

Harper's but saw no equivalent in his home country.

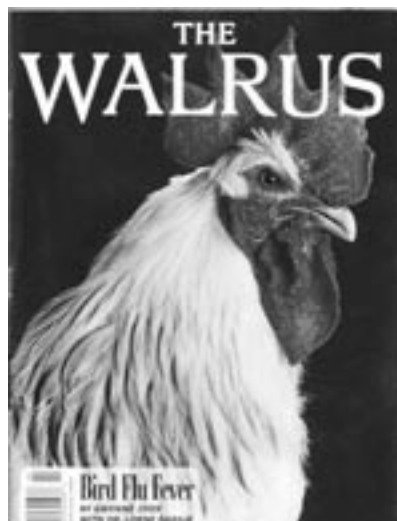
"I was interested in a magazine that would exist as part of something larger. At the time, there were numerous stories about Canadian media concentration and consolidation," Alexander says on the magazine's website. In prose less elegant than he might find in the magazines he admires, he adds: "It is true, whereas in some areas of the world there are a plethora of voices, it seems that here there are fewer and fewer. So I envisioned a magazine functioning as part of a multi-pronged approach at getting divergent views out there."

He launched the magazine in 2003 with David Berlin. The front of the book features small stories from around the globe and columns on sports and politics. The lengthy features in the middle are followed by fiction, poetry, and an arts and culture section. Based in Toronto, the small staff produces a glossy, erudite monthly, and in its history *The Walrus* has been nominated for several (Canadian) National Magazine Awards.

*The Walrus* frequently features an up-and-coming fiction writer. Much of the foreign correspondence is written by Canadian nationals. The magazine also examines the less pleasant aspects of Canada we Americans might not otherwise see. Julian Sher has a story in the February issue about Thomas Sophonow, who is "one of the disturbing number of wrongly convicted people in Canada—a victim of police and prosecutorial misconduct."

*The Walrus'* views on politics are nuanced but undeniably left-leaning. The February issue profiles and critiques one of Canada's most prominent public intellectuals, Michael Ignatieff, the Harvard professor and *The New York Times Magazine* contributor who, at the time, was poised to become a new member of parliament representing the Liberal Party. The writer, Alex Mazer, a Canadian law student, questions his devotion to Canadian liberalism by citing his support for the war in Iraq and "his willingness to countenance coercive interrogation practices in terrorism-related emergencies." The subtitle of the piece says: "*The New York Observer* wrote that Michael Ignatieff left Harvard 'to save the Canadians.' Why have his writings led some to wonder if we need saving from him instead?"

*The Walrus'* adherence to a political ideology has caused the magazine to miss the mark in some of its political commentary. In the coverage leading up to Canada's January elections, political writer Joan Bryden speculates that discontent with the Liberal



government in Quebec would mean that the separatist party would gain votes. Although it turned out that she was right, she went on to predict that the Bloc Quebecois' increased presence in the race would make it harder for the Conservatives to win than for the Liberals—and the Conservatives won in the end. But beyond coverage of Canadian politics and culture, does *The Walrus* offer anything new to the North American reader in the rest of its pages, which cover foreign news and reviews of books that can be purchased in the United States? A look at the February issue suggests that the answer is yes. It contains reports on Latin America's political move to the left and a town in Iraq made up solely of women because all the men have left.

Such reports could easily fit into an American general-interest magazine, but their placement in *The Walrus* allows them to have a fresh viewpoint. After all, had either of these stories been featured in *The New Yorker*, *Harper's* or *The Atlantic*, they would have had to comment on how the United States is affected by such developments or to what extent they are a consequence of United States policies. This is not the case with *The Walrus*. Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales are not fighting off the yoke of free trade and economic policies imposed by Ottawa. Nor is that town in contemporary Iraq living under a Canadian military occupation. Because Canada is seen as relatively benign to the international community, foreign news can be covered and analyzed in a detached way that is not possible in American periodicals.

*The Walrus'* residency on American newsstands thus gives readers here a new perspective on foreign events as well as a glimpse into the nuanced culture and politics of our often-ignored neighbor.

**YES! A JOURNAL OF POSITIVE FUTURES**

Circulation: 31,000  
Date of Birth: 1996  
Frequency: Quarterly  
Price: \$6.50  
Natural Habitat: On the kitchen tables of progressive activists, in between the organic oranges and the soy milk.

BY JENNA FISHER

Over a carton of Chinese food a few months back a family friend asked me, as a journalism student, what I thought of news today. I went on a short rant about the sensationalism and the fearmongering that seems so omnipresent in the news media.

When I stopped to take a breath, she mentioned *Yes!*, a small, alternative magazine with a positive approach to issues in the news.

I decided to go pick up a copy, but it turned into a hunt. I tried magazine stands and bookstores around the city. At each place, my search among the racks was unsuccessful. Finally, I had to give up and find someone to help me. Inevitably, our conversation would go something like this:

"Excuse me, do you carry *Yes!* magazine?"

"Yes!?"

"Yes."

"*Yes!* magazine?"

"*Yes!*" I'd say, thinking he'd have it.

"No."

The most difficult thing about the magazine may be finding it. On its website, the publishers of *Yes!* provide a list by state of where you can pick up a copy if you don't want to order it online. If you can wait a couple of weeks, *Yes!* will send you a free copy of their latest issue. If that's too long, the user-friendly website has almost every article posted.

When you do get your hands on *Yes!*, you will find a magazine that believes people are tired of just griping about problems in the world; they want solutions. The premise is that there is positive social change afoot, but because progress is not widely visible in the mainstream media, the magazine must, according to its website, "give visibility and momentum to these signs of an emerging society in which life, not money, is what counts."

When *In Context*, a magazine with a similar philosophy, folded in 1995 after 12 years of publication, one of its staff members, Sarah Ruth van Gelder, along with a few of her colleagues, felt strongly that the concept of providing practical solutions was

too important to die with it. So with no capital and working on old computers from the basement of a rented house on Bainbridge Island, off the coast of Washington state, they conceived *Yes!*

At 64 pages, the magazine may be small, but it doesn't feel wimpy. Its sturdy cover and all the inside pages are printed on eco-



friendly New Leaf paper. On the back cover, a chart outlines how many and what kind of resources *Yes!* saved by using the recycled paper.

*Yes!* appears four times a year, with each issue treating a different theme, such as "Oil," "Aging," "Place," "Media" and "Healing." The articles don't try to avoid serious social problems in an attempt to accentuate the positive. Instead, they propose positive solutions. Although the magazine seems to cater to an environment-friendly, human-rights minded, anti-war readership, the solutions its writers offer sound very doable.

A timely article titled "Resurrect New Orleans: A Better City is Possible," began by criticizing Bush and Republicans, but it went on to outline a plan that included using "rebuilding to lift the poor to safer economic and social ground." An illustration caption read, "New Orleans can be rebuilt on higher land built up from Mississippi sediment to protect it from future high water." The idea was to build higher and let wetlands return to protect the area naturally.

Other articles in the Winter 2006 issue dealt with the importance of debt cancellation for developing countries, the workings of fair trade in Uganda, the protection of indigenous rights and an alternative homeless shelter in Alaska. At times, there's a tinge of anger in the activist tone that accompanies the uplifting news of progress.

I was impressed with the scope of *Yes!*'s

inclusiveness in its issue on spirituality, which ranges from Wicca to Judaism to the Native American perspective. Both Bible quotations and Sufi wisdom are spread throughout, making the idea of a "spiritual uprising" begin to feel like a valid answer.

The magazine is a nonprofit company that does not seek or accept advertising. Van Gelder says that about 40 percent of *Yes!*'s income is derived from subscriptions and single-copy sales (although the \$6.50 cover price is bound to make you think twice). The rest comes from private donations, support from the publishers' own foundation and sales of back issues.

Many of the articles are written by outside contributors who work for nonprofit groups. Some are excerpts from books, newspapers or other magazines. *Yes!* is peppered with Web addresses for learning more about the subject matter at hand.

Though it has its weaknesses, the 10-year-old *Yes!* is filled not only with good intentions but also with good sources for those looking to further their grassroots social activities. Many of the articles are insightful as well as uplifting, and they make it worth shelling out the six-and-a-half bucks. At least once.

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**

Circulation: 5.25 million in North America; about 9 million worldwide

Date of Birth: 1888

Frequency: Monthly

Price: \$4.95

Natural Habitat: On a library shelf, surrounded by 100 yellow-framed counterparts.

BY ELEONORE MARCHAND

For more than a century, *National Geographic* magazine has survived the perils of the magazine jungle while transporting its readers to obscure corners of the world—as well as many familiar ones. As part of the National Geographic Society, the largest nonprofit scientific and educational institution in the world, the magazine's circulation has grown to nine million worldwide. Its back issues, with their yellow-framed covers, have become collectors' items, and the National Geographic brand is recognized around the globe.

The founding of the National Geographic Society in 1888 led, nine months later, to the creation of the magazine. "Its pages will be open to all persons interested in geography," the first issue announced, "in the hope that it may become a channel of intercom-

munication, stimulate geographic investigation and prove an acceptable medium for the publication of results."

The magazine has always seen itself as an educator, but in its articles the 19th-century academic tone has been replaced by writing that can be entertaining as well as informative. And photography has become the publication's most striking and distinctive element. At the turn of the 20th century, the decision to include photographs in the magazine was highly controversial and led to the resignation of some of the Society's board members. Today, it is impossible to imagine the magazine without its photography. Last year, Chris Johns, a distinguished photographer, became its editor-in-chief.

The reader can browse through a 128-



page issue without being interrupted by advertisements, which are restricted to the front and back sections. There are usually six to eight features in an issue, which gives the editors the luxury—rare in the magazine world these days—of spreading a story over as many as 30 pages.

The magazine's editorial style allows the reader to hear, see and feel the authors' experiences. In the September 2005 special issue on Africa, author Binyavanga Wainaina describes Nairobi: "There is something magical about the moment when the light softens and the city stops glaring and the people are removed from themselves by this hour of transition: Vendors packing away their mobile shops; children cut loose from school, shrieking on their way home; workers on their black Chinese-made bicycles, ringing bells, hurling warnings and threats; people everywhere streaming through alleyways