

My name is Ian Cox, and I'm applying for the Designer of the Year category for this year's NSPA awards. Over the past three years, I have worked with my high school's magazine publication, Drops of Ink, to create and design layouts for the magazine. This past school year, I worked on various other tasks, including designing a new cover and masthead, updating the logo I designed the previous year, creating a custom typeface, and creating videos promoting both the magazine and destinations around our local area.

Over the past two years, I worked as the layout and design editor and made various advancements to the design of the publication. During my first year as layout and design editor, I created new, modern, and professional templates for our layout designers to help keep the magazine consistent, professional, and to help improve efficiency for designers. Using what I learned during my first year as the layout and design editor, I made several changes to these templates for the 2019-2020 school year. Changes included additional modernization of the templates and other changes to make it easier for layout designers to know what to change and what to do, aiding in the workflow even for beginning designers. I designed the templates with original paragraph styles, color palettes, and body text, image, caption, and headline blocks. The table of contents was completely redesigned, along with our color schemes. During this past school year, I also created a new, custom typeface that was used within the magazine as body copy. I designed this custom typeface with legibility in mind. Due to the large amounts of text that often is placed on a page, I created the font to be legible and modern, even in small sizes. I also created an entirely new logo and cover redesign to replace our previous magazine logo and cover design. I created custom-designed t-shirts for our staff to wear to promote the distribution of each issue and created video advertisements to further promote our new issues to gain traction and support for each upcoming magazine. I developed and delivered training presentations and procedures to help both new and seasoned layout designers learn more about layout design and to make their work easier, less confusing, and more efficient. The presentations were designed to provide new designers with a good grasp on the basics of design, everything from basic InDesign workflows to choosing powerful and appropriate color schemes and fonts. To make sharing layouts easier, I created a process for designers to share their layouts with me and receive feedback quickly. This, among other procedures, was extremely effective in making the entire process much simpler during the Coronavirus lockdown. The more efficient basic workflows can become, the more people can accomplish in the same time frame. My main ambition since being the layout and design editor has been to make each magazine better than the last and continue helping me and others grow and improve our layout design skills.

Throughout my time as the layout and design editor and the past year, I have improved several of my skills and learned new design principles and techniques. Going along with my overall ambition for the entire magazine, I have always placed the same mission on all of my work. I have improved my skills in color schemes, choosing colors that work well together, and I've improved my skills in designing pages that match the content. Whether this is using color schemes that match with the content or using design features and elements that directly correlate with the content, this has been a skill I've worked to advance over the past year. I've worked to create more visually appealing content, such as custom icons, infographics, and headings. Over the past year, I have also worked to improve text flow and readability, to ensure people can easily understand how their eyes should flow across the page and what order to consume the content in. Designing the typeface was my most ambitious project when it comes to fonts and typeface design. This was a large learning venture that I worked on for several months, working to learn more about fonts and the software I used, FontLab. In addition to developing my skills in FontLab, I also saw immense improvement in my speed, efficiency, and skills in Adobe InDesign over the past year. Outside of design-specific improvements, I also improved my abilities and confidence in leadership roles, as I worked with others on an almost daily basis, helping others, leading others, and supporting others to help them become the best they can be and allow their work to be the best it can be.