



## Incwriters State of the Industry Speech

Given by Andrew Oldham at Manchester Central Library, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Committee Room  
on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

**Any competition creates** controversy, no final list can ever be universal but it can reflect a moment in an ever changing industry and it can celebrate the diverse nature of that industry.

It has been four years since The International Network and Community of Writers established the Outstanding Contribution to Literature (Magazines). The award is biannual and proves that even in a short period of time, Literature changes, from the decline of Zembla to the rise of new magazines, such as, Brand and Succour. Showing that the industry continues to grow and bring in new editors, new writers, new poets, new designers and new voices. Many established magazines and publishers, such as, Stride, have forgone hardcopy publishing for the internet. This is, as many of us believe, is a funding choice. This is not true. Incwriters has proven, along with such publishers as Route and Comma, that you can bridge the gap between the virtual and the real, between e-publishing and publishing. That gap, since Incwriters was initially established as Inc. in 2002, has not only shrunk but has become a mutually beneficial relationship to those publishing on the web and in the real world.

Incwriters reaches over 100,000+ readers a year through its imprints and events, it continues to post information about publishers on its forum and more importantly it is run by the very people every publisher wants, readers.

Our online community celebrates Literature in the UK and in the past four years we have read over 500 magazines. Many of them fly by nights that land in the industry with a noise akin to poets discovering a critic in a pub, neither see daylight again; to those with long term plans who acknowledge the power, the common sense and the need to network utilising live events and the web.

Incwriters acknowledges the hard work and long hours that many editorial teams put into their magazines only to be met by poets who do not read poetry, writers who do not read prose. To the editors who face this ignorance everyday we want to say that we understand and for those poets and writers who feel that they shouldn't ever read, we say one thing, grow up and support the very industry you want to support you.

It is not good enough that a magazine is vibrant or of interest if it is not supported by the very people who want to appear on its pages.

This is why the Incwriters OCL(M) award garners interest and controversy, we are open in our judgement. We know any negative comments or positive platitudes for any magazines will not fox the intelligent reader, we know they will seek out the final twenty publications and make the final judgement for themselves by subscribing.

Incwriters welcomes an overdue discourse between publishers on the future of publishing in the UK and we have established forums for this at our website.

All magazines that made it to the final twenty, should be applauded, they were not chosen by academics, writers or poets but by readers. All these magazines reflect a diverse field from Post-modernism, to SF, to Gay Literature and to Translation and should be celebrated.

There is one thing we should all strive for as publishers, editors, writers, poets and readers, excellence or should I say outstanding vision? We should all seek out that publication that with each turn of the page allows the hair on the back of our necks to stand up. Magazines that capture beauty of language, greatness of design and gives readers ideas beyond the final page.

Every publication in the final twenty did this. They showed that UK Literature continues to grow and that the high street sellers who have neglected them for so long are losing out. That the likes of Waterstones, should rush forward to create window displays full of Interzone, Banipal and Penniless Press and that everyone in this room today should subscribe to at least one of the magazines in the final twenty.

Incwriters would like to thank Manchester Libraries for their continued support, the judges Andrew O'Donnell, William Park, G.P. Kennedy, Cath Nichols and Libby Tempest and to all the magazines, old, new and long gone that have supported us since 2002.