

EDITORIAL PROFILE FOR THE SBR

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What can be more appropriate as a topic for an editorial than the editorial profile of the magazine the author is editing? A rhetorical question with the answer: Nothing! And let me start this discussion with recapitulating what the SBR is here for – our mission is as follows:

‘The SBR is first and foremost the membership journal of the Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish Brewers’ Guilds, and is, thus, specifically directed at serving these organisations and their members. The members of these brewers’ guilds are people with a background in brewing, but this background varies from highly academic/scientific to very practical with no educational basis. The professional occupations of the members varies just as much – from managers at million HL breweries to “all purpose” brewers at small, semi-professional breweries.

It is the aim of the SBR to service all the different member groups. Preferably, but not necessarily, at the same time.

Besides this primary target group, the SBR also aims at being the preferred brewing-related magazine for suppliers to the industry, customers, and other people – beer writers, journalists, customers and consumers – with interests in our industry, in the Nordic countries and beyond’.

This editorial commences our annual ‘Craft Beer Theme Issue’, which makes the choice of topic for the editorial even more relevant. The fact that we have chosen to appoint one of our five yearly issues of the SBR as an annual ‘Craft Beer Theme Issue’ is the very reason why we need an open discussion about the overall editorial profile of the magazine. The composition and demographics of our industry has changed very dramatically over the past few decades with the emergence of the many small craft breweries in all our countries. Therefore, so has obviously also the contents, the scope and the focus of the SBR, as has been communicated and discussed in great detail in previous issues of the SBR – in particular, when the undersigned took over as technical editor almost three years ago. At that time, the board of the SBR stated very clearly that one of my tasks was to reach out to the Nordic and Baltic craft brewing communities in an effort to make these communities embrace the SBR as their professional brewing magazine. Not just because it’s the only one out there, but preferably because they feel that the magazine is truly relevant for them, with plenty of articles, news and debate focusing on issues they find relevant and inspiring.

Whether this aim has been achieved or not is not up to me to decide – I can only say that I’ve done my utmost in this respect. And when looking at the categories of topics covered by the SBR over the past couple of years, it certainly seems clear that as far as the *quantity* of material goes, the balance has shifted significantly towards subjects of interest to the craft brewing communities. We – the editorial board of the SBR – have decided to focus our own evaluation of the contents of the SBR by actually assigning a category to each article we feature, as well as quantitative goals for how much these categories should make up of the total contents of the magazine seen over time. These categories and their attempted share of the material are as follows:

1. General subjects of interest for all potential readers of the SBR – 30 per cent of the total.
2. Technical subjects of interest for all potential readers of the SBR – 25 per cent of the total.
3. Technical subjects of specific interest for larger breweries – 20 per cent of the total.
4. Technical subjects of specific interest for small and medium sized breweries – 20 per cent of the total.
5. Other topics not covered by any other category – 5 per cent of the total.

The editorial format does not allow me to elaborate on which specific topics belong to which of these categories. However, I am, of course, more than willing to supply this information to anybody interested.

If you, dear reader, find that during the past years the balance has tilted much more towards the issues of general interest and those directed towards the smaller breweries, than the shares above would suggest, you need not start getting your old SBR issues down from the shelf and start counting pages, because you are right! We are probably – when we include the ‘Craft Beer Theme Issues’ – getting close to 75-80 per cent of the articles being in the categories ‘general’ and ‘for small breweries’.

Whereas previously everything in and around the SBR was focused on the topics of interest to the large breweries only, this has now shifted. Simply because those are the areas where I as the technical editor have my contacts and interests. As you will be aware from my previous laments, the sourcing of material for the magazine is not a question of sorting through the myriad of articles submitted... No, it's pretty hard work on my behalf, persistently hunting down everything and everybody I believe could supply me with quality articles, news and debate.

The vast network of colleagues within the major brewing groups I had when I worked for Carlsberg up until 2001 is close to useless by now, as virtually none of the brewers in this network are left in an industry that currently prioritizes knowledge of supply chain management within fast moving consumer goods over our expertise in beer and brewing. And

as it's pretty hard to push those people you do not know, I am left with my own existing contacts. The shift in the balance is, in other words, not intentional, but inevitable!

I am not only starting this discussion because of my concern as the technical editor that the weighting of the contents of the SBR is getting increasingly out of tune with the interests of the readers. I have serious concerns, also, on behalf of our advertisers who, as it should be clear to all our readers, primarily are the ones catering to larger breweries. In a situation where the financial crisis is making it increasingly difficult to hold on to our existing advertisers, let alone attract new ones, the last thing we need is a magazine that becomes irrelevant to these advertisers.

This situation raises the following three questions:

1. Is the above outlined situation OK, and should we thus just forget about establishing the desired balance?
2. Are the objectives in terms of the distribution of material between the categories, as described above, what our readers, as a whole, want?
3. If the answer to either of these two questions is ‘No!’, then what am I supposed to do to source more material relevant to the bigger breweries?

Needless to say, you, dear reader, are the only one who can provide me with answers and guidance. We on the editorial board of the SBR need to know your opinion, and we also need all the help we can get with contacts – at the big breweries themselves as well as at their suppliers, who increasingly are responsible for technological innovations, projects and general problem solving in our industry.

So, again: Please, dear reader, take just five minutes of your time to make up your mind in relation to my questions, and drop me a line or two at anders@kissmeyer.dk.

Enjoy your reading – in this issue, there are no concerns about the craft beer focus!

Anders Kissmeyer, technical editor