

boding headline, “YOU WILL SURVIVE,” is followed by the subhead “Hellish things can happen to you, so here’s how to stay cool and pull through some of life’s most threatening moments.” Those 16 moments include being caught in a tornado, being pulled over for speeding, having your 5-year-old walk in on you during sex, having your car plunge into a lake, overcooking dinner and arriving in casual clothes at a formal event. Seriously. It sounds like something *The Onion* would do.

If *Women’s Health* sincerely wants to improve on the women’s fitness formula, it needs more than fast facts and fluff. To stand out, it needs to differentiate itself from its rivals. If it had solid stories about real women, sports (since there’s more to life than cardio machines and yoga) and athletes, rather than the same old celebrities, that would make me sit up and take notice.

SEED

Circulation: 150,000

Date of Birth: November 2001

Frequency: Bimonthly

Price: \$4.95

Natural Habitat: In the lobby of a Harvard research laboratory next to *Wired* and *People*

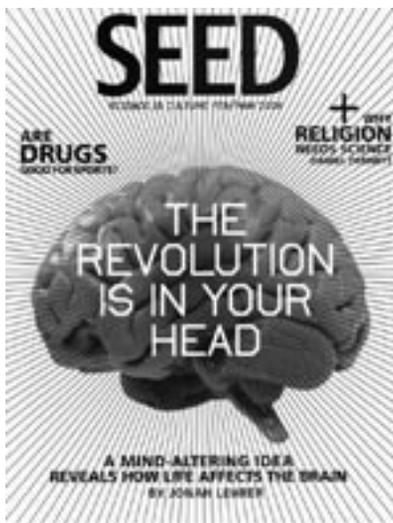
BY BREE NORDENSON

If you’ve ever browsed the science magazine rack, you may have noticed that most of the publications fall into one of two categories: science for scientists and science for dummies. With the tagline “Science is Culture,” *Seed* treads the middle ground between *American Scientist* and *Popular Science*, emphasizing the practical implications of the discipline without oversimplifying them. While it could be argued that *Scientific American* occupies a similar niche, *Seed* distinguishes itself by placing science at the center, rather than the periphery, of social discourse. “Science is driving so much of our culture these days,” says founder and Editor-in-Chief Adam Bly.

Reborn last fall after suspending publication for almost a year, *Seed* is owned by Seed Media Group, which also runs scienceblogs.com, a science news aggregator called phylotaxis.com and an online version of the magazine. After a year at McGill University, Bly, now 25, dropped out to start *Seed*, the realization of his passion for “communicating science to the public.” A science prodigy of sorts, Bly is the youngest research assistant to have worked for the National Research Council of Canada, where he studied cancer. He founded the magazine in 2001

and moved it from Montreal to New York City in 2002.

As might be expected of a science magazine created by a young entrepreneur, *Seed* is hip. The glossy advertisements for liquor, luxury cars and high-tech gadgets cater to a young, educated readership. The writing style also leans that way. For the most part, the approach works, but on unfortunate occasions it backfires. Examples of *Seed*’s gimmicky inclinations include comparing the speed of a star to a celebrity fleeing the paparazzi and likening the repulsion between matter and anti-matter to “a marriage teetering on divorce.” The magazine is as unlikely to earn a reputation for being cutting-edge as it is for being serious about science when it uses the phrase “like, duh” and abounds with pun-inspired headlines like “Pucker Up For Safety.” Such tabloid-style prose calls into question a central claim in the magazine’s mission statement—that



it provides “thought-provoking content.”

With a sleek, modern look created by a recent winner of a National Design Award, *Seed* has achieved a successful aesthetic—not too sterile, not too flashy—that conveys the magazine’s merging of serious science with current culture.

Seed’s content is a mix of news, analytical essays and reported features on topics ranging from physicists’ philandering to breakthroughs in understanding prime numbers and Africa’s burgeoning scientific community. It is organized into a long front section called “notebook,” a smaller front section dedicated to the latest scientific findings, a series of longer features and a back section of reviews. With the exception of “notebook,” the sections fulfill their function of propelling the reader through the magazine. At more than 20 pages, the “notebook” section

is too long to exist without an organizing principle. The use of separate categorical subheadings for its individual articles only adds to the reader’s confusion.

While *Seed* succeeds in covering a variety of interesting and scientifically relevant topics, some articles fall flat. In the February/March issue, the cover story addressed recent research in neurogenesis (the growth of new neurons) by neuroscientist Elizabeth Gould. Although informative, this article, like several others in the same issue, is presented amateurishly. Its organization is tentative, with awkward transitions between scientific explanations and descriptive reporting. When he characterizes Gould’s finding that stress inhibits neuronal growth as “startling,” writer Jonah Lehrer tends toward hyperbole. While the field of neurogenesis is relatively new, the nature-versus-nurture debate isn’t. Saying the “structure of our brain ... is incredibly influenced by our surroundings” is hardly a revelation.

Of the many writing formats found in *Seed*, the straight interviews are most effective. In the February/March issue, the magazine explores Literary Darwinism, an interpretive framework for literature that emphasizes evolutionary theory, by interviewing one of its foremost scholars, Jonathan Gottschall. The format allows Gottschall to explain his work casually, presenting the reader with a comprehensible account of a somewhat arcane theoretical framework. “Salon,” *Seed*’s designated interview section, presents lengthy conversations between scientists and experts in other disciplines. What makes the interviews successful is their ability to communicate the complicated ideas that emerge when science is examined through a cultural lens.

Perhaps the strongest piece in the February/March issue is an essay by Chris Mooney calling for scientists to communicate more effectively with the public, especially given “science’s newly exposed political and cultural vulnerability” under the Bush administration. Mooney notes that “too many [scientists] have grown accustomed to the security of their labs and university communities, occasionally lamenting the American public’s poor understanding of science but doing little in a concerted way to improve it.” The article is well-written and inspiring, and it encapsulates the magazine’s mission—to bring science to the forefront of culture.

Bly succeeds in creating a science publication that is interdisciplinary and culturally relevant, but in his aim to make *Seed* “the fresh face” of science magazines, he overreaches. The stylish graphics and

punchy headlines may have contributed to a newsstand sell-through (the percentage of distributed copies sold) that is well above average, but they also reflect the magazine's central shortcoming: a lack of sophistication. Bly's attempt to create a "gutsy" and "bold" publication has ultimately overshadowed his simultaneous effort to make it "authoritative." As a magazine still in its infancy, *Seed* may well be on its way to balancing intrigue with intelligence, but it's noticeably not there yet.

FOLIO:

Circulation: 9,605

Date of Birth: 1971

Frequency: Monthly

Price: Free online; free hard-copy subscription to U.S. "applicants" who "qualify"; \$116 for international subscribers. Natural Habitat: Not on a newsstand; most likely on a computer screen belonging to a magazine publishing company executive or media specialist investment banker.

BY THOMAS GOMMES

F*olio*., the self-styled "Magazine of Magazine Management," is more than just an ordinary trade magazine in the conventional sense of the term; it's at the forefront of the modern shift away from the outdated concept of the magazine as a physical compilation of information distributed at periodic intervals. *Folio*: (yes, the colon is part of its name) describes itself as "a multi-channel, multidimensional information source, using print, online and face-to-face delivery to bring actionable information to the publishing community."

The print version of *Folio*., available only by subscription, is but one component of a series of services. The suite includes *Folio*mag Online, *M10 Alert* e-newsletter, *Online Content Channels*, *Folio: Superbook*, *Folio: Show* and various creative, consulting and trade show services. The company's annual trade show in New York has been an industry staple for the past 31 years.

Whatever the delivery format—hard copy or online—the core editorial content remains consistent and targeted at those already familiar with the magazine business. Editorial departments include Executives Perspective (interviews with publishing executives), *CircXtra* (a sporadic section offering articles about magazine circulation), and *M&A Scorecard* (analyzing media mergers and acquisitions). In addition, a Publishing



Technology department addresses the question of how technology is changing the face of magazine publishing and how the industry is adapting (or failing to adapt). Each issue also includes several columnists.

The articles are for the most part consistent with the magazine's stated goal of providing "actionable information to the publishing community." The February 2006 issue featured a lead story reviewing the top M&A media deals of 2005. Shorter articles offered information about capitalizing on "Webinars" (online seminars) and working with the Audit Bureau of Circulations to add objectivity to magazine-sponsored subscriber studies. Longer pieces covered debt-based financing for magazine growth, a look at Wasserstein & Co.'s growing magazine portfolio and techniques for ensuring timely magazine publication.

It has to be said that there is something haphazard about the organization of the magazine. The irregular scheduling of departments such as *CircXtra*, for example, disrupts the magazine's continuity. Moreover, occasional articles attributed simply to *Folio*: staff raise accountability concerns and questions about the reliability of the information. And many of the articles read a bit like products of a magazine-industry mutual-appreciation society. Adding to the confusion, the past two years have seen an expansion in the *Folio*: suite of products and a shift in the delivery format away from print and toward an online presentation.

Some of these problems may be attributable to a change in management. In August 2004, Red 7 Media LLC, founded by Kerry Smith, a former executive of the publishing powerhouse Primedia, assumed full responsibility for producing the magazine and managing the ancillary services (although Primedia has maintained an ownership

stake). Nevertheless, there are signs that the change has helped to strengthen what had started to become a flagging brand name. All aspects of the *Folio*: enterprises cater to publishing professionals, but the target market also includes mergers-and-acquisitions bankers. The home page of the online edition, for example, includes a link to a website co-hosted by a financial firm specializing in mergers and acquisitions within the media industry. As early as 2003, when the magazine was still widely distributed in hardcopy format, the editors were running stories as relevant to the financial sector as to the magazine industry. This equal treatment of banking-relevant topics and pure magazine-industry topics makes *Folio*: read at times like a magazine suffering through an identity crisis.

On the whole, however, *Folio*: feels ahead of the curve both in its delivery methods and its choice of articles. In the January 2006 issue, Tony Silber, the magazine's editor and publisher, wrote a piece examining the difficulties traditional magazine publishers face as the industry moves further away from print and closer to an exclusive Web presence ("The World's Toughest Transition"). In the next issue, senior editor Bill Mickey wrote about the difficulties of merging print and digital subscription files.

In many ways, the magazine itself embodies both the positive and negative aspects of the transition that the whole magazine industry is today undergoing. Will print magazines eventually disappear? *Folio*: is hedging its bets. Meanwhile, in whatever format, it remains largely unchallenged as the industry's primary trade journal.

THE WALRUS

Circulation: 43,000

Date of Birth: September 2003

Frequency: Monthly

Price: \$5.95 (Canada)

Natural Habitat: On a glass coffee table in your upscale Toronto flat next to an anthology of great Canadian poetry.

BY ARI PAUL

There are many cultural icons that help our neighbor to the north define Canadian identity, such as ice hockey, "The Kids in the Hall" and mounted policemen. *The Walrus* is one more.

This monthly magazine aims to give Canada a place to put its collective pen to good use. Ken Alexander, a Canadian writer and literary aficionado, had a love for American magazines like *The New Yorker* and