Penn Libraries to host own version of the 'Sparky Awards'

The Oscars aren’t quite here yet. But soon the Sparky Awards will be.

The Sparky Awards are an annual video competition sponsored by libraries, media-based groups and student organizations across the country.

This year, the Penn Libraries will host its own version of the competition. Penn’s contest will feed into the national one.

To enter the competition, participants submit a two-minute video that celebrates the value of information sharing. The video must have been created in 2009, and be either narrated or subtitled in English. It also must have a Creative Commons license that allows its public use.

Awards for the national contest will be presented at a ceremony in January. The winner will receive $1,000, and the winning video will be screened for an audience of about 10,000 people.

Penn’s Sparky Awards are intended to generate excitement for the national competition, according to Weigle Information Commons Director Anuradha Vedantham, who organized Penn’s contest.

Since all entries submitted to the Penn competition will automatically be entered at the national level as well, participants’ chances of winning are higher if they enter both competitions, she said.

Penn’s Sparky Awards are taking the place of Penn Libraries’ usual “Mashup Contest” for video compilations, which began in 2007, according to Vedantham. That contest focused on scholarly communication, information sharing and knowledge as a public good.

Penn’s edition of the Sparky Awards will incorporate all of these themes. However, students also have the option of entering a separate public health category. Both the general and public health categories offer a prize valued at $500.

The public health aspect of the competition was inspired by the Center for Public Health Initiatives’ seminar series on the arts and public health, as well as the Center’s “This is public health” campaign, according to administrative coordinator Jeannette Schroeder.

The Center’s Managing Director Wendy Voet said she hopes the awards will “highlight Penn students’ views on public health,” by giving them a way to show that they’re engaged in community action.
College junior Janis Kreilis, who participated in last year's Mashup Awards, said he enjoyed making his video. “The most exciting part was showing it to our friends,” he said. For Kreilis, making the two-minute video took between six and seven hours.

“I know it’s a busy time for students,” said Vedantham, “but hopefully they will take the time to put together a Sparky Awards entry — it could be a great study break.”

The deadline for submissions to the Sparky Awards at Penn is this Saturday, a day before the national deadline.

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