P-Essay

A Dynamic Interactive Process for PSA Inter-club Competitions

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During the past 20 years, although the St Louis Camera Club attempted to participate in the Photographic Society of America's (PSA) Inter-club competitions, the efforts failed to generate much participation or excitement. But now, the club participates in all six Inter-club Competitions: **Photojournalism; Photo Travel; Nature; Electronic Image; and both Color Projected Image Division competitions: International Color Inter-club Competition (ICIC)** and **International Creative Color Competition (ICCC).** Twenty-five to forty-five photographers enter fifty to ninety images in each inter-club competition. Most of the entrants are newer members. Participating in the Inter-club Competitions brings club recognition, creates a club spirit, brings individual's recognition, and opens a current and creative connection between PSA and the club.

Promoting participation in the competitions is the initial important step and this is accomplished by advertising on the club's front web page under the Calendar of upcoming events; announcements at club meetings and reinforcement through email reminders. New members need to know that the competitions are open to all who are club members, not just PSA members. Announcing the type of competition educates newer members in the rules specific to a PSA Division and through participation, members bind closer to the club and begin to have a connection and understanding of PSA.

The St. Louis Camera Club images are chosen democratically by utilizing the Internet: entering images into an inter-club competition is a direct process through the web site. Members go to the club web site, click and go to the entering process. This is identical to entering the weekly competitions, which helps familiarize people with the process. Members are encouraged to submit two images in the inter-club competitions and this allows participants to receive feedback on which of the two images the other members view as the strongest.

The images go to a special folder on the web where the inter-club coordinator, using File Transfer Protocol (FTP), drags them to her computer. The coordinator compiles a "Pair Voting" site. All participants are sent an email with the link to the "Pair Voting" site and are encouraged to vote for the strongest of each pair. The purpose of this vote is to eliminate one of each pair. The voting process is simple for the participants; they click on the "My vote is to keep the 'left image' or 'right image' ." The coordinator gets an email and cuts and pastes the votes into Excel, which compiles the votes for each image pair.

After the pairing vote is complete, the coordinator copies the winning image of each pair onto a "Final Vote" web page. The coordinator sends an email to each participant and they vote "1st through 6th Place," a "Mine," or "Pass." Each vote has a numeric value. "1st" and "Mine" both get a 6 point score. 2nd through 6th receive 5 through 1 points, respectively. A "Pass" receives zero points. Giving the equivalent of 1st Place points to the participant when they vote allows them to be free to evaluate all of the images, ranking all images without concern for their image. The coordinator, again using a cut and paste method, puts the results in Excel to automatically tabulate the winning images.

On each of the voting forms, participants may place comments. Samplings of comments include: "What fun!" "Great pictures." "Tremendous photos." "This method is great." and "Choosing only 6 images is difficult." Learning how to evaluate images is a sensational side benefit for the members.

After submitting the vote, participants are directed to a link called "What is PSA?" http://www.stlcameraclub.com/psa/psa what is it.php, as a way of promoting PSA membership. This has assisted in increasing our club's membership in PSA.

A web page with the top scoring images is produced and publicized to the membership. These are the images that are sent for the particular competition. When the competition results are received, this page is modified, showing the scores and any awards. And, the top-scoring image of each competition is featured on the club's home page for additional recognition of a member's honor. It also makes the inter-club competition part of the club's internal competitions.

To encourage our members to look at other camera club web sites, the results table at the

bottom has active links for all participating clubs with web sites. Links on each of these pages to other inter club competitions are included as well.

The St. Louis Camera Club hosted the judging of three of the Inter-club competitions. The judges were selected from inter-club award winners and all members of the club were invited to attend. It was enlightening to see the quality of the images from all other participating clubs and it gave several of our members valuable experience in judging.

There are a total of six Division Inter-club competitions and a combination of twenty-one inter-club competitions in a year. One hundred twenty images are needed to enter all six areas. St. Louis Camera Club averaged more than sixty images to begin each competition vote. Strong images were entered as a result of participants voting and photographers benefited by partaking in the process.

Results of the club's efforts included a 4th Place in EID, 2nd Place in Photo Travel, and 1st Place in both Color Projected Image competitions: ICIC and ICCC. As of this writing, the club is awaiting the results from Photojournalism. Over thirty club-member images received individual awards. At the club's Award Ceremony, a Pro Show Gold® presentation showed all of the images submitted for inter-club competitions and certificates were given to individuals who received awards in the competitions.

The two expenses for inter-club competitions are time and inter-club costs for fees and mailings. The fees and mailing expenses were covered through a few dollars collected from the photographers whose images were selected for entry. The time was contributed by the club members participating, the coordinator, and last, but not least, the web master, **Wade Clutton, FPSA, EPSA**, who worked with the coordinator to create and modify the web site. St. Louis Camera Club now has an easy and dynamic interactive process for Inter-club Competitions.

This process shows the powerful potential of a web site to serve the club members as well as to promote PSA. PSA membership has increased in Region 4 by more than 61% in the past year. Photographers finding success in inter-club competitions then have confidence to join and participate in PSA as an individual. ∎