

Names | A Journal of Onomastics



2021 Award for Best Article in *NAMES: A Journal of Onomastics*

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Each year, the Editorial Board of *NAMES* reviews the articles that have been published in the journal to select winners for its prestigious Best Article of the Year Award. In 2021, the deliberation process was delayed due to COVID. However, throughout the Winter and Spring of 2023, the members of the Editorial Board carefully reviewed all of the articles that appeared in the four issues of *NAMES* released in 2021. Publications were assessed for scientific innovation, academic writing style, research methodology, and overall potential to make a significant and lasting contribution to the field of onomastics research. After the votes were tallied, four publications clearly emerged as winners.

Taking fourth place was “Usernames on a Finnish Online Marketplace for Illegal Drugs” by Lasse Hämäläinen (Tampere University, FINLAND), Ari Haasio (Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, FINLAND), and J. Tuomas Harviainen (Tampere University, FINLAND), which appeared in the Summer issue of *NAMES* (volume 69, issue 3). In third place was “Boundary-Maintenance’ or ‘Boundary-Crossing’? Name-Giving Practices among Immigrants in Germany” by Jürgen Gerhards (Freie Universität Berlin,

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Announcement: Best Article of the Year 2021

GERMANY) and Julia Tuppatt (University of Leipzig, GERMANY). This article also appeared in volume 69, issue 3. The writing team that produced the second-highest ratings is one that will be very familiar to *NAMES* readers: David Blair (Macquarie University, AUSTRALIA) and Jan Tent (Australian National University, AUSTRALIA), whose collaborative work “A Revised Typology of Place-Naming” was featured in the Fall issue of *NAMES* (volume 69, issue 4). Finally, the article that received the highest cumulative scores and was named Best Article of the Year 2021 was the co-authored paper “Developing the Gaois Linguistic Database of Irish-language Surnames”, which was written by Brian Ó Raghallaigh (Dublin City University, THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND), Michael Boleslav Měchura (Dublin City University, THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND), Aengus Ó Fionnagáin (Dublin City University, THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND), and Sophie Osborne (Dublin City University, THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND). This work appeared in the Winter issue of *NAMES* (volume 69, issue 1). Just a few of the many accolades the reviewers gave this cutting-edge onomastic research are featured below:

This paper provides a template for organization of databases for non-English names generally, using Irish as proof of concept. The ‘cluster’ approach is productive and accommodates the intricacies and variations in spelling in Irish and the corresponding English names. The tools used are all open-source, and the results are freely available, making this important work accessible to many types of researchers. This work highlights the use of new technologies in recording, organizing, and preserving names of minority languages in English-speaking countries. The paper itself is clearly and concisely written; the authors explain their methods and results in meaningful, jargon-free text.

This paper is an excellent and inspiring example of data collection of Irish-language surnames and English-language equivalents, its enrichment, and user-friendly online presentation with wide applications. The paper gives a clear explanation for the need and application of such a collection, gives examples where needed, discusses the problems of clustering and the organization of the data (in a not too difficult to understand XML-scheme). The paper is well-written and organized. The work addresses not only theoretical and technical issues, but provides an exemplary website in which readers can access and search the data themselves in various ways.

This is a pioneering project developing a publicly accessible database of Irish-language surnames. This provides a useful, scalable resource to support onomastic research using Irish data. The paper is extremely well written and clear as it traces the history of naming in Ireland.

This research was an outgrowth of Dublin City University’s Gaois research group which is devoted to developing and promoting Irish heritage and Irish language. Started in 2004, Gaois has set as one of its guiding operational principles the application of modern technology to deepen the public’s understanding of and appreciation for the Irish language.¹ The Irish-language surname database detailed in the award-winning *NAMES* article is one of the fruits of this larger research objective.

As explained on the official “Gaois” website:² the database provides visitors with “in-depth lexical and grammatical information” on over 1,000 common Irish-language surname clusters. Free for public use, the database allows onomasticians and name-lovers alike to search for both exact and related or similar surname matches. The fact that this research makes such a contribution to both the academic and the lay communities is a feature shared with all four of this set of winners. This is not the only commonality found across this illustrious group of publications.

Each of these works was co-authored by a team of experts, often representing different areas of specialization. The popularity of this multi-authored approach amongst this elite set of papers is a powerful reflection of the interdisciplinary appeal of onomastics as well as the power of scientific collaboration. Another factor that the winners have in common is the diversity of nations, languages, and cultures both they and their research represents. This heterogeneity mirrors the continuing commitment of *NAMES* to promote the scholarly and popular study of names, as articulated in the Constitution of the ANS. The fact that over 70 years later, the winners of the Best Article of the Year Award have remained true to this vision is as impressive as it is inspirational.

On behalf of the Editorial Board of *NAMES*, its international list of subscribers, the authors of all four winning papers are congratulated on their outstanding achievement. It is contributions like these that will not only help to ensure the development of onomastics as discipline of academic research. Through their

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cross-disciplinary methodology and sophisticated theory, these works help to underscore the continuing validity and utility of onomastics investigations for increasing our collective understanding of the world in which we live. As always, sincere thanks goes to each and every member of the *NAMES* Editorial Board for so generously sharing their time and expertise.

Notes

¹ Detailed information about the Gaois research group can be found here: <https://www.gaois.ie/en/about/info/>

² Interested readers can find the database referenced in the winning article here:
<https://www.gaois.ie/en/surnames/info/>