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In this era of digital media, many have written the obituary of traditional print formats. But here in *Agora*, the ever clever and inventive planning students have found new life in the format.

What they have crafted is neither a retro act of preservation nor an ephemeral stream of blog posts, but a substantive and multi-faceted hybrid of old and new. The print journal gives coherence and a tangible, in-the-hand form to a collection of ideas and arguments. In the impressive *Agora* web pages, they have expanded this home base. And each year the *Agora* staff, with considerable graphic skills and dedication, evolves the format and experiments in new directions.

Nine years ago a small, energetic and seemingly over-optimistic cluster of planning students dreamed up the idea of a student-run journal,

gave it the ambitious Greek name for a gathering place (which befits planning's emphasis on collective thinking and public spaces), and plowed ahead into uncharted terrain. At the time the student editors were too busy soliciting articles, collaborators, funding and supporters to imagine – beyond getting that first issue to the printers – that they were launching a new tradition within the program. But a tradition they did trigger, one that this current cohort of editors and contributors ably continue. *Agora* has worked its way into the heart of planning student life here at Michigan, along with the annual Martin Luther King Jr. event, the Expanded Horizons trips, and the capstone projects in Detroit.

Agora each year attracts a remarkable, dedicated cadre of students who devote late hours and long weekends to making this journal as strong, professional and relevant as possible. *Agora* challenges students to work on something outside the classroom, to stalwartly craft, refine, and perfect the content and format in a lengthy schedule over an academic year. They confront the real challenges of giving and receiving criticism. Most importantly, they explore the power of writing as a tool beyond the classroom. I encourage the editors and contributors of *Agora* to take courage and inspiration from this experience; after graduation, to continue to use the

leverage of well-reasoned, persuasive words in the professional world; and to see writing as a tool as powerful as a map, a design, or a budget.

So read the articles, linger over the images, and glimpse the worldview of the next generation of planners and urbanists. But also bookmark www.agoraplanningjournal.com. The website is a portal to a rich collection of images and words that didn't fit neatly within the bounded pages. It empowers the student editing team to experiment with new formats, narratives, visual and documentary forms to explore cities, planning, and the graduate student experience. And then return to the printed publication: a format that is still inimitable in the power to sustain a focused voice of argument and inquiry.

Congratulations to the Michigan planning students for a great issue and year-long stream of live and virtual activities. The journal continues, expands, matures, evolves – it is a living, dynamic, ongoing project.

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(who shares the role of Faculty Advisor with Julie Steiff)