Ones to Watch” that provides information about important contestants who were not winners in their categories. This editorial direction works because readers are interested in learning about who is influential in their design field. People both within and outside of the design community are very interested in knowing who the winners will be each year. As Quin notes, because the issue is constantly requested and is one that the design community

⁴⁴ Anicka Quin. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. March 2012.

⁴⁵ *ibid*

pays close attention to, it is important for advertisers to be in that magazine.⁴⁶ Readers also want to know about the interesting and cutting-edge work that is being done in each of the categories, and they are purchasing this issue to do so. It is for this reason that the DOTY issue is advertisement-heavy.

Because the DOTY issue has proven to be such a lucrative venture for advertisers, their involvement has only increased. Advertisers within this issue have even had a say in the aesthetics of the cover: the chrome colour scheme on the cover of the 2010 September issue of *Western Living* was directed by one of the largest event sponsors, Audi. Determining the boundaries of advertiser influence in this specific issue has been achieved through trial and error. Advertisers are constantly attempting to promote themselves in different ways, and it is up to the editorial team to determine if this promotion crosses any advertorial boundaries. The editorial team must also work with marketing and sales to determine if something is truly best for the bottom line. For example, in the early years of the DOTY Awards, a sponsor could choose to be represented as a category sponsor in the magazine. While this was a coveted spot for a sponsor, the magazine limited such sponsorship opportunities to eight. In this case, limiting sponsor presence in the editorial content was not necessarily an advertorial concern, but rather a way to increase opportunities for sponsors to be part of this issue.

3.2.2. Expansion Of DOTY Awards

From the beginning, the DOTY Awards were a success. “Despite our expectation that it could take a couple years to be profitable, the event was profitable from the first year,” says Tara Schmidt. “Moreover, the revenue it generates has increased year over year as we’ve sold more and more sponsorship for it.”⁴⁷ The DOTY Awards event has been a consistently successful and growing initiative for *Western Living*. Based on its predecessor, the Residential Design Awards, the first awards took place in September of 2008 at the Ritz-Carlton hotel and residences (which no longer exist). This first evening was a cocktail-style party with awards presented halfway through. The initial round of

⁴⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁷ Tara Schmidt. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. January 2012.

invites included 500 people, and the staff at *Western Living* were hoping that at least 200 would show up. The total attendance on that first night was over 300. Attendance has only continued to increase year to year.

The awards were so successful in Vancouver that *Western Living* decided to expand the event in 2010 and hold an awards evening in their second largest market, Calgary. Not only are many readers located in Calgary, but also in 2010 many of the winners had come from Alberta.⁴⁸ Because so much of the work being recognized had come out of this region, and the Vancouver event was already such a success, the next logical step was to roll out the event across more of *Western Living's* markets. The Calgary event was not as large as its Vancouver counterpart, but it too is growing quickly. In 2011, anticipating this growth, former publisher Kim Peacock flew to Calgary in 2011 to find a larger space.⁴⁹ The first event in 2010 was a simple, 100-person cocktail party. By the following year it had grown to over 200 guests.

⁴⁸ Anicka Quin. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. March 2012

⁴⁹ *ibid*

4. Conclusions

Any published magazine has two goals. One is to serve the reader and the other is to serve the advertiser. At times, these goals can be directly at odds. A successful magazine is one that manages to maintain an equilibrium between the two. As technology changes, the demands of each of these parties can shift. Such was the case with *Western Living* in the 2000s when advertisers' desires began to shift. No longer was static ad placement in the pages of a magazine enough to satisfy advertisers. This moment in time was also pivotal for the magazine as editorial changes were being introduced and the format of the magazine was being transformed to better connect with and reach readers. To do this, the magazine shifted its editorial focus to include a broader spectrum of design. This meant a change in the format of the magazine: i.e., what front-of-book content and standing elements would be included, as well as an overall change in what the *Western Living* brand would be.

The emergent view that continues to guide content decisions focuses on two objectives. One is that *Western Living* be seen as an authority on Western Canadian design on the cutting edge of this industry's news. The other is that *Western Living* remain representative of the Western Canadian region, from British Columbia to Manitoba. These two editorial objectives must be pursued in an environment in which marketing and sales works to attract advertisers. These two departments must build and maintain *Western Living's* brand as a leader in the Western Canadian design community, increase exposure of this brand across Western Canada, and make a profit for the magazine. The DOTY Awards has allowed these departments to meet their goals while maintaining a balance of editorial and advertisement. In the creation and delivery of the DOTY Awards, *Western Living* represents the positive ramifications that non-digital arts can have on the creative economy in Western Canada. As Tara Schmidt puts it:

The awards are a way to celebrate distinctly Western Canadian design and to give exposure to designers who are doing unique work in their prospective fields. The caliber of the judges gives a real sense of authority to the awards and has been a big part of their growth. The event connects designers from a variety of industries (fashion, interior design, landscape, etc.) who wouldn't necessarily have an outlet to meet one another and be inspired by one another outside of Designers of the Year. Essentially, the awards showcase talented Western Canadians while the event brings them together to share the experience of celebrating the top notch design coming out of the West.⁵⁰

Central to the creative economy is the creation of jobs in multiple sectors and the establishment of meaningful relationships between the various industries of the creative sector. Such relationships can encourage the growth of the creative economy, which in turn can drive innovation, increase participation in arts and culture, enhance tourism, and in and of itself, catalyze.⁵¹ Finding data on these five outcomes can be difficult because, as Lorimer notes, data on the creative economy often only scratches the surface of the total economic consequences incurred. By tangibly meeting these five criteria as I outline below, the DOTY Awards is illustrative of the positive effects that an arts-oriented affair can have on the Western Canadian economy.

Chiefly, the DOTY Awards employs many people across multiple, but meaningfully related sectors. Throughout the production of the magazine, various experts are needed within the staff alone. Editors plan the editorial calendar, write and edit content, and work with art and design staff to produce the ultimate aesthetic of the publication. Freelance writers work peripherally by submitting articles and getting paid for these services. Marketing works to organize the actual logistics of the event. The sales team brings in advertisers who must submit their completed advertisements and logos via the FTP server. This creates work within the advertiser's organization, which must hire someone to do their graphic art. Then, Amanda Ross is brought on temporarily to take the lead on organizing entries and judges. Freelancers are assigned to write profiles of each of the winners, and photographers are hired to photograph their portraits. Interns, who are paid nominally, are used at this stage to help plan, as well as

⁵⁰ Tara Schmidt. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. January 2012.

⁵¹ Rowland Lorimer. *Dreamcatcher towards a creativity/innovation strategic plan for British Columbia : a BCreative 2012 conference report*. Vancouver: CCSP Press, 2012, 6.

to create relevant copy for the print magazine, and organize the day of setup. And even though the event relies heavily on contractors, many – from planners and waiters, to those who set up audio-visual requirements and provide security – are paid employees on the day of the event. All of this is simply the job creation around the actual event. In addition, there is the increase in commercial value experienced by those designers whose work is featured.

Further, even though the designers' work is central to the event, the DOTY Awards is more than a celebration of its designers. The awards are a celebration of innovation in design. The event does not exist to simply commend designers whose work is already recognizable. The intention of the event has always been to bring acclaim to designers who are doing innovative work, or, as Amanda Ross states, “[to] keep celebrating good design in the west and [recognize] who is having a banner year.”⁵² This is why *Western Living* puts so much energy into sourcing a number of designers, new and old, from all over Western Canada. And categories like Eco Green exemplify this desire to drive innovation. This category does not yet have concrete boundaries or guidelines, and Anicka Quin acknowledges that the field is growing and does not yet have very recognizable names.⁵³ The work that *Western Living* is doing in seeking judges who can serve as experts and putting forward designers whose work embodies green initiatives, is creating and defining an industry in and of itself.

The DOTY Awards also generate more participation in arts and culture. Whether in a growing field or an existing one, or just on the night of the event, people are coming out to appreciate design. By sourcing new designers from across Western Canada, *Western Living* is encouraging artists to engage with their community and then providing them with a vehicle by which to do so. On the night of the Vancouver event, almost 1,000 people come out to support artistic endeavors. The Calgary event adds hundreds of people to that number. Advertisers are suddenly striving to align themselves with the event and what it represents in the artistic community. This trickles down to the reader, who is engaging with content that teaches them to appreciate the artistry involved in

⁵² Amanda Ross. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. February 2012.

⁵³ Anicka Quin. Interview by the author. Vancouver, B.C. March 2012.

some of their favourite designs. And by bringing exposure to designers, readers are more likely to participate in the arts by actually purchasing their products.

The lucrative value of the event also extends to the enhancement of tourism. The hundreds of people who turn out for the event – featured designers and their guests, advertisers and their guests, industry hosts, judges – come from all over Canada, making Vancouver a destination during its run. Now, with the second event, the DOTY Awards is doing much the same for Calgary.

And finally, the DOTY Awards event is an example that is, in and of itself, catalyzing within the design industry. The DOTY Awards are also actively defining and legitimizing the design community in Western Canada. As a result of the awards, the most creative, innovative, and capable people in design are meeting and exchanging ideas every year. As the event continues to grow, the job market around it will also continue to expand. This will be manifested in many ways: expansion of staff at *Western Living* as budget constraints can be lifted; increased requirements for day-of event staff; and even growth within the designers' own businesses.

The DOTY Awards have had a positive impact not only on *Western Living* but also on the community. *Western Living* needed to modify its editorial content to sustain readership, keep up with advertiser demands, and legitimize its brand as an authority on western Canadian design. By expanding their coverage of content to include a larger range of design, *Western Living* made its brand one of authority within the Western Canadian design community. Their subsequent event, the DOTY Awards, not only helped to further legitimize this position, but also provided their advertisers with the kind of multi-platform marketing options they required. The benefits of the DOTY Awards beyond this have been plenty. The DOTY Awards has created jobs, driven innovation, and encouraged more participation within the design community, and has managed to grow and become more successful each year. The DOTY Awards were part of a solution to *Western Living's* changing editorial and advertisement requirements, but also illustrate the value of the creative economy in Western Canada.