



These Selection Statistics are as of 08-02-2006 (Rev. 2)

Entry Sources

The total number of entries evaluated by our readers in 2006 was actually 1,132. I believe I mentioned 1,200 in a few e-mails, but that higher figure included some “dead” entries: poets who were nominated by a program/magazine but didn’t upload their work. But here’s how the “live” selections broke down based on entry source:

Entry Source	Total # of Entries	% of Total Entries	# Selected (50 in Book)	% of Selections	Selection Rate
Open Competition	923	81.5 %	28	56 %	3 %
Program Nominee	104	9.2 %	9	18 %	8.7 %
Magazine Nominee	105	9.3 %	13	26 %	12.4 %

The “Total #” column contains the counts of entries from each source (some entrants chose to submit multiple times). The next column shows the percentage of our total entries from each source. The “# Selected” column shows the number of poets making our final 50 from each source. The next column shows the percentage each entry source accounted for in the final 50. The final column, “Selection Rate,” divides the “# Selected” column by the “Total #” column for each entry source. Those rates ended up pretty much where I expected them. I realize the 3% Open Competition Selection Rate will seem low to some, but this is actually a higher selection rate than you see at many literary magazines.

The high magazine rate makes sense: these publications have already screened many poems to recommend the ones they do. A similar pre-screening effect goes for the program nominees: these are poets the programs feel are some of their best. However, as I mention on the web site, we do read all the entries blindly. The readers and editor never know the entry sources until I un-blind the entries after final selections.

State by State Selections

I can also provide some rudimentary demographic information. This table breaks down the counts of entrants from each state and the 50 finalists by state:

State	# of Total Submissions	# in 50 Final Selections	Selection Rate
WY	3		
WV	5		

WI	16	1	6.3%
WA	39	1	2.6%
VT	8		
VA	54	3	5.6%
UT	10		
TX	43	2	4.7%
TN	21		
SD	1		
SC	10		
RI	6		
PA	48	3	6.3%
OR	30	2	6.7%
OK	5		
OH	33	1	3.0%
NY	143	8	5.6%
NV	3		
NM	3		
NJ	17	1	5.9%
NH	11		
NE	10	1	10.0%
ND	1		
NC	57	3	5.3%
MT	2		
MS	8		
MO	24	2	8.3%
MN	23	1	4.3%
MI	33		
ME	3		
MD	24	1	4.2%
MA	57	1	1.8%
LA	6		
KY	11		
KS	1		
IN	15	1	6.7%
IL	41		
ID	9	1	11.1%
IA	13	4	30.8%
GA	21		
FL	33	1	3.0%
DE	2		
DC	13	1	7.7%
CO	19	1	5.3%
CA	108	5	4.6%
AZ	21	3	14.3%
AR	1		
AL	9		
AK	8	1	12.5%
Foreign	50	1	2.0%

Someone with a stronger background in statistics will have to tell me how “significant” those results are. Please note that these figures are based on what state the entrant put

down for their current mailing address; the counts are also based on entries, not entrants, so if someone entered multiple times, every entry counts for that state.

After the 2005 edition came out, at least one West Coast editor told me he thought the anthology had a Southeastern bias. I explained that with such a limited advertising budget, we relied on word of mouth (or e-mail), and being at the University of Virginia, our mailing lists are slanted toward the East. Thus, we got a lot of East Coast entries. This year, we had many more entries from the West Coast and Midwest, and the selections generally reflect that.

Obviously, The high selection rate from Iowa jumps out (I hear they have an MFA program out there). Then again, I think we had zero selections for Iowans in 2005. But the data skews easily ... an 11% rate from Idaho because we took 1 out of 9, for example. This year, we shut out Michigan's 33 entries and Georgia's 21. Then again, a single selection would have jumped their percentages up to 3-5%.

I am quite pleased to see the high numbers submitting from California, Washington, Oregon, Illinois, etc., and the expatriates, too. It seems that many poets are recommending *Best New Poets* to their peers. It surely isn't because we have money to advertise.

Winners from 2005

At least one entrant asked about whether winners from a prior year should be eligible to submit the next. A reasonable question. There are five people from *Best New Poets 2005* in this year's selections. Seventeen other 2005 winners entered but were not selected. These 22 poets submitted 37 entries. Using the same "selection rate" formula as above, this gives prior winners a selection rate of 13.5% for the 2006 edition (5 divided by 37). I can understand why some entrants would have an issue with this relatively high rate. However, this year we had an entirely new pool of readers and a new editor; I was the only link from 2005. I'd contend that the only advantage these poets had was experience, not any bias in the contest. However, I acknowledge that having 10% of the winners come from the last year's edition can create the *appearance* of bias, and I do worry about that. This is an evolving process, now in its second year, and I will definitely consider suggestions to bar prior winners, or bar them for one year, or some similar eligibility change. Sooner or later, many poets featured in this anthology will get a book out and become ineligible. I had thought that would cull prior winners sufficiently, but like I said, in something like this, appearance matters.

But for all entrants, there were simply *a lot* of poems under consideration. My thanks to those of you who have sent in compliments, as well as those who have sent constructive criticism. I doubt I can ever make the outcome satisfying for all involved, but I am committed to satisfying as many as possible.

Jeb Livingood
Series Editor, *Best New Poets*