DIGITAL MAGAZINES: **BEST PRACTICES**

AMPA welcomes digital-first members, and our definition of digital magazines is always evolving to stay current. In addition to fulfilling the requirements listed in our Membership Policy **albertamagazines.com/ membership/member- guidelines**, here are tips to help decide if your online publication qualifies as a digital magazine.

DEFINITIONS: GETTING ON THE SAME PAGE

Digital edition (digital facsimile, digital replica):
"Distribution of a magazine's content via electronic means," such as a PDF, "flipbook," electronic newsstand/library, app or web edition, according to the U.S. Alliance for Audited Media. The Association of Magazine Media in the U.S. still requires its member brands to have a "print anchor."

Digital magazine:
In August 2017, Magazines Canada released guidelines that say a digital magazine: "Must either define itself to the public as a magazine or not define itself as other than a magazine. The magazine must be a publication of a cultural, social, economic, political, special interest, consumer, business media or artistic nature."**magazinescanada.ca/wp-content/up- loads/2017/08/magazinesCanadaDigitalMembershipConsultation2017.pdf**

In short, a digital magazine in Canada should have many of the same hall- marks and values as a traditional-media edition of a magazine.

LESSONS FROM PRINT

Some hallmarks of traditional magazines help define your digital publication as a magazine. They include:

Advertising
· Paid advertising appears in demarcated (with words and visual disclosures) advertising space/units (such as those defined by the IAB). **iabcanada.com/ iab-standards-and-guidelines/digital-advertising-guidelines/**

· Paid content follows industry best practices (i.e. No undeclared product placement or unlabelled native content).

· Creative staff produce the publication's editorial content without any advertising or promotional consideration.

Masthead
· Listing of magazine administrative (advertising, office) and editorial/creative staff and contributors, and how to contact them, in a "contact us" section or similar.

· Guidelines for contributors who may want to submit ideas or work to your magazine.

· Means to contact creative staff to provide feedback, or the equivalent of a "letter to the editor."

Content
· Magazine stands behind the facts and opinions in its content, and takes steps to verify the accuracy and credibility of content before publication.

· Best practices of copyright and intellectual property protection are respected, and all content is credited to its creators.

DIGITAL MAGAZINE CHECKLIST

To establish credibility and trust with readers, there are certain industry-standard features that act as litmus tests.
A true digital magazine should check all or most of these boxes:

- ☐ Does it have a consistent name/title that is part of its URL?

- ☐ Does it generate revenue through advertising or other activities?

- ☐ Does it sell/offer subscriptions (including to an e-newsletter or e-zine that links to the online publication)?

- ☐ Does it periodically post content updates according to a consistent calendar?

- ☐ Is its content curated into streams, editions, or themes (not just posted most-recent first), some of them regularly recurring?

- ☐ Is its content >50% original (not made up of aggregated news or links), and does the content go beyond reacting to something that already existed in the media or on the Internet?

- ☐ Is there professional oversight with an editorial function (commissioning of original content, directing contributors and preparing material for publication)?

- ☐ Does it feature original content from multiple contributors (writers, photographers, artists, animators, audio artists, videographers) and pay them for their work (not just represent one person's point of view)?

- ☐ Does it use a publishing platform with features such as search, commenting and archives, with a unique design (vs. from a supplied template or on a shared social-media platform)?

- ☐ Does the content remain as-is after posting (with any modifications noted), or is it iterative and constantly evolving?

- ☐ Is at least 50 per cent of the material posted content, and no more than 50 per cent advertising and/or paid content?

- ☐ Does it have a verifiable audience of (suggested numbers from Magazines Canada): paid subscribers (100); user-registration or application-based circulation (1,000); open-access unique visitors (2,500 unique monthly visitors)?

IF IT LOOKS LIKE A DUCK AND QUACKS LIKE A DUCK…

It's also helpful to define, with help from the Magazines Canada guidelines, what a digital-only magazine is not:

- · Not content created by a single user or on shared platforms (such as blogs or social media).
- · Not publications with the majority of content aggregated from other sources or platforms (including news, listings, directories, reviews, guides, wikis).
- · Not content generated by algorithms, artificial intelligence or other non-creative means (like financial results, schedules, calendars).
- · Not e-mail newsletters that do not link to more substantive content.
- · Not publications that are predominantly made up of puzzles or games.