



**AKE:**

**A LITERARY MAGAZINE**

A MAGAZINE REPORT BY  
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## Fact Sheet

**Magazine:** MAKE: A Literary Magazine

**Web Address:** [www.makemag.com](http://www.makemag.com)

**Address:** 2282 W. Dickens St., #3  
Chicago, IL 60647

**Email Address:** [info@makemag.com](mailto:info@makemag.com) (no submissions by Email)

**Founded:** 2004

**Managing Editor/Director/Co-Founder:** Sarah Dodson

**Frequency:** Biannual

**What They Publish:** Nonfiction, Fiction, Poetry, Interviews, Reviews

**Submission Guidelines:** There is an 8,000 word limit for fiction and nonfiction, and work is accepted in English or Spanish. No hard copies or e-mail submissions are accepted. Submissions are done through a link on the website which directs you to a one page form to fill out and send. Include a cover page.

**Reading Period:** Includes the weeks before and after deadline, but submissions accepted year-round

**Simultaneous Submissions:** yes

**Reporting Time:** Two months, if not sooner

**Contributor Payment:** Payment is in the form of a contributor's copy

**Mission Statement:** MAKE expands on the Chicago tradition to entertain and to inform.

**Average Page Views per Month:** 1000 printed copies per issue and an average of 160 readers on the website each day

**Average Percentage of Pages per Category:** Fiction 30%, Nonfiction 30%, Poetry 25%, Reviews 5%, Interviews 10%

## **Why I Chose MAKE Magazine**

I was pleasantly surprised when I picked up this slick, fresh looking magazine. The texture of the pages felt weighted, mature, and I was glad to find that the content fit the quality of its presentation. The stories were clever and a little abstract, like “Bookmarks” by Spencer Hendrixson, in which he wants to be a bookmark when he dies. I appreciate writing that’s not easy to digest. It should sit inside a while and even bother you.

Once I found out that MAKE is based out of my Chicago neighborhood, Logan Square, I was sold. I have a great investment in Logan Square as a community. I have a Logan Square-focused blog, and both my husband and I work for places with a large presence in Logan Square. I am interested in literature as a community experience; MAKE is very active in the community, holding events around the area and fostering connections with community endeavors like the Danny Reading Series.

## Issue Comparison

	Spring/Summer 2008 Issue 6 The Experiment	Fall/Winter 2011 Issue 11 Neither/Nor	Winter 2012 Issue 13 Exchange/Intercambio
Prose : Poetry	8:10	17:7	13:8
Male: Female (Writer)	10:9	15:16	13:8
Male:Female:None/Both (Protagonist)	3:3:2	5:10:1	7:4:2
1st:3rd:2nd (Point of View)	6:2:0	15:2:0	10:3:0
Novel:Magazine:1st time (or didn't say)	7:9:0	14:9:14	13:7:1

The most shocking observation from this breakdown is the overwhelming bias toward first person point of view. Almost all of the nonfiction pieces were told with a distinctive first person voice. I expected to find more variety in fiction, but fiction pieces were largely in first person as well. This motivates me to work on more first person pieces—I tend to write in third person. I would like to submit my work to MAKE sometime soon. While reading through some of the first person pieces, it was apparent first person can be very strong, which reveals some reason toward MAKE's first person bias.

The other thing that stuck out to me was the variation between authors who have published novels, been published in magazines/online journals, and haven't been published at all. In Issue 11, there were equal numbers of authors who had published novels and authors who had never been published (or didn't say.) But in Issue 13, the novelists lead significantly. This is encouraging because I feel MAKE is not biased toward accomplishment. They just choose good work.

## Story Reviews

### Spring/Summer 2008, Issue 6, "The Experiment"

*Unlikely* by Amy Leach is a plainspoken essay in a domestic setting. She introduces herself from a plush arm chair suspended in the air over a garden. Then she explains her belief in infinite parallel universes with infinite Amy Leaches doing identical things. Her desire to be "the Only One," different from the rest of her copies, leads her to end up in the chair above the ground.

Reading this essay is like listening to a sci-fi daydream. "The thought of them all, and especially the thought of the ones who digress not, was dissolving my disposition. Every time I tripped or chewed or rolled my eyes, I thought, 'We trip, we chew, we roll our eyes.' I did not like the Amy Leaches. We did not like the Amy Leaches (16.)" She speaks in such a tone of commitment to this idea that we cannot help but be in its grasp. It is confusing, but I commit to it because I want to know her belief in this world. It pushes the imagination on how to think of oneself and the universe(s) around us. It is not clear why this is considered nonfiction. Perhaps it is because it was a real dream or that she actually believes there are multiple versions of herself. But one thing is for sure: she is not currently levitating in a chair above a garden, though the thought is nice.

*The Library of Babel: An Infinite Translation* by Daniel Wuebben is a plainspoken essay in a domestic setting. It describes the way a computer program called "The Infinite Translation" works to arrange and rearrange translated words into a "long experimental lottery." "It randomly selects words and creates a line of approximately eighty characters (20.)" After ten seconds, it disappears and refreshes. It can generate roughly 8,640 lines every day. Wuebben shares the intricacies of this program as it relates to Jorge Luis Borges' short story *The Library of Babel*.

The essay begins with a sample of nine translated lines from Borges' piece. It borders the nonsensical and the poetic. After the lines, a quote from Borges asks: "is translation more than the long experimental lottery of omissions and emphases?" This set-up affects the almost dry reading of the details of the experiment. It reads like a science report, but by giving the effect first (the presented translation) and the question second (Borges' quote) I appreciated the report more. Although it takes a lot of stamina to read through, it ends with a nice reason for the experiment. "We hope that we vanishing/reshuffling line of the infinite translation ... offers readers a new path through Borges' text (21.)" It reminds me of those magnetic words for the refrigerator—the ones you move around and create random phrases or sentences with. It provokes the imagination and sometimes inspires. Reading this essay helps me appreciate the groundwork it takes to allow people to become more imaginative.

### **Fall/Winter 2011, Issue 11, "Neither/Nor"**

*The In-Between Time* by Ira Sukrungruang is a plain-spoken narrative creative essay in a domestic setting. The story is a first person narrative about Sukrungruang as a boy who is chronically left home alone between the hours of 9pm and 11:30pm—the hours his parents' work schedules overlap. A phantom cat and squeaky chair, possibly combined with memories of his parents fighting, frightens him enough to call his best friend, Kevin, to take him away to his house for the night.

The voice of the little boy is simple, but it is caught in the torrents of an overactive imagination, giving the story a feel of magical realism. "And it was rocking and squeaking. I want to say there was a shape to the shadow ...I want to say that the shadow pointed its finger at me" (48). The sentence: "but the can. I heard it." And: "but the chair. I heard it." These sentences stand alone in their own line with space on either side. The isolation of this line amplifies the

boy's fear. Choices like this draw empathy from the reader. The story is also broken down into subdivisions with titles: "How I Tell the Story," "What I Leave Out," "What I Tell Myself," "What I Imagined Happened," "The Next Day," and "That Night." This gives nice chunks of scene and moves the story like setting up a camera from different angles.

*The Boy and the Girl in the Honeymoon Suite* by Timothy Schaffert is a plain-spoken piece of fiction in a domestic setting. Two children, a girl from an orphanage and a boy from a boarding school, fall in love and meet up in secret places. They find themselves in an abandoned hotel in a honeymoon suite and decide to crawl in the bathtub fully clothed, which leads to their terrifying but peaceful death when the bathtub takes control. It whisks them away like The Captains's boat in Peter Pan and feeds them into the mouth of a machine that kills them.

This story thrives on faking the reader out, taking jarring left and right turns, throwing any sort of anticipation out the window. It begins by messing with the reader. "The boy wears the girl's dress and the girl wears the boy's suit. I'm kidding, of course, but I bet you enjoyed picturing that too (55.)" Then the story quickly dips into fantasy. The girl, Stitch, doesn't have a skull, which gives her night terrors, and she stitches her own head-wound together. The boy, Teddy, pokes her brain when the wound is open. When the children are in the bathtub, dream-like fantasy takes full flight. As they are stitching her wound back together, "...the bathtub's claws unclench, and the tub rises from its perch and it rocks as it drifts up to bump the heads of the boy and the girl against the ceiling" (57.) The story seems to finish in the throes of her nightmares. The story balances the fascinating and the bizarre.

### **Winter 2012, Issue 13, "Exchange/Intercambio"**

*I Am the Christmas Spirit* by Megan Sielstra is a plainspoken fiction narrative in a domestic setting. The first person protagonist, Pamela, speaks in first person about a time her son



Nicky's father, Steve, showed up unannounced at Christmas for the first time after three years. The story moves from present time into backstory of Pamela's relationships with Steve and her critical mother. At one point, Pamela observes a janitor lady at her gym who has on a sweatshirt that says I AM THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT across the front and AND SO ARE YOU across the back. All these things impact Pamela as she learns to navigate the waters as a single mother.

The structure of the story is memorable. It opens up with a scene of Pamela doing spelling flashcards with her two-year-old son, and it ends the same way but earns a new weight and meaning. The voice is particularly honest, letting us in on the things that affect her. "It's mini-Steve!' everyone says when they first see Nicky; then they look at my face, turn red and backpedal, trying to get their feet out of their mouths, because they suddenly remember that Steve didn't want this little boy" (149.) The story is simply told, much like a person who has been through tragedy would retell a story. And that somehow adds to the pain of the story even more.

*Access* by Adam Levin is a plainspoken fiction narrative in a domestic setting. This is a third person story about a woman who empathizes with her dog because she loves it. Her approach is to imagine the taste of a sweaty sock because the dog particularly likes them. Her boyfriend shows up in the middle of her trance-like state and criticizes her effort. He argues, she defends and they end up having sex.

This story is almost play-like, composed mostly of dialogue, making it quick and easy to read. It is also only one page long, but the effect drills deep. It's like a quick slap to the face. It all comes together in the ending sentence. After the boyfriend basically spits upon the idea of his girlfriend doing something as weird and gross as imagining the taste of a sweaty sock to love her dog more, "they moved closer together ... and bore down on sex. Parts were spat on and slapped.

Parts were licked and admired. Twisted, accommodating faces were made. The whole thing was gross, but the good kind of gross (165.)” The seemingly insignificant interaction and daily banter the two reveals deeper meaning about what each would do to love others (people and dogs) better.

## **Interview with Sarah Dodson, Co-Founder/Managing Editor/Director**

**ALICIA HAUGE: You wear a couple of different hats: Director of Make Literary Productions, NFP and managing director of MAKE: Literary Magazine. Plus you have been publisher, poetry editor, nonfiction editor, not to mention a founder of MAKE. How has your ownership of MAKE changed over the years?**

SARAH DODSON: Initially, I was working more directly with the magazine—choosing content and editing. Then, as the organization that would soon be the publisher of MAKE was formed, I delegated the editorships. My main role now is to keep everything moving forward and to make sure there is enough funding to do so. When we started, we were funded through advertising revenue. Now, we are a 501c3 organization that seeks grants and contributions, in addition to income through magazine sales. I still have creative input, but I also spend a lot of time using Quickbooks.

**AH: What is the MAKE Literary Productions?**

SD: It's the 501c3 charitable organization which does a number of things, including publishing the magazine and producing events. As an organization of this designation, we have with a greater capacity for producing projects and more viability.

**AH: MAKE has been around since 2004. What was your mission as a literary magazine in the beginning? Has it changed?**

SD: Though our mission has evolved, the core of it remains the same. In the beginning we wanted to create a printed format in order to bring the different literary communities of Chicago together. This was to ensure that Chicagoans were aware of each other's writing, and to provide

a way for Chicago to be represented nationally. Though we remain a Chicago-based organization, the scope of the magazine and the programming has changed. We now understand the value in including writers and visual artists from outside of Chicago, in order to elevate the stage for Chicago arts. We now have greater distribution for the magazine, which means we reach a wider audience. In the end, we hope this means the readers and writers consider Chicago to be the literary mecca that we think it is.

**AH: So you feel like it has remained true as a Chicago magazine?**

SD: Yeah, I think so, because I feel defining what a Chicago magazine would be is difficult. I mean, if you want to just define it as just Chicago writers, then that it is not. It's a publication that works hard and relies on its community for support. In that way, we're a very "Chicago" institution.

**AH: MAKE was born in Chicago and is about storytelling in Chicago, but now your staff is located in different parts of the United States. Is there still a sense of cohesion?**

SD: We're actually pretty lucky in that most of the staff was in Chicago at one point, and we were able to get together in person before some editors moved to either coast. We're also fortunate to be a group that works well together. There's a lot of respect for the work that each editor is doing, and that strengthens the individual work.

**AH: Was it demand for MAKE that encouraged the choice to spread out?**

SD: The distribution has been growing since began the publication. Also, when we started, we were in the beginning stages of adulthood. As the magazine aged, so did we, and with that came

a lot of big changes in the form of marriage, babies, and new careers outside of Chicago. Having editors physically in places like New York and Los Angeles, has allowed us meet new writers and other publishers in person, as well as attend and hold events outside of Chicago more easily. The internet is what allows us to create a publication while being so spread out, but there's something significant about making personal connections.

**AH: Do you consider yourself a young publication? Well-weathered? Or in-between?**

SD: I think we're somewhere in between because when we started we were so young—meaning we started a little behind the line. I think that we've grown a lot since we started doing perfect bound issues. We always took the project seriously, but at that point, it "matured." Also, we're each much more comfortable as editors and more familiar with the production process, and because of that, we're able to make smarter decisions.

**AH: The first issues were around fifty pages. Issue 11 was around 100 pages. Is that because of more submissions or because of how you wanted to change the magazine?**

SD: It's a little bit of each I think. The initial page count was all we could afford, but from the get-go, we wanted to include more work. As we found more funding, our page count grew. Currently, each editor is responsible for twenty pages of content, though it's always negotiable. We, like most publications, now use an electronic submission database and that has substantially increased the number of submissions we receive.

**AH: How has the approval and editorial process had to change? What is it like now?**

SD: It's more organized now. We've written down the process in steps, and it's available for reference. It's a little different for each editor. For example, Kamilah Foreman, the fiction editor, works with more associate editors to cover the work, because they are just more fiction submissions. Also, in this last issue, we had Spanish translators, so that changed the whole process. In general, we have a reading period before and after the submission deadline, and then the section editor works on the selected pieces with the author.

**AH: How do you collaborate with a writer? Is there a lot of heavy editing after submission?**

SD: There usually is not a lot of heavy editing, because we tend to choose pieces that are complete—as in the author has taken the time to have others read the work and to proofread the piece.

However, the editors will make minor suggestions. Also, the proofreader will find things no one else did—always.

**AH: I'm curious about content and how it has changed. You've always included fiction, non-fiction, poetry, artwork, and interviews. But you've also included plays, like the Tennessee Williams' play in issue six. Why have you settled on certain forms? How has content shifted or been emphasized in different ways?**

SD: I think it just really depends on the theme, and the particular interests are of the editors at that point. We're definitely not closed off to anything. We've had some very non-traditional work, as well as first-person narratives.

**AH: In Issue 11: Neither/Nor, I noticed a lot of non-traditional approach. There are almost dream-like pieces, like Timothy Schaffert’s “The Boy and the Girl in the Honeymoon Suite.” Is this influenced by issue theme mainly, or is it because this is who MAKE is as a publication?**

SD: The choice of that piece was definitely influenced by the theme. Issue 12, which is out after Issue 13, is a little more traditional—a little more emphasis on structure. In issue 13, the theme is exchange, such as the exchange of language, among other things. Styles vary issue to issue. The only thing we hope remains the same is the emphasis on the quality of the contents.

**AH: How much of the personal opinion of the editors is reflected in the content?**

SD: Each editor reads beyond their own personal preferences. A portion of the work in each issue is solicited, and through those selections, the preferences of the editors are most evident.

**AH: Aesthetic seems to have a lot of attention. Since Issue 8: This Everyday, there was a significant design change on the cover, where the MAKE was less obvious and a quote is sprawled across it. Other things like font and texture have also changed. What are the reasons for some of these aesthetic changes and why is it important to MAKE?**

SD: Beginning with issue #8, Johnathan Crawford became the Creative Director. He created a new graphic design identity for the magazine, and that included everything down to each font. The cover is meant to portray the magazine as having both a literary and visual arts focus.

**AH: How do you feel that reflects the writing?**

SD: I think it shows we are concerned with presentation. We want to do well by our contributors, by putting their work in a format people will want to look at even before they know what the stories are. We also wanted to create an object that is itself a vessel worthy of the work it contains.

**AH: Where do you see MAKE magazine physically resting in people's homes?**

SD: Well, I've seen them in some bathrooms, but ... I think on coffee tables available for people to browse through. We started putting an image on the back of the cover instead of an ad so that it is more of an object that people will want to collect and showcase.

**AH: How much does your budget come from ads?**

SD: Who might purchase an ad varies depending on when the issue comes out and who is in the issue. Roughly a third of the budget comes from advertisements. It's not as much as in the beginning, then again our budget has grown too. We transitioned from a partnership to a nonprofit because we realized our time was better spent seeking grants than ads for a magazine with a very specific audience.

**AH: Do you feel like MAKE has had to adapt in any way? Or have you always set a standard you won't budge from?**

SD: We've adapted to changes in the publishing world. In addition to the print publication, we also offer an electronic version, as well as more content online. We, somewhat, follow the LP



model. We print fewer copies of each issue, but we've increased the quality of the paper and have included more color.

**AH: Can you tell me about your literary community? Who do you consider family?**

SD: Of course there's Joel Craig who is the poetry editor. He runs the Danny's reading series. (<http://dannys.noslander.com>) Everyone he works with has been very supportive of MAKE. And Featherproof Books (<http://www.featherproof.com/Mambo/>) and MAKE kind of started at the same time and we started learning the ropes together, like how to get a table at AWP. The Green Lantern Project (<http://press.thegreenlantern.org>) is a good buddy. We often share a table together with them at events. Elephant Rock Books (<http://www.erpmedia.net/books/>) is a new friend too.

**AH: How have you received encouragement from them?**

SD: There's always social media shout outs and stuff like that, but you know they've got your back when it comes to events and conferences. Publishing a magazine means hauling a lot of boxes, so it's always nice to have someone who can lend a hand or at least commiserate.

**AH: Who do you feel like your readers are? Do you feel like your audience is becoming wider or more specific?**

SD: I think we have a broad audience, and I think that has to do with the different themes and the wide variety of contributors. We're always trying to find new audiences by participating in events outside of the literary community and including writers whose work might be consider more commercial or trade-oriented.

**AH: Why do you continue to do this?**

SD: Sometimes it gets really, really hard. For issue #13, we were up literally all night long to get it to the printer. I'm sure each of us has asked, at some point "Why am I doing this?" But meeting a satisfied reader or having the opportunity to put someone's work out there that would have gone unrecognized makes the question obsolete. With the bilingual issue, we're publishing translation in a small publication, and though it took so much more time than expected, we're really proud to have stepped outside our own comfort zone to create it, and we look forward to introducing our readers to writers who have not been previously published in the U.S.