

Skunk River Review



Contributors: Alan Hutchison, Bonne Doron, Ann McBee, Bethany Sweeney, Judy Hauser, Marian Tonhouse, and *Skunk River Review*: Various editions from 1989 to 2018.

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Left: Cover from the 2012, Volume 24 *Skunk River Review*. Photographed and designed by Ashley Ramey.

Skunk River Review (See OpenSPACE@dmacc for various editions ranging from 1989 to 2016). Link to 2016-2018 edition: [HTTPS://WWW.DMACC.EDU/DEPARTMENTS/ENGLISH/PAGES/CONTESTS.ASPX](https://www.dmacc.edu/departments/english/pages/contests.aspx).

The *Skunk River Review (Review)*, a publication written **by and for students** from Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC), began in September of 1989 through the inspiration and editorship of Alan Hutchison, Professor of English, and Dayna Pittman, English Instructor. As Hutchison pointed out, the magazine was originally designed to be an affordable teaching tool to introduce DMACC students to the “idea of workshopping essays.” Students now had the opportunity to evaluate “simple, not perfect” essays where they would “not feel intimidated,” stated Hutchison.

Hutchison explained how early editions of the *Review* were typeset, requiring detailed, hands-on organization to create a final print copy. This intricate manual work shifted over time, and as I recall, various technological resources, such as the computer, floppy disks, and so on, were being used in the submission of students’ work and overall publishing process. Judy Hauser, retired English Professor,

shared how she was part of a group who transferred the publication to the Web. At that time, the publication was made accessible online; however, Hauser also noted that paper editions were provided to those students whose work was published and were also available to those teachers who wanted to use a document in the classroom.

Eligibility for how students could enter their work has experienced some variations along the way as well. For the most part, however, students submitted an essay(s) during the year in which they were enrolled in an eligible class, as I remember. Students might enter the competition either directly, or at times, through an instructor's recommendation, both, or variations of this process. According to Ann McBee, Associate Professor of English and current co-editor of the *Review*, students may enter their written work themselves and/or an instructor can make the recommendation for consideration.

Upon reviewing various volumes of the *Review* on OpenSPACE@dmacc and English Department Web page, I noticed that many of the earlier essays were drawn from core writing classes and a literature class; however, that grouping expanded over time to include not only core writing classes, but also additional contributions from various literature classes, humanities, and film. (Note: A complete listing of the [eligible classes](#), [on-line forms for submitting an essay](#), and [prize-award information](#) can be found on the Web: "English Department", "Contests and Publications," which is through the editing work of Ann McBee and Bethany Sweeney, Associate Professor of English/History (see [HTTPS://WWW.DMACC.EDU/DEPARTMENTS/ENGLISH/PAGES/CONTESTS.ASPX](https://www.dmacc.edu/departments/english/pages/contests.aspx)).

I also noticed from observing these on-line editions of the *Review* that the majority of the volumes also included a cover page. Cover pages ranged from artwork in the early years to photos of the Skunk River from various locations in Iowa later on. DMACC photography students would enter their pictures of the Skunk River for consideration of being chosen for the front page, as this writer recalls. Judy Hauser also pointed out how the 2013-2014 publication included a front-page photograph by Maria Cochran, DMACC Professor of English. However, after I reviewed subsequent publications, it does not appear that a cover page for that publication is included online today.

In addition to changes to the cover page of the *Review*, students' work underwent varying degrees of editing and presentation formats. Alan Hutchinson discussed how essays initially received no editing; whereas, over time, published essays received a variety of alterations, such as spelling and so on. Judy Hauser also shared that the use of the author's photograph as well as an explanation of the essay's writing requirements were initially introduced to the publication through Sharran Slinkard, retired Professor of English. While that structure varied over time, currently, each published essay includes a photo of the student as well as an explanation and rationale of the assignment. In addition, as Ann McBee wrote, even a brief biography is included when students submit work.

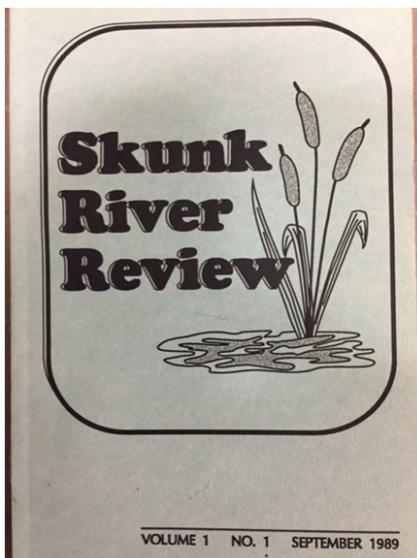
Other noteworthy elements include how essays and photographs have been chosen for publication. Over the years, this selection process has varied; nevertheless, faculty judged the essays, and the photography received evaluation for the cover page as well. Depending upon the selection process for students' essays, which also changed over time, either some or all essays have been chosen for publication. Being published is one level of recognition; nevertheless, it has varied over the years. For example, students have received prize awards of varying types, such as cash awards, and so on.

Some benefits in the classroom for using the essays from the *Review* for in-class workshopping continued over the years. Bonne Doron, retired English Professor, noted that the publication was helpful for her students to analyze and to assess essays from other DMACC students rather than from a

textbook filled with general essays. She viewed these published essays as especially beneficial for her students' future work, such as the case when analyzing comparison/contrast strategies prior to composing future documents, such as comparison/contrast essays. Doron added that, at a later time, many writers, students, or others may "suffer a lack of confidence in their writing." She wrote how students who have the opportunity to assess this type of published work in conjunction with being chosen to enter their own essay, enables them to "see themselves as a true, worthy writer." Doron so aptly pointed out: "That kind of valuable self-worth should help beginner writing students to succeed in life."

Benefits from the opportunity of being published were experienced by students in other ways as well. Judy Hauser shared how she would encourage students to redo their work even after their essays had already been given a completed evaluation. Also, having their work shown in a publication was an incentive for her students to enter the competition. In addition to the valuable incentive of being published, I believe that having an essay or photograph recognized and enjoyed by others may also bring a lasting, visible reminder of the creative artistic gifts of one's own thoughts, feelings, and overall spirit as seen through the image captured by the photographer and the words composed by the writer.

As is evident, many students, faculty, and staff contributed to each volume spanning from 1989 to 2018. The best way to appreciate all their contributions is to take time to review the volumes that are so readily available online today at OpenSPACE@dmacc for various editions ranging from 1989 to 2016. According to Bethany Sweeney, the 2016-2018 edition of the *Skunk River Review* is now available for viewing. The English Department Website identifies the most recent edition among others and can be found at: [HTTPS://WWW.DMACC.EDU/DEPARTMENTS/ENGLISH/PAGES/CONTESTS.ASPX](https://www.dmacc.edu/departments/english/pages/contests.aspx).



Left: Cover for the first Skunk River Review. Volume 1, No. 1, September 1989. Designer of cover is unknown.