

THE 2012 DELL MAGAZINES AWARD

It was another record-breaking year for submissions to The Dell Magazines Award for Undergraduate Excellence in Science Fiction and Fantasy Writing. Once again, my co-judge Rick Wilber and I chose our finalists from a huge pool of talented authors. And once again, we were delighted to have all the finalists in attendance at the 2012 International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts in Orlando, Florida. The award, which includes a five hundred dollar first prize, is co-sponsored by Dell Magazines and the International Association for the Fantastic and is supported by the School of Mass Communications, University of South Florida. It is given out each year at the conference.

Top honors went to Rebekah Baldrige for her complex and moving time travel tale, "Superpositions." Rebekah a junior at Newman University, is a student of English and philosophy. Her love for improv is matched by her love for the Classics. Rebekah studies writing with Bryan A. Dietrich. Bryan's name may be familiar to readers of this magazine because his poem "Edgar Alan Poe" was the winner of our own 2010 Readers' Award Poll.

Madeline Stevens, our first runner-up, is a freshman at Bennington College. In 2010, she attended Diane Turnshek's Alpha Writers' Workshop for teens and she is returning to the program this summer as a junior staff member. Madeline received her award certificate for the heartbreaking "Halcyon Days."

Although the awards' final outcomes are decided by a blind read, we were pleased to see familiar faces among the recipients. Our second runner-up Rachel Halpern is a three-time finalist. A senior at Grinnell College studying English and Spanish, Rachel is considering an

MFA program in the fall and is pursuing some entrepreneurial online ventures. She accepted her certificate for a chilling tale about "The Taste of Salt."

Rick and I had such a hard time choosing stories this year that we ended up with a three-way tie for third runner-up. Once the decision was in, we discovered that two of the three recipients were well known to us. Lara Donnelly is a fourth-time finalist for the award. A senior at Wright State University who had just been accepted into this summer's Clarion Writers Workshop, she received her award for the dark, yet delightful "Case of the Smitten Magician." Another Wright State senior, Anthony Powers, was a finalist two years ago and returned to accept his award this year for "Opus 4: Duet for Expressionism and Absinthe." Anthony is a painter, fencer, fire performer, and multi-instrumentalist. At the conference's request, he treated us to a piano performance during the evening's cocktail reception.

The third branch of this talented triumvirate, Brit Mandelo is quickly becoming a force in the SF field. Brit, who studies at the University of Louisville, blogs at *Tor.com* and has recently been appointed a fiction editor at *Strange Horizons*. She received her award for the eerie "Writ of Years."

While Brit was new to our contest, our two honorable mentions were known entities. Rebecca McNulty, another three-time finalist, is a senior at the College of New Jersey. Rebecca is an English major who has worked as a ghostwriter for online media. She received her award for the bittersweet "Sister Kite." Our other honorable mention, and fellow three-time finalist, E. Lily Yu, received her award for the evocative "Ilse, Who Saw Clearly." Lily is a senior at Princeton



Photo credit: Francesca Myman, Locus Publications.

Left to right: Anthony Powers, Rick Wilber, Lara Donnelly, Rebecca McNulty, Rebekah Baldrige, Madeline Stevens, E. Lily Yu, Brit Mandelo, Rachel Halpern, and Sheila Williams

University studying English and biophysics. In 2011, she was second runner-up with a captivating tale about “The Cartographer’s Wasp and the Anarchist Bees.” Soon after last year’s conference, she sold a revised version of the story to *Clarkesworld*. The tale is now a finalist for the Nebula and the Hugo, and Lily is a finalist for the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer. We hope you will join Rick and me in wishing Lily and our other finalists the best of luck with all their future endeavors.

As usual, the students were warmly welcomed by a number of leading authors. On Friday night, they had dinner with Nancy Kress, James Patrick Kelly, Kit Reed, and Joe Haldeman. At Saturday’s banquet they dined with Rob Sawyer, Nick DiChario, and Kathleen Ann Goonan. Other writers at the conference included Suzy McKee Charnas, Ted Chiang, Stephen R. Donaldson, Andy Duncan, Kij Johnson, Nalo Hopkinson, China Miéville, John Kessel, Pa-

tricia McKillip, Sandra McDonald, Rachel Swirsky, Peter Straub, Nick Mamatas, Delia Sherman, and Karen Joy Fowler.

You can visit with previous finalists and current writers at our Facebook site. Search for the **Dell Magazines Award** or go directly to <http://www.facebook.com/pages/manage/#!/pages/Dell-Magazines-Award/177319923776>

We are actively looking for next year’s winner. The deadline for submissions is Monday, January 8, 2013. All full-time undergraduate students at any accredited university or college are eligible.

Before entering the contest, contact Rick Wilber for more information, rules, and manuscript guidelines. He can be reached care of:

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Next year's winner will be announced at the 2013 Conference on the Fantastic, in the pages of *Asimov's Science Fiction*

magazine, and on our website.

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Editor's Note: Dell Magazines invites you to take a peek into the publishing world. Join our four fiction titles at the Brooklyn Book Festival, NYC's largest free literary event, for author signings, giveaways, subscription deals, writers' guidelines, and more.