

And the winners are...



By Kimala Naidoo

The gold at the Innovative Awards for New Media 2003 went to an online book about the Atlantic slave trade, an Arab newspaper, and a science website.

Manu Herbstein's www.ama.africatoday.com, which has published the book *Ama, A Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, was announced winner of the individual category. In 2002 the book won the Commonwealth Writer's Prize. Herbstein beat off tough competition from other finalists, including Herman Manson's Media Toolbox (<http://www.media-toolbox.net>), and Nandiphotos.com, a photo gallery of people in Uganda, developed by Vincent Mugaba (<http://www.nandiphotos.com>).

Al-Ahram Online (<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg>), the online version of the Arab newspaper Al-Ahram, won the corporate category for its focus on science, technology and ICTs, and its independent coverage of the Middle East, especially the recent US-Iraq war. Al-Ahram beat competitors like eLink Publications (<http://elinkpublications.co.za>), and AfricaWoman (www.africawoman.net).

Janice Limson's Science in Africa (www.scienceinafrica.co.za), which won in the non-profit category, addresses scientific research in Africa. "It started off as a hobby to communicate science understandably," said Limson, a biotechnology lecturer at Rhodes University. "Now it reaches 50 countries."

There were 44 entries for the awards this year. Roland Stanbridge, journalism lecturer at the University of Stockholm in Sweden, a judge, said: "These awards are not just for sites that look good, but for those that address the needs of the continent."

For more information see www.highwayafrica.org.za.



New Media Awards: from left: Ahmed El-Gody (accepting the award for Al-Ahram), Janet Limson for Science in Africa *Ama, a story of the Atlantic slave trade*. Photograph: Trevor Crighton

disadvantages

too Cool for Blacks", African American writer Leonce Gaiter says that more problematic than the physical problem of access is the nature of the Net itself, which clashes with African-American culture.

Why is this? After all, the web is cool. The web is "new, chaotic, shamelessly undisciplined, alternately revolutionary and reactionary, the web, by nature, butts heads with entrenched Afro-American cultural truths. It mocks some of [American] fundamental beliefs, [and] core desires".

Gaiter says: "The web is considered a place. We call it cyberspace. We visit a website. The web is presented as a series of landscapes or neighbourhoods."

"...Through decades and generations of cross burnings and redlining and beatings and bombings and harassment, black Americans are wary of majority space. The web is no exception to the rule."

Some suggest that the web is the great uncolouriser, the great colour barrier dissolver, because in cyberspace, one doesn't know what colour one's audience or conversation partner might be.

"But suggesting," says Gaiter, "that black Americans would take solace in conversing with those

who would not show hatred or bigotry or cultural chauvinism toward them only because the other party didn't know they were black – that's insulting in the extreme."

We know of many examples of hate speech, hate blogs – or weblogs – and hate email online; this – in a way – is also a creator of the digital divide. In this case, access is not denied – but hate serves as a barrier to entry.

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