2022 Award for Best Article in *NAMES: A Journal of Onomastics*

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For more than a decade, the American Name Society has singled out an outstanding article to be given the Best Article of the Year Award. To select the publication to receive this prestigious honor, each member of the Editorial Board independently reviewed all of the articles that had been published in 2022. As per ANS tradition, obituaries, notes, editorials, book reviews, and articles contributed by the Editor-in-Chief were excluded from consideration. To make their decision, Board Members were asked to select the publications which they felt possessed the highest degree of creativity; demonstrated the best writing style; employed the soundest research methodology; and had the greatest potential to make a lasting and significant contribution to onomastics. Then, in a secret ballot, the Board members cast their votes.

The results were tallied and the eligible publications were rank ordered by number of votes received. In alphabetical order by the surname of the primary author, the following publications were selected as the top four articles for 2022: (1) "Mapping Digital Discourses of the Capital Region of Finland: Combining Onomastics, CADS, and GIS" by Jarmo Harri Jantunen (University of Jyväskylä), Terhi Ainiala (University of Helsinki),

Salla Jokela (Tampere University), and Jenny Tarvainen (University of Jyväskylä) featured in *NAMES* 70, no. 1: 19–39; (2) "My Name Is...: Picturebooks Exploring Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Names" by Carrie Anne Thomas (The Ohio State University) and Blessie Samjose (The Ohio State University) in *NAMES* 70, no. 4: 18–30; (3) "Using Onomastics to Inform Diversity Initiatives: Race, Gender, and Names in Academic Radiology in Canada" by Sohrab Towfighi (University of British Columbia), Adrian Marcuzzi (University of British Columbia), Salman Masood (University of British Columbia), Mohsin Yakub (California University of Science and Medicine), Jessica B. Robbins (University of Wisconsin), and Faisal Khosa (University of British Columbia) in *NAMES* 70, no. 3: 39–50; and (4) "Gendering Urban Namescapes: The Gender Politics of Street Names in an Eastern European City" by Mihai S. Rusu (Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu) in *NAMES* 70, no. 2: 11–25.

Aside from being outstanding pieces of scholarship, these publications are all excellent examples of how modern onomastic research can be applied to offer new insights and bring deeper conceptual understanding across multiple academic disciplines. From geography and gender studies, medicine and children's literature, these four works demonstrate the ever-increasing breadth of contemporary onomastic scholarship. Another important feature of this exemplary group of research is the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of the contributing authors themselves. In total, the academics in this illustrious group come from institutions in five different nations: Canada, Finland, the United States, and Romania. This geographical heterogeneity not only mirrors the global appeal of onomastic scholarship. It also reflects the continuing commitment of the American Name Society and *NAMES* to increase awareness of and appreciation for the importance of names and naming around the world. Along with this observation, it is important to point out that many of this year's finalists are non-native English speakers. This fact should not be overlooked as it represents a particular achievement on the part of many of these scholars. As a significant portion of *NAMES* readership is composed of English-speakers with advanced degrees in literature and/or linguistics, the level of English prose required for publication in this journal is exceedingly high. The finalists mentioned above not only met, but exceeded this expectation. A final observation that is essential to mention here is the overall methodological variety demonstrated in the top four articles. While one half employ a quantitative method, the other half utilize a qualitative method. This split is important to point out as *NAMES* warmly welcomes both empirical and non-empirical investigations. By the same token, the journal encourages submissions that employ both linguistic and/or literary onomastic analyses.

In years past, the race between the top contenders was so close that a second round of voting was needed to determine the winner. This year, one contribution was able to secure the top spot in the very first round of voting. The Winner of the 2022 Best Article of the Year Award is "Mapping Digital Discourses of the Capital Region of Finland: Combining Onomastics, CADS, and GIS" by Jarmo Harri Jantunen (University of Jyväskylä), Terhi Ainiala (University of Helsinki), Salla Jokela (Tampere University), and Jenny Tarvainen (University of Jyväskylä) in *NAMES* 70, no. 1: 19–39. Just a few examples of the many words of praise that were showered upon this contribution by the voting members of the *NAMES* Editorial Board are shared below:

> The article creatively introduces a big data approach into socio-onomastics with highly interesting results that have great potential for future research. It uses mixed methods and combines onomastics, GIS and CADS resulting in analyses of both onomastic, linguistic and geographical data. Moreover, the article effectively presents its results in clear figures and visualizations making the article interesting and intriguing to read.

> The question of 'how' toponyms (and names in general) are being used in discourse is an important one. And explanation of the various methods that can be used may stimulate onomasticians in various areas, as well as the teamwork needed for this. [. . .] this co-operative type of analysis and the teamwork need to be rewarded.

> This article combines data from a number of new and interesting sources to reveal not only usage patterns, but social meaning attached to city names in Finland. The authors have taken up Motschenbacher's challenge[1] to incorporate corpus data ('big data') and applied it to actual discourse found 'in the wild'. The article is clearly written and provides tables, maps, and charts which contextualize the results. This paper points the way to further research that is only possible through corpus-assisted discourse analysis, moving onomastics away from limited sample sizes and error-prone analysis based in intuition and biased thinking.

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> This article offers insights into the meanings that can be attached to place names by looking at the verbal environment that surrounds them. As previous research has shown, the study of the interaction between names and the verbal 'habitat' around them is worth exploring further, and this paper is an intriguing contribution to the field. [. . .] It draws on an integrated approach that interestingly combines cultural geography, corpus-assisted onomastics, corpus-assisted discourse studies and geographical information system.

> This is one of the most innovative and original onomastic studies I have ever read. It employs and integrates three research methodologies (CAO, GIS and CAD) to analyse a very large social media corpus to detect any differences in online discourses that made reference to three Finnish cities. As the authors say, their study 'paves the way for future onomastic studies to research actual name usage using this new methodology. Knowledge gained from such research may not only enrich the field of onomastics, but also facilitate more socially sustainable urban planning' (20). I believe that the research method employed may be applied to other types of names, not just toponyms. It also highlights some of the study's shortcomings and suggests ways these may be addressed in future studies. The article therefore, makes a significant contribution to onomastics.

As the winners of the *NAMES* 2022 Best Article of the Year Award, the authors will be sent a commemorative plaque and will be invited to give a special lecture about their innovative work in the upcoming annual conference of the American Name Society. In addition, announcements about the award will appear on the official websites of the ANS and *NAMES*. An official press release about the winners and the other finalists will also be issued to inform the larger scientific community and the general public about this accomplishment.

On behalf of the Editorial Board of *NAMES*, the international community of *NAMES* readers, and the members of the American Name Society, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere congratulations to each of the authors of this seminal piece of scholarship. I would also like to thank the members of the Editorial Board for their participation in the deliberation process and their year-long commitment to ensuring the publication of cutting-edge onomastic research which is enjoyed by names specialists and enthusiasts the world-over. It is thanks to their uncommon professional and personal dedication that *NAMES* has remained one the foremost academic publications of onomastic research for more than seventy years.

Endnote

[1] This challenge was formally issued by Motschenbacher in the seminal 2020 article, "Corpus Linguistic Onomastics: A Plea for a Corpus-Based Investigation of Names" in *NAMES* 68, no. 2: 88–103.