

This is an issue of both good news and bad news.

First, there is much good news. In alternate years we publish the winner of the Jacqueline Tatom Award, given by the St. Louis Metropolitan Research Exchange for the best student paper on a regional topic. We're happy and proud to do it—*The Confluence* is about fresh new ideas about our region, after all. It's open to undergraduates and graduate students on most any topic. The papers submitted cover a pretty broad swath, too—public policy, planning, demographics, history, and various combinations of them. These are papers submitted by professors who consider them to be exemplary student work. And they are.



This year's entries were a particularly varied lot, which made the selection process particularly difficult. Most all of them had great merit, and had something interesting to say about our region and about us. On the down side, it made the selection process that much harder. That's how we ended up with a tie between two papers, appearing in this issue, and about as different as two topics can be. Lucas Delort from Washington University uses statistical analysis to discern why some places—say, Delmar Avenue in St. Louis—become racial “Mason-Dixon lines” instead of others like Cass Avenue. It's an interesting article using a very localized sample to answer some much larger questions. And look at his maps—you really have to see them. In the other, Julian Barr from Lindenwood University takes one divorce case file from the St. Charles County Circuit Court to examine domestic violence in mid-nineteenth century America. It's a tough topic to read about, to be certain, but also an important contribution to our understanding of the region's heritage.

Our other good news, of course, is that *The Confluence* has received two awards this year; we feel honored to receive both. One came from the Missouri Humanities Council this past spring, presenting us with an Award of Excellence for Literary Achievement. We received the other in October from the American Association for State and Local History, an Award of Merit for our contributions to public history.

On a quite sad note, we were heartbroken to hear the news of the passing of David Straight. For those who are regular readers, David wrote a regular feature for us on aspects of postal history. When he first proposed the idea, I must admit to being a big skeptical, but his lively writing, excellent eye for images, and gift as a storyteller made these some of our most popular and engaging articles. We'll miss him both personally and as a regular contributor to these pages.