

## Deaf Artists in America Wins Benjamin Franklin Award



**D**eaf Artists in America: Colonial to Contemporary (San Diego, CA: Dawn Sign Press, 2002) by Dr Deborah M. Sonnenstrahl, which profiles 62 Deaf artists and their work, won the 2003 Benjamin Franklin Award in the Education/Teaching/Academic category.

The Benjamin Franklin Awards, sponsored by the Publishers Mar-

keting Association, recognizes excellence in independent publishing. Titles published during the previous year are judged on editorial and design merit. Judges come from all areas of the industry: major newspaper and trade media reviewers, bookstore and library buyers, non-competing publishers, artists, and writers who serve the industry. Winners are recognized for setting the standards and the pace for the publishing industry.

Dr Sonnenstrahl is professor emeritus at Gallaudet University, Washington, D.C., United States. Currently she acts as a consultant, advisor, panelist, and judge for numerous national organizations and museums including the American Association of Museums and the Smithsonian Institution. She also works as a museum and art exhibition docent and has served on the Art Forum Planning Committee at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. **WFD**

## Haiku Competition: Poetry Meets Technology

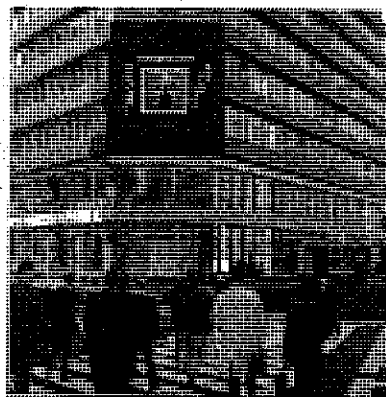
by Kathleen S. Smith

**C**ombining an ancient Japanese poetry form with the expressive beauty of American Sign Language and Japanese Sign Language, a haiku competition for Deaf college students has become an important cultural component of an international programme whose main focus is on technology.

The Robert F. Panara Haiku Competition is sponsored annually by the Postsecondary Education Network International (PEN-International), a first-of-its-kind educational partnership that is funded by the Nippon Foundation of Japan (see WFD NEWS, December 2001, p. 37). The contest was named for Dr. Robert F. Panara, a renowned Deaf poet, actor, and educator, who was the first Deaf faculty member at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York, United States

While its primary aim is to develop faculty use of instructional technology, PEN-International also encourages cultural exchanges and social interaction. So when Professor Jerome Cushman, who was then teaching at NTID but is now retired, proposed the idea of a haiku competition between American and Japanese students, it was warmly embraced as a way to humanize the focus on technical education that is its backbone. The first competition was held in 2001.

The competition thus far has



In March and April 2003 the Nippon Foundation displayed a video of students performing their haikus on the two-story-high screen on the outside of the foundation's headquarters in Tokyo's busy Akasaka business district. The video can be viewed at [www.pen.ntid.rit.edu/news/level2.php?a=haikumovie](http://www.pen.ntid.rit.edu/news/level2.php?a=haikumovie).

Photo by William Clymer

involved Deaf students from NTID and Tsukuba College of Technology (TCT), Japan. Competitions are staged separately at both colleges, but video conferencing allows the students to watch each other's performances. Professor Cushman manages the

NTID competition; his Japanese counterpart is Professor Midori Matsufuji, a professor of English at TCT.

"The unique point of this contest is the way it is presented," Professor Matsufuji said. "The winning poems are expressed not only in written word but in sign language and sign mime. Having the poems presented through telecommunication technology and via the World Wide Web also shows the potential of technology to aid in the cultural development of Deaf students."

Each school has its own panel of judges who select winners in categories ranging from Best New Poet to First Place Winner. Students must translate their poems into English and Japanese. Prizes include cash awards. Last year's first place winner from NTID, film and animation major Mr Sam Sepah, also enjoyed a trip to New York City, where he per-

The 2002 winning poem from TCT student Ms Sakiko Yajima:

*without hearing aids  
I still hear the bouncing basketball  
banging on the floor*

Mr Sam Sepah's winning haiku from the 2002 competition:

*sunrise  
from the bridge icicles drip  
into a thawing stream*

First prize in the 2003 competition went to NTID student Mr Stephen Hilburn for this haiku:

*on this new year's day  
i long to meet my parents  
as they were before*

The judges deemed this haiku outstanding for "its originality and depth."

formed his winning poem at the Northeast Regional Meeting of the Haiku Society of America.

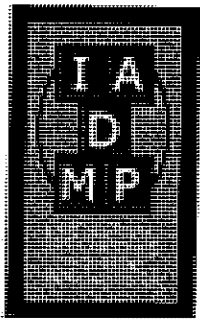
Each year the number of students participating in the competition has grown, as has the quality of their poetry. Professor Panara, one of the NTID judges, said: "I am greatly impressed by the overall quality and achievement of the contestants. It is obvious that these students had fun creating and developing their haiku. The Japanese define haiku as 'pleasure words.' Certainly, they give much pleasure to the reader, who

can identify with similar observations of nature and experiences. The students give a refreshing newness and insight to what we have sensed and experienced. That is the essence of poetry...and these students have justly earned their winning laurels." **WFD**

*Kathleen S. Smith is currently a professional writer working with PEN-International. She previously worked at NTID as a writer, editor, and public information manager.*

## Unified Voice in Deaf Media

by David H. Pierce  
and Joshua Flanders



Television, film, newspapers, and the Internet are an important part of our recreational and educational lives. As significant as the media are to the audience, they are equally important to the professionals who work in the industry.

Whenever an issue comes up that affects media consumers, such as media ownership, vulgarity, targeting advertising to children, negative images, or truth in the news, consumers speak out. On the industry side, when an issue comes up that affects media professionals, they rely on trade organizations to speak out with a unified voice. For example, the Federal Communications Commission does periodic reviews on employment quotas of minorities and women by media employers. The appropriate trade organizations representing these constituencies participate in the reviews by filing comments with the bureau.

This is just one example of how trade organizations are actively involved in government proceedings that affect them. Several factions of the media industry are well represented except for one: Deaf media professionals. Cur-

rently, the only representation that exists for Deaf people working in media are actors' unions: the Screen Actors Guild and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists. There are talent agents that specialize in handling Deaf talent, but no unified voice for Deaf media artists.

What about the Deaf technical and content people in the media industry, such as producers, directors, editors, writers, reporters, and lighting experts? Where is the representation in the industry that caters specifically to their needs?

To fill this gap in the industry, a new trade organization, the International Association of Deaf Media Professionals (IADMP), has been formed. The mission of this organization is:

1. To encourage and develop employment opportunities for Deaf and hard of hearing media professionals in the industry
2. To encourage the showcasing and distribution of Deaf and hard of hearing media content to the general public
3. To provide a venue for networking with Deaf and hard of hearing colleagues and other industry professionals
4. To advocate for the rights of Deaf and hard of hearing media professionals in the industry
5. To foster an appreciation for media content targeting the Deaf and hard of hearing community, and to spread awareness about Deaf and hard of hearing people and their use of media to preserve their culture and heritage

The organization was founded by Mr David H. Pierce, who is chief executive officer (CEO) of Davideo Productions in Seguin, Texas, United States.

IADMP will strive to provide Deaf media professionals with valuable information they can use to further their careers, such as announcements of crew

calls for productions, job postings, grant information, and other funding opportunities.

IADMP will work on forming a unified voice, not only through its individual members, but also through the recruiting of major media organizations to join its organizational advisory board. National and international consumer organizations representing the Deaf and hard of hearing community will also be involved.

With numbers comes power; and by working together, pooling knowledge and talent, the mass media industry will be exposed to qualified Deaf filmmakers, television producers, and news journalists, and be able to finally utilize their expertise to help bridge the gap between Deaf and hearing people and enhance the quality and accuracy of portrayals of Deaf people in media. **WFD**

For information about joining IADMP, please visit the website at [www.deafmedia.biz](http://www.deafmedia.biz).

*David H. Pierce is the owner and CEO of Davideo Productions, a broadcast television and motion picture film production and consulting firm in Seguin, Texas. He has worked in all aspects of television programming and production and is considered to be a "jack of all trades" in the broadcast and cable industry. Mr. Pierce is the inventor of the "Pierce Method for Deaf Editors," an editing technique for cutting video to audio by editors with hearing losses.*

*Joshua Flanders taught English as a second language in Portugal and returned to Chicago in 1996, teaching at various levels from elementary through high school. In 2000 he founded Chicago Institute for the Moving Image (CIMI). As the executive director of CIMI, he is responsible for building and organizing academic conferences, think tanks, and film festivals, and for overseeing all CIMI publications.*