

Spring 2015

"All the world's a stage:" A social media project for the American Shakespeare Center

Lauren D. Ambrose
James Madison University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/honors201019>

 Part of the [Public Relations and Advertising Commons](#), and the [Social Media Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ambrose, Lauren D., "All the world's a stage:" A social media project for the American Shakespeare Center" (2015). *Senior Honors Projects, 2010-current*. 69.
<https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/honors201019/69>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Honors Projects, 2010-current by an authorized administrator of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.

“All The World’s A Stage:” A Social Media Project for The American Shakespeare Center

An Honors Program Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Arts and Letters
James Madison University

by Lauren Deanne Ambrose

May 2015

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Communication Studies, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors Program.

FACULTY COMMITTEE:

HONORS PROGRAM APPROVAL:

Project Advisor: Dr. Corey A. Hickerson, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor, Communication Studies

Philip Frana, Ph.D.,
Interim Director, Honors Program

Reader: C. Lee Mayfield, Lecturer,
Communication Studies

Reader: Dr. Tatjana M. Hocke-Mirzshavili, Ph.D.,
Assistant Professor, Communication Studies

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

This work is accepted for presentation, in part or in full, at James Madison University on April 14, 2015 .

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Abstract	4
Timeline of Events	5
Goals and Objectives	7
Situational Research and Analysis	8
Literature Review	18
Publicity Plan for The American Shakespeare Center	21
Journal	29
Reflection	36
Appendices	45
References	58

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my Honors Advisor and professor, Dr. Corey A. Hickerson for his continued support throughout the past three semesters. His knowledge and guidance has helped me to further understanding of what it means to be a public relations practitioner. I truly could not have done it without him!

Additionally, I would like to thank Cathy Bagwell Marsh and Danielle Hoffman of the American Shakespeare Center. Thank you for taking a chance on me, allowing me to express my creativity and helping me to find my own voice as I helped the ASC (and Crumpet the Elf) find theirs.

I would also like to thank the James Madison University School of Communication Studies and my readers, C. Lee Mayfield and Dr. Tatjana M. Hocke-Mirzashvili. Thank you for your continued support of my work, both in and outside the classroom.

Finally, I would like to thank the James Madison University Honors Program for providing me with the challenge and the opportunity of conducting my creative project. As a result, I have been able to further develop my creativity, problem-solving skills and passion for my field.

Abstract

As the nation's only original re-creation of Shakespeare's indoor theater, The American Shakespeare Center plays a lead role in its local area of Staunton, Virginia. The organization boasts a prominent following in the theatre and on Facebook; however, its remaining social media accounts have been stuck in the Renaissance. In November 2014, the ASC got an update in the form of a new cast member—the “What's Your Shakespeare Personality?” quiz and web-based application. Using extensive research into local demographics, audience and arts trends and social media usage, this project sought to assist the organization in the application's launch and expanding their digital reach. A resurgence in its Twitter account, coupled with written news releases, generated buzz in several local publications and resulted in a gain of 14 new Twitter followers from November 2014 to January 2015. Now, the ASC continues to grow its social media presence and solidify its place in the digital (and theatrical) spotlight.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

Timeline of Events

February 2014: Contacted Cathy Bagwell Marsh, Marketing Director at the American Shakespeare Center to pitch project idea

March 2014: Confirmed collaboration with the American Shakespeare Center working on their application launch and social media

April-May 2014: Decided upon specific tasks of project (internship) with ASC

August-September 2014: Began weekly correspondence with Cathy Bagwell Marsh, planned monthly visits to ASC and weekly conference calls

September 2014: Held first in-house meeting with Cathy Bagwell Marsh and Danielle Hoffman from ASC's marketing department, began application development plan

October 2014: Submitted press release to Cathy for publication in local media; deadline for application launched postponed to November 5; began creating sample Facebook posts and Twitter schedule for organization's holiday Twitter account

November 2014: Application launch took place on November 5 and went live online, organization approved Twitter schedule, began managing organization's Twitter account

November-December 2014: Twitter account gained 13 new followers

January 2015: Finished managing Twitter account and internship with The American Shakespeare Center

February 2015: Received confirmation that Facebook posts will continue to be used by organization throughout the year

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

March 2015: Finished journal entries for project and completed final compilation of materials, planned to present project at JMU SCOM Conference on April 14, 2015

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

Goals and Objectives

Goal: The goal of this project is to examine the communication needs of a local arts organization, The American Shakespeare Center. Through the direct targeting of audiences and creation of written works, including press releases and other material, the project will enable the organization to be more widely recognized in the local area and as a whole.

Objectives:

- To investigate the public relations needs of a local arts organization from August 2014 until January 2015
- To create one facet of a campaign catered towards enhancing the marketing and public relations strategies of the ASC
- Gain recognition and publicity of the organization through the targeting and submission of written materials to local publications within a three month period

Situational Research and Analysis

Organizational Background

a. Organizational History

The American Shakespeare Center, located at the Blackfriar's Playhouse in historic downtown Staunton, Virginia offers performances, exhibitions and educational programs that make Shakespeare accessible to all. The ASC is known as the world's only re-creation of Shakespeare's indoor theater—a unique and fitting title, considering that each Shakespearean work performed is done so under its original staging conditions with a simple stage, limited sets and the audience sharing the same light as the actors. The playhouse opened its doors in 2001 and began a new chapter in the ASC's rich history of Shakespeare performance and education.

Created by Jim Warren and Ralph Alan Cohen, the concept for the ASC began as The Shenandoah Shakespeare Express (SSE) (The American Shakespeare Center, 2015). The professional traveling troupe of actors launched its first tour in Virginia in 1988 with its opening work, *Richard III*. From there, in 1989, the SSE added a spring tour to its repertoire with Shakespearean classics, such as *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In 1990, the SSE began featuring shows in repertory format, or presenting several works regularly (or in alternating sequence) in one season. The SSE opened its first summer season the following year and was awarded its first grant.

The company reached international status with its first overseas tour in 1992. They traveled from the Shenandoah Valley to England and Scotland with a grant for general operating support provided by The National Endowment for the Arts; this granted unrestricted funding to support and maintain the organization (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2015). The

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

return home was accompanied by an increasing demand for more performances and sparked the opening of an autumn tour in 1995 alongside the 12-month tour. The next year, the SSE traveled back to England to tour primary and secondary schools, which eventually led to the first Young Company Theatre Camp for high school students (1997) and introduced the educational aspect of the company through SSE-style workshops and classes.

In 1999, the troupe experienced a multitude of changes, including a move to Staunton, a change in name (Shenandoah Shakespeare or “S2”) and the initiation of a plan to create the Blackfriar’s Playhouse indoor theater and a center for education and research. Construction on The Blackfriar’s Playhouse started in 2000; only a year before the doors opened in September 2001 for the first Blackfriar’s Conference for Shakespeare. S2 cast the first resident company for Blackfriar’s in 2002 and changed its name again in 2005—this time to The American Shakespeare Center. By 2010, the ASC had 16 plays running each year. In 2011, the ASC welcomed the second Blackfriar’s Conference, as well as the 10th anniversary of the Playhouse. Two years later, in 2013, the ASC was awarded the Folger Shakespeare Library’s Shakespeare Steward Award for excellence and innovation in teaching Shakespeare in American classrooms. Now, the ASC celebrates over 25 years as a world-renowned center for Shakespeare performance and education, having performed in 47 states, 5 foreign countries and a U.S. territory (The American Shakespeare Center, 2015). The legacy continues with an increased presence in social media via podcasts, an education blog, and the development and implementation of a new web-based interactive application, “What’s Your Shakespeare Personality?” which will continue the center’s reach into its community, Virginia and beyond through social media.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

b. Organizational Mission

The mission of the American Shakespeare Center is to “[recover] the joys and accessibility of Shakespeare’s theatre, language and humanity by exploring the English Renaissance stage and its practices through performance and education” (The American Shakespeare Center, 2015). The organization does so through the performance of Shakespearean works year-round on its recreation of the original Shakespearean stage, the continuation of an annual tour with a company of actors, singers and musicians, workshops and theatre camps for middle and high school students, and an education residency program in play production for students and teachers (The American Shakespeare Center, 2015).

c. Organizational Structure

The ASC is a non-profit organization that features an in-home acting troupe housed at the Blackfriar’s Playhouse, a touring company, and an education center that provides workshops, performances, actor training and summer programs for students and teachers. The structure of the artistic organization is also complemented by a staff of actors, stage managers, costume designers. In addition to the departments of theatrical artistry, marketing and development, the ASC features a unique education and research department for the direction of educational programs and college preparation. The structure of the internal organization also features a board of trustees, including board chairs and advisers.

The ASC is also supported by “our amazing volunteers [who] serve as the backbone of our community support from the Shenandoah Valley” (American Shakespeare Center, 2015). “Volunteers play an important role in the organizational structure, providing additional

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

assistance in the costume shop, administrative offices and ushering at the various performances, events and education programs hosted at the Blackfriar's Playhouse.

d. Organizational Policies

The American Shakespeare Center operates on a system of core beliefs, which shapes the ways in which it operates and conducts business. These beliefs include the following, as outlined in their document, "Beliefs That Drive Our Actions" (The American Shakespeare Center, 2014, p. 1):

- "We believe in open, honest...respectful communication (para. 2)."
- "We believe in creating a foundation of mutual respect and trust in all our dealings (para. 2)."
- We believe in living within our means...making all decisions in line with...economic and human resource realities (para. 3)."
- "We believe in providing excellent customer service externally and internally (para. 3)."
- "We believe in creating a vibrant, healthy community on a local, regional, national and international level (para. 4)."

In addition to these core values, the ASC follows strict drug-free, violence-free workplace and personal appearance policies. It also implements a travel policy for its touring company, which provides funds for each employee while traveling on ASC-related business. Employees are also instructed to follow policy when interacting with ASC patrons—this includes what can and cannot be discussed and being courteous and professional in all working relationships. The organization also promotes flexibility with its office environment, allowing employees to telecommute and work from home for a certain period of time. Finally, the ASC

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

follows specific policies when it comes to its actors; due to an agreement with Actor's Equity, individuals cannot take any photos of/with actors.

e. Organizational Environment

The American Shakespeare Center operates as a nonprofit theater—and it's in good company— with the number of nonprofit theaters doubling in the United States since 2005 (National Endowment for the Arts, 2008). These theaters have maintained strong financial stability with individuals and foundations as the primary financial supporters; in 2002, foundation giving made up 22 percent while individual giving provided 40 percent of all revenue (National Endowment for the Arts, 2008). The primary and constant struggle that nonprofit theaters face is the steady decline in attendance for spoken (non-musical) theatre (National Endowment for the Arts, 2008). Non-musical play attendance has dropped at a rate of 33 percent in the last decade (National Endowment for the Arts, 2013). In addition, theater attendance in general (both musical and non-musical) has declined significantly since 2008 (National Endowment for the Arts, 2013). In surveying the audience that attended a non-musical play in 2012, the majority was found to be white, highly educated adult men and women ranging from the ages of 25 to 34 and 55 to 64 (National Endowment for the Arts, 2013). The majority of these individuals also attained a graduate degree level of education (National Endowment for the Arts, 2013). These characteristics support and contradict the demographic trends of theatre audiences, as non-musical attendance has declined for individuals between the ages of 18 to 24 and 55 to 64 (National Endowment for the Arts, 2013). Though younger audience members were not in attendance, the majority of audience members in 2012 were in the 55 to 64 age group (National Endowment for the Arts, 2013).

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

Within the city of Staunton, the ASC serves a growing population. As reported in the U.S. Census (2014), the population within the city of Staunton increased by 2.5 percent from 2010 to 2013. As of 2010, the majority (83.7 percent) of residents are white and have either graduated high school or received some college education (United States Department of Commerce, 2014). The majority of all households in Staunton are family households; 41 percent of these homes are married couples, 33.7 percent include at least one individual age 65 or older, and the remainder is single parent homes or nonfamily households (United States Department of Commerce, 2014). These findings indicate that the demographics in Staunton are not like the demographics of the average theatre going population; therefore, the ASC's target population may need to include the older generations, families and those less educated individuals who may not be familiar with Shakespeare or the organization.

As a result of constant economic pressure due to its nonprofit status, The American Shakespeare Center is highly dependent on its relationship to the local community. In order to continue its mission and status as a hub of artistry in Staunton, the ASC must rely on a variety of methods to generate financial support. The primary means are contributions made through grants and sponsorships by organizations such as the Virginia Commission for the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, the Schubert Foundation and Staunton's Bright Idea Innovations Grants (The American Shakespeare Center, 2015). In addition to sponsorship by various local organizations on a regular basis, the ASC has individual sponsors for their 2014-2015 season, an annual music sponsor and an annual student matinee sponsor (The American Shakespeare Center, 2015). Alongside these contributions, the ASC generates financial support through an annual gift campaign, the opportunity for individuals to sponsor the organization on an annual

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

basis, per season and per performance and—perhaps the most unique fundraising opportunity—“pay what you will nights.”

f. Organizational Trends

At the American Shakespeare Center, the changing concept of the workplace and the importance of social media are recognized as being vital to business in today’s world. As of 2014, the new concept of telecommuting makes up 2.6 percent of the American workforce and includes 3.2 million workers (Tugend, 2014). This method enables individuals employed full-time to work at least half of their time at home (Tugend, 2014). Though telecommuters tend to work longer hours and be more productive from home, the balance of time at home and in the office is ideal (Tugend, 2014). The ASC works to strike this balance by providing a flexible office environment to suit each employee’s individual needs; this includes the ability to work from home for certain tasks and flexibility with hours (time in and out) worked per day (The American Shakespeare Center, 2008). This trend will likely enable the ASC to keep up with and achieve success over other businesses, as telecommuting remains a relatively new concept that continues to be adopted.

Additionally, the ASC is working to broaden its horizons on social media by encouraging its employees to use Twitter and Facebook to create conversations about relevant topics and the ASC’s business (as outlined in *ASC Social Media Guidelines*). The organization maintains its most active social media accounts on Facebook and is in the process of revitalizing its Twitter account (see Appendix C). Reviving the ASC’s social media influence through frequent posts and creation of conversation will prove beneficial in reaching an adult audience, as 64 percent of adult users visit the site on a daily basis (A. Smith, 2014). This number has increased from the 51

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

percent of daily adult users in 2010 (A. Smith, 2014). The establishment of a more prominent online presence via Facebook may prove most beneficial for the ASC, since only 19 percent of online adults use Twitter (as of January 2014) (Pew Research Center, 2014). Additionally, Facebook may prove to be more interactive than Twitter; a majority of active users use the platform to read tweets and get news, not engage in active conversation (or tweet at all) (Pew Research Center, 2014). This decline in active usage may dictate Facebook as the current (and potentially future) primary social media platform for the American Shakespeare Center.

Finally, with the growing popularity of Instagram, the ASC may reap benefits from continuing to expand its social media reach. Over 90 percent of the 150 million Instagram users are under the age of 35, making it a perfect platform to target individuals ages 18 to 34 (C. Smith, 2014). It is also conducive to adult residents in urban areas, such as Staunton and Charlottesville, with 17 percent of users living in urban areas and only 11 percent in the suburbs (C. Smith, 2014). The age range matches that of the average audience member at a non-musical play and also includes the less prominent 18 to 24 year old audience members. Using this outlet, the ASC may be able to extend its reach to a younger audience and meet the growing social media needs of the ideal adult theatregoer.

Introduction of Publics

a. Primary Publics

The primary target audience that the American Shakespeare Center would like to communicate and form a stronger relationship with is composed of individuals directly outside the Staunton area. Specifically, the ASC aims to communicate with individuals who travel into Staunton and are approximately two hours away; the targeted cities include: Washington, D.C.,

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

Charlottesville, Richmond, and Raleigh and Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Based on the U.S. Census (2014) and the ASC's 2011-2012 marketing surveys (2011), the ASC's average visitor travels between 30 minutes and two hours to get to Staunton, earns an average household income of approximately \$42,000, has seen between zero and five ASC performances prior to their visit, spends a majority of their time online using Facebook and is between the ages of 50 and 70.

51-60	20.9%
61-70	24.9%
71+	16.4%

two to four hours	20.9%
more than four hours	22.0%

Facebook	30.6%
News	56.2%

51-60	24.3%
61-70	25.0%
Less than 30 minutes	31.1%
half to one hour	23.7%

Facebook	26.5%
News	51.0%

41-50	22.5%
51-60	15.5%
61-70	9.9%
Less than 30 minutes	39.4%
half to one hour	36.6%
Email	26.6%
News	39.1%
Facebook	39.1%

51-60	22.7%
61-70	23.7%
Less than 30 minutes	22.9%
half to one hour	22.9%
two to four hours	30.2%
Email	70.1%
Facebook	27.6%

51-60	26.2%
61-70	15.4%
half to one hour	34.4%
one to two hours	18.8%
Facebook	33.3%
Email	68.4%

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

Image 1—Some of the findings of the ASC’s 2011-2012 marketing survey, including visitors’ age, length of commute, and where they spend a majority of their time online. Each color corresponds to one of the ASC’s multiple seasons, including summer (yellow), fall (orange), holiday (green), Renaissance (blue) and spring (purple).

As a widely known, world renowned center for Shakespeare education and performance, the ASC strives to achieve the objective(s) of continuing its reputation while attracting visitors and contributing to Staunton’s visitor/tourism revenue. Additionally, the geographic segmentation of publics in the coastal Virginia/central Virginia area is vital to the release of the “What’s Your Shakespeare Personality?” application, as the character quiz results delivered to each user indicate a two-night stay in the city and provide a recommendation for local hotel accommodations. The target audience for the application includes both individuals in the millennial category and leisure travelers between the ages of 30 and 50 years old.

b. Secondary Publics

The secondary public that the ASC aims to influence includes the residents of Staunton and the “regular” public of theatregoers who attend seasonal/various/all ASC theatrical performances. Overall, this public includes the percentage of individuals who currently support and attend shows at the ASC; as previously stated, these average visitors are between the ages of 50 and 70 years old.

Literature Review

I. Introduction

For the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Virginia, educating, entertaining and maintaining relationships with its target audiences is of the upmost importance. The center for theatrical Shakespearean art and education seeks to use performance and education to reignite the joys of the Shakespearean theatre and stage for individuals of all ages. As a nonprofit theater, the ASC faces numerous challenges to its financial stability, audience awareness and overall development; each of these challenges can be confronted and overcome using previous research regarding non-profit theatre and current social media trends.

II. Financial stability and audience reach of non-profit theaters

The ASC's non-profit status is accompanied by a series of unique challenges—from financial stability to audience reach. It is not alone, however; according to the National Endowment for the Arts (2008), the number of non-profit theaters in the United States has doubled since 2005. Like the ASC, several of these theaters have maintained strong financial stability through the financial support of individuals and foundations (National Endowment for the Arts, 2008). The ASC relies primarily on grants, donations from individuals and sponsors such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the Schubert Foundation and Staunton's Bright Idea Innovations Grant (The American Shakespeare Center, 2015). Meanwhile, several other non-profit theaters are maintained by the 40 percent of revenue that is donated by individual givers and 22 percent by foundations (as of 2002) (National Endowment for the Arts, 2008). Overall, the primary and constant struggle that non-profit theaters face is the steady decline in

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

attendance for spoken (non-musical) theatre (National Endowment for the Arts, 2008). Non-musical play attendance has dropped at a rate of 33 percent in the last decade (National Endowment for the Arts, 2013). In addition, theater attendance in general (both musical and non-musical) has declined significantly since 2008 (National Endowment for the Arts, 2013). Trends were also spotted in audience demographics; in surveying the audience attendance at a non-musical play in the year 2012, the majority was found to be white, highly educated adult men and women ranging from the ages of 25 to 34 and 55 to 64 (National Endowment for the Arts, 2013). The majority of these individuals had also attained a graduate degree level of education (National Endowment for the Arts, 2013). As nonprofit theaters continue to entertain and educate their audiences, it will be vital to take these demographic and attendance trends into account to continue the organization's outreach and growth.

II. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram usage and trends

In addition to trends in the realm of non-profit theaters, trends in social media may present numerous obstacles to the audience reach and relationship building process of the ASC. Currently, Facebook remains one of the most actively used social media platforms for adults with 64 percent of adults visiting the site daily (A. Smith, 2014). This trend has increased from the 51 percent of adults using the platform as of 2010 (A. Smith, 2014). In contrast, a mere 19 percent of adults who are online use Twitter and the majority of active users utilize Twitter to read tweets and get news, not actually engage in interactive communication (Pew Research Center, 2014; Edwards, 2014). This decline in active usage may indicate a rising population of online adults using Facebook as their primary social media platform. In addition to these platforms, Instagram may prove beneficial in reaching a young adult population with over 90

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

percent of the 150 million users under the age of 35 (C. Smith, 2014). The platform is also most often used by 17 percent of the population living in urban areas versus a mere 11 percent in suburbs (C. Smith, 2014). Utilizing these social media trends and platforms, the ASC can more accurately target their ideal consumer through the platform that best meets the audience's needs.

Finally, research has uncovered a declining trend in the realm of applications for smartphones. Despite having access to a virtually endless amount of applications for a user's smartphone, 65.5 percent of individuals rarely download any new apps (Tweedie, 2014). Only one-third of smartphone users try a new app while the remaining users download only one new app per month (Tweedie, 2014). This overall decline in app downloads may be attributed to first, the fact that individuals are happy with their current apps, and second, that it has never been more difficult to connect the right user with the right app (Tweedie, 2014). This information will prove vital for the ASC in the launch of their new web-based application as they seek to create a personalized experience for their audience, connect with visitors on social media, and gain viewership and downloads using the application.

III. Conclusion

With changing trends in the realms of nonprofit theaters, social media and application downloads, organizations like the ASC must pay careful attention to its target audiences and their needs. Using the previous research, non-profit organizations can effectively target an audience based on demographics, send a message through the most viewed channel and create the optimal personalized experience with applications. With this knowledge, the ASC will be better equipped to develop and target their new personalized app for download, generate conversations with their 50 to 70 year old target audience on Facebook, reach out to the 18 to 35

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

year old generation through Instagram, build relationships with its target public and expand its audience reach.

Publicity Plan and Social Media Strategies

“Nothing’s so common as the wish to be remarkable.” –William Shakespeare

Amidst a digital world containing over 1.2 billion apps, the web-based application often serves as the understudy—though it is time for this app to shine. According to *Business Insider* (2014), 66.5 percent of Americans prefer to continue using the applications they already have on their smartphones and do not download any new apps each month. While individuals carry a pocket-sized loaded arsenal of applications, the problem may lie in the discovery of new applications because “it has never been more difficult to connect the right user to the right app” (Tweedie, 2014, para. 6). Enter stage left: The American Shakespeare Center’s “What is your Shakespeare Personality?” web-based application.

This publicity plan outlines the target audiences and objectives of the ASC’s application launch in November 2014, as well as the social media schedules and other promotion techniques that will be implemented throughout the fall season and beyond.

I. Audience and Objectives

For visitors of the Staunton area, the American Shakespeare Center is the hub of local theatrical artistry. This dynamic app will connect the target audiences of residents and tourists to the ASC and local businesses. Additionally, the ASC will aim to increase awareness about its establishment and the city of Staunton in the fall season and throughout Spring 2015. The center will continue its reputation as a remarkable, world renowned center for Shakespearean education and performance while contributing to the city’s visitor/tourism revenue. Finally, the ASC will track its application’s success and reach by tracking the number of downloads and redemption of coupon codes at participating businesses. It will be vital to continue building the audience and number of app users through social media and creative outreach following its launch in October.

II. Social media strategies

The “What is your Shakespeare Personality?” app, which was renamed “What Shakespeare Character Are You?” provides users with a short quiz that determines which Shakespearean character best suits their personality. Then, it matches their result with a specific weekend itinerary for the city of Staunton that fits the personality and needs of said character. The application quiz, which will change each year, will effectively match users with not only the “right” app, but with local businesses and specific ASC performances that suit their individual preferences. Also, through the application and other social media, the ASC will be better equipped to connect potential visitors to the center and city.

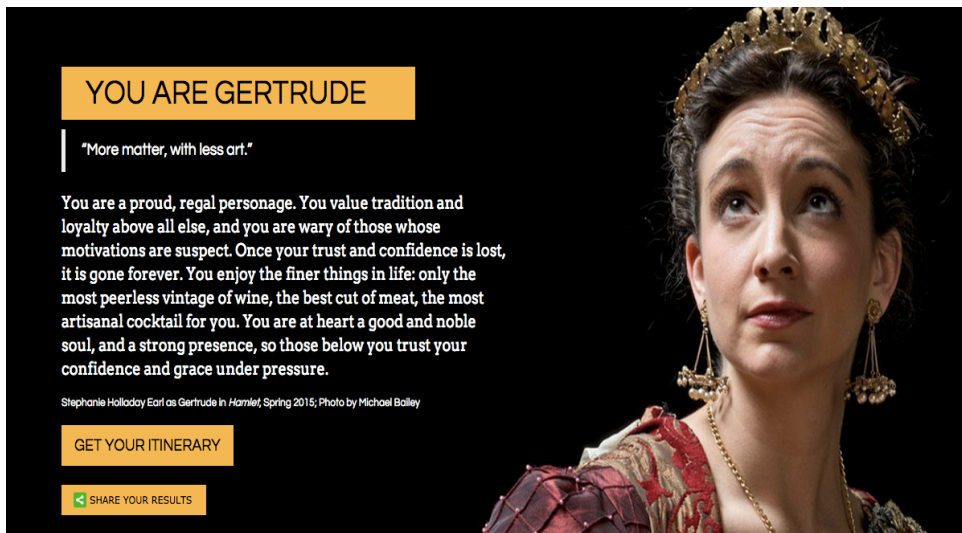


Image 2— Pictured above is one of the sample character results from the “What Shakespeare Character Are You?” online quiz.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

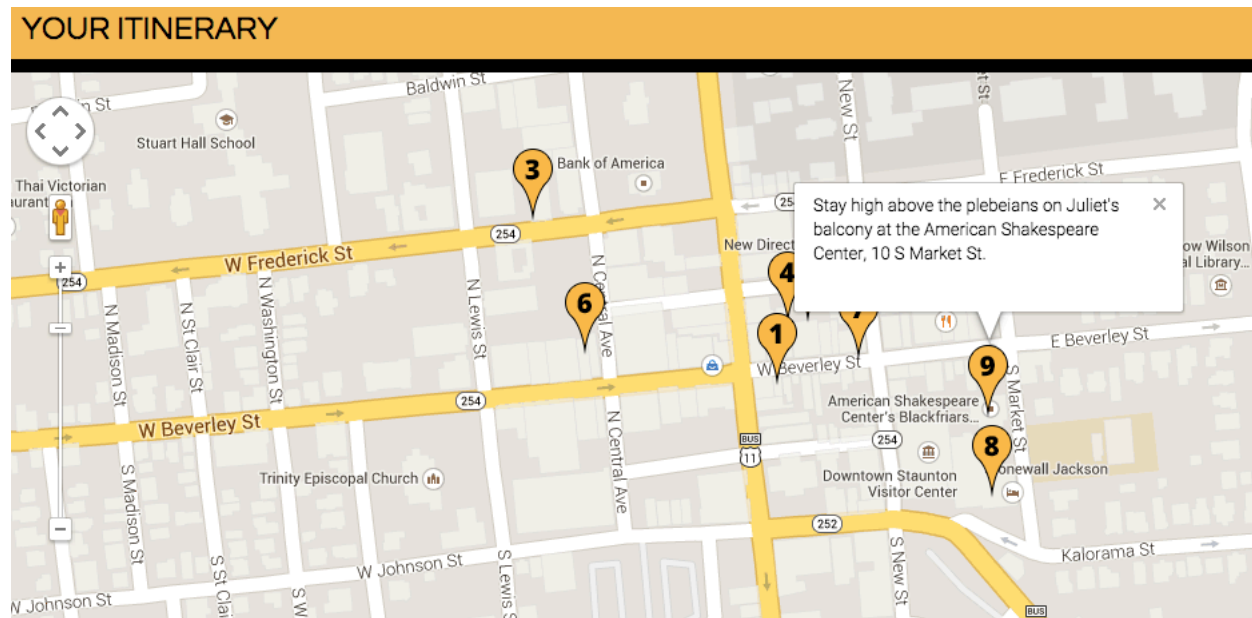


Image 3— Above is a sample itinerary based on the character, Gertrude. Each itinerary includes a map of the local Staunton area with numbered points of recommendations of where your character would dine, stay, visit and sit in the Blackfriars Playhouse.

The following strategies will be used to promote the application launch and local happenings on social media:

- Increase the amount of posts on social media (Facebook and Twitter) to frame the ASC as a unique landmark in Staunton
- Emphasize the ASC as a member of the larger surrounding community
- Make Shakespeare fun, approachable and contemporary
- Establish relevant content by building off of important dates at the ASC, in Staunton and in Shakespeare's history (e.g., Shakespeare's birthday, ASC dates, Staunton historical events)

III. Social media content

The application launch will be promoted on Facebook and Twitter through weekly posts, memes and tweets.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

On Facebook, the ASC page will connect audiences with its characters, the ASC and Staunton with posts including photos of each character in the quiz results, the interior and exterior of the ASC, various landmarks in Staunton, creative memes, and links to download the application/take the quiz. In addition, posts will promote education about Shakespeare using quotes and other fun facts about Shakespeare. Finally, the ASC may plan to host a scavenger hunt for Facebook followers using photos of various city landmarks, costumes from previous/recent shows and other ASC artifacts. Followers can comment and attempt to correctly identify the place/object for a chance to win a special opportunity (such as a backstage tour, meet and greet with actors before show, discount at the merchandise store, etc.).

Listed below are samples of potential Facebook posts (see Appendix B):

- Are you a Desdemona or Emilia? Take our quiz and download the app to find out more about your Shakespeare personality!
- Happy November! Do you agree with Beatrice (Much Ado About Nothing) when she says that “he hath no beard is less than a man?” Take the Shakespeare Personality quiz and download the app to find out!
- Did you know? The ASC’s Blackfriar’s Playhouse features performances in Shakespeare’s “original staging conditions—” a simple stage with limited sets, in which the audience shares the same light as the actors. Learn more about the playhouse here: <http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com/v.php?pg=124>

Twitter can also be an effective tool to build the ASC’s brand and get conversation started with a target audience (Krogue, 2014). In order to attract an audience who shares similar interests (e.g. theatre-goers, Staunton residents and visitors), the ASC will tweet on a weekly basis (approximately one tweet per day) about content related to their business, theatre and the

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

local area. This strategy will be communication-based with a focus on promoting the center and city through creative, engaging and informative content. In addition, a play-on-words strategy will be used, incorporating the ASC and its shows through the use of significant/known lines and words from each play in tweets/hashtags.

Listed below are the steps the ASC will take to effectively utilize Twitter:

- Follow local Twitter accounts to generate publicity for local businesses and events, such as:
 - Visit Staunton- @Staunton
 - Staunton Downtown Development Association (@StauntonDwnTwn)
 - Staunton News Leader (@NewsLeaderNOW)
 - Staunton Insider (@StauntonInsider)
 - Staunton Tours (@StauntonTours)
 - Virginia Tourism (@VisitVirginia)
 - William Shakespeare (@Shakespeare)
 - Ebenezer Scrooge (@ASC_Scrooge)
- Establish a weekly Twitter schedule with tweets highlighting the application and its launch, local businesses featured in the results, various shows in the ASC's fall/spring season and local happenings and events in Staunton (see Appendices B and C)
- Tweet each day at specified times (Note: *Forbes* recommends that the best time to tweet if aiming for retweets/favorites is Friday at 4 p.m.)

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

- Develop relevant and unique hashtags that relate to the ASC and upcoming events, including:
 - Shows— “ASCFaustus” “ASCComedy” “ASCHolladay (“12 Dates of Christmas”)”
 - Application launch—“#ASCapp” “ASCPersonality”
 - Seasonal: “#ASCChristmas”
- Use direct tweets (replies, favorites) to encourage one-on-one communication and relationships with followers, in addition to retweeting relevant content as see fit (see Appendix 4)
- Engage ASC actors and administration in a live Twitter chat with followers (on dates near upcoming shows or application launch) answering questions and commenting using the hashtag “#AskASC”

IV. Other creative promotions

In addition to the above promotions, the ASC will generate press and news releases about the application and launch to be distributed to publications in Staunton and surrounding cities (see Appendix A). Information on the application will also be included in a segment in the ASC e-newsletter and on the ASC blog.

It may also be worth considering hosting a family-friendly event, “Playtime in the Playhouse” at the Blackfriar’s Playhouse. Such an event would allow the organization to continue its mission of education while simultaneously promoting the application and upcoming productions. This interactive story-telling event for children and their parents could potentially include the following elements:

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

- Storytime of Shakespeare's life and success
- Lesson on historical period costumes by ASC actors (in costumes from recent shows)
- Opportunity to take the Shakespeare character quiz on an iPad/tablet and view the costumes for that character as worn by the actors
- Lesson on the different parts of the stage and what a Shakespearean stage is
- Snack time with refreshments provided by local businesses

Journal Entries

August 2014

This month, I begin my honors project with the American Shakespeare Center. So far, I am feeling a little anxious and frustrated. It seems that communicating with the client is going to be more difficult than I'd anticipated—it is hard to get in touch on the phone and I have not been getting replies to e-mails I've sent. I was able to get in touch with Cathy on the phone and she and I discussed the plans for the project, which I am excited about! I will be in charge of the social media aspect and also help with some writing and editing for their new web-based application, "What's Your Shakespeare Personality?" Cathy explained that I will handle the launch a little bit on my own and help out with making edits to the application before it's launch in October. I am a little apprehensive because the process is moving faster than I'd anticipated. Dr. Hickerson and I originally planned on working on the project throughout fall semester and presenting the information towards the end of spring semester. I hope that there will be more for me to do once the application has launched!

September 2014

This month, I got to dive in a little more to my work with the client. I met up with Cathy and Danielle (the ASC's social media account executive) in person for the first time at the ASC. We talked about my goals for the project (to assist wherever needed, build upon my existing internship experience) and discussing the ASC's needs (lacking social media, help with press release writing and editing). I also pitched the idea of constructing Twitter and Facebook schedules for the ASC and the potential for an Instagram scavenger hunt. Cathy also mentioned the Twitter account they manage during their holiday season and asked if I would be up for handling it. I was a little unsure, but decided to go ahead and dive in! My next assignment is to

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

check out David Sedaris' "The Santaland Diaries" and learn about the character, Crumpet the Elf. Recently, I also began working on a press release for them, which was a little different than what I was used to. The ASC has a their own way of formatting their press releases, which was a little less formal than press releases I'd constructed in the past. Though this was an adjustment, I think it will be good to learn how to adapt my writing style and format to different clients. Finally, I was excited to learn that actively involved in the process as possible—they referred to me as their intern, which was unexpected! They also seemed receptive and open to my ideas. I'm excited to start working on another internship for the fall semester and look forward to gaining more experience as the ASC's intern!

October 2014

This month, Cathy, Danielle and I scheduled conference calls throughout the month and began collaborating on editing the press release for the launch. Originally, the launch was supposed to happen this month, but got moved to November 3 because more edits (to the actual web application) were needed. Cathy seemed really pleased with the press release I wrote—she complimented my writing and told me that not many edits were needed! I was nervous to send in the release because neither Cathy nor Danielle had seen my writing prior to "hiring" me on as their intern. I wanted to make a good first impression and to please them, so it felt good to have their approval! I sent along the finalized release this month, which will be featured on the ASC's website and (hopefully) in local Staunton publications. It's exciting to know that what I wrote is actually going to be published! Additionally, I began working on the Facebook and Twitter sample posts for the application's launch, based on the character results. I constructed a Twitter schedule with tweets specific to the app—it included character results and quotes from some of Shakespeare's work. It was a little daunting to go through all of the information; there were a lot

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

of characters and each had 4-5 results (including where to eat, stay, sit in Blackfriar's Playhouse, etc.) so I tried to make the tweets as entertaining as possible. Unfortunately, I never got word that these tweets were actually used by the ASC, which was a little disappointing. It was frustrating to know that I'd worked so hard and what I'd come up with was not actually used. Fortunately, I still have the opportunity to showcase my social media content with the seasonal Twitter account; we're going to set up another conference call this month to get prepared for the ASC's holiday season.

November 2014

The application went live this month! It went live on the ASC's website on November 5 and seemed to get a couple good media hits; I set up my Google Alerts and was notified that it was mentioned in local Staunton publications (*August Free Press*, *Staunton News Leader*). Cathy and I also planned for me to begin constructing a Facebook and Twitter schedule for both the ASC and Crumpet the Elf. This month was a tough one for me regarding deadlines, because I was simultaneously trying to construct Facebook and Twitter content alongside studying for midterms and completing projects. It was made a little easier, though, by the fact that our phone calls and my work for the ASC would now be done on an ad hoc basis and as needed. It was a little disheartening to know that my internship and work would be coming to an end soon, but I was excited to start tweeting as Crumpet! I finished reading the book and sent my sample tweets off to Cathy and Danielle. I received word from Danielle that Cathy loved them, so she gave me the account information and let me go to work! I think that tweeting as Crumpet will be a new experience for me because I do not generally use social media "in character." Crumpet is also my complete polar (ha!) opposite—he is cynical, sarcastic and despises the holiday season. Even

though we're nothing alike, I'm excited for the challenge that managing the Twitter account will bring and am looking forward to bringing Crumpet to life.

December 2014

This month, I began tweeting as Crumpet the Elf, which was a lot of fun! It was a little difficult because I tweeted on a more random schedule; I did not go in order as I originally had on the schedule. I also did not set up a HootSuite, which in hindsight may have been a smart idea! In addition, with winter break and holiday gatherings, it was a little chaotic! I was working from home for the ASC, finishing a video project for a film festival and I also got engaged! It was quite the month, for sure! I was a little overwhelmed after realizing that my busy schedule had caused me to miss 4 consecutive days of tweeting. There were a lot of tweets that I wanted to use but did not have the time to. To make up for lost time, I tried to tweet multiple times a day and use relevant content (e.g. The Hobbit movie release, New Years' Eve) to generate interest. I also got to engage in a little back and forth conversation with the ASC's second holiday count (Mary Dates from *12 Dates of Christmas*. It was really enjoyable to have someone to tweet back and forth to who had the same personality as Crumpet! I did have some trouble with the overly sarcastic, snarky nature of Crumpet; I had to try to be as in character as possible and often had to edit (and re-edit) tweets before publishing them. It was difficult because Crumpet's character and my own personality/personal Twitter are so different! It was definitely a new/different experience having to get into the mind of a specific character and say everything as he would. I had a lot of fun with it, though—some tweets were retweeted and favorite. I even got Cathy's approval in the form of mentions and comments! Finally, I saw results in the form of 11 new followers! Overall, getting to manage the Twitter account was a fun experience. I enjoyed getting to lead this part of the project even more—especially considering Danielle and Cathy let

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

me lead the account on my own (because their social media manager was leading Mary Dates' account). By the time December 31 rolled around, I sent my last tweet as Crumpet. It was saddening to know that one of the largest (and most fun!) parts of my project had come to an end.

January 2015

This month, it has been extremely difficult to get back in touch with Cathy and Danielle. Even though Dr. Hickerson assures me that now, I can stop working, it is still frustrating to not have gotten any feedback about my performance or where I can help next. I had really hoped to do more with the Facebook and Instagram scavenger hunts this semester. I've e-mailed both Cathy and Danielle twice since being back at JMU but have not gotten much of a response; Danielle did say that she would talk to Cathy as soon as she was back in the office and get back to me about the next steps. I've realized that this may be one of the challenges of one, interning from a far and two, working with a non-profit. Originally, they seemed very receptive and encouraging of my ideas; however, they seem to be very busy into their spring season and do not have the time or funds to dedicate to expanding their social media influence. Next, I will have to locate the readers for my honors project (oops- did I mention I forgot who they were?) and begin compiling everything into one document. I am also going to have to start thinking about where and when to present my information (in poster format, according to Dr. H). This month has been tough, dealing with the typical bout of senioritis and wanting to be finished with school. Fingers crossed that I can power through it and that the ASC will get back with me, soon!

February 2015

This month has been a bit of whirlwind and a standstill all at the same time. I have been trying to get back in touch with Cathy and Danielle to see about the results of my Facebook

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

posts. Cathy explained that she plans to use some of the Facebook posts I created throughout this upcoming year since the ASC did not get a chance to use them this past year. I'm really looking forward to potentially having more of my work featured on their social media account(s)! I am not sure where Dr. H and I plan to go from here—we'll likely have to set up a meeting to go over what the next steps are. I am still a little bit unclear of how all of my project will come together. I have been feeling stressed about my current classwork and workload so it feels like my project has been pushed aside for a little while. I feel like I've got time before I need to begin worrying about piecing the project together, but I know that April will be here before I know it!

March 2015

Cue the stress! I'd been less diligent about working on my honors project this month, so I am not entirely sure where to go from here. I got an e-mail from Dr. H and Dr. Aleman about my honors project presentation, so that will be another thing I need to start thinking about. Dr. Aleman invited me to have my project featured on a panel-like discussion at the SCOM Conference, which is apparently a great honor! I'm excited (and a little anxious) to know that my honors project experience will get to be shared with my fellow peers. I also have to start the process of finalizing my creative work, journals and other elements that I've written over the course of the past three semesters. Unfortunately, I didn't get much of a jump start on it until about three weeks before the due date to Honors... Oops! I definitely thought that I had more time than I do—April has snuck up on me! It has been a long time coming—I can only hope that my project formatting and content will be good enough. Dr. H says that he's never had a student's project rejected by the Honors Program before, so that helped me to feel a little better. I have been so overwhelmed with job applications, interviews, work and classwork so it will be

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

tough to stay motivated to finish the project. With less than 50 days until graduation, I am very ready to finally be finished with my project and turn it in!

Reflective Essay

In *As You Like It*, William Shakespeare emphasizes that “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” This mantra helped to shape my project and internship with The American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Virginia as I worked behind the scenes with the organization’s marketing department. Throughout the past three semesters, I’ve learned the truth behind these words in relation to public relations, non-profit organizations and social media. I experienced numerous challenges and successes in working with a non-profit that helped me to better understand an organizations’ role (both on and off stage) in relation to its audience.

Working as a long-distance “intern” with the American Shakespeare Center presented its fair share of challenges. The primary challenge I experienced was the difficulty and lack of constant communication between myself and the organization’s marketing department. Initially, I noticed that communication was not the marketing department’s strongest suit—I struggled to get in touch with Cathy following my first inquiries at the ASC. I was able to successfully get in touch with her to ask permission to use the ASC in my honors project; however, the frequency of communication deteriorated from there. I recall a time in the spring semester of 2014 in which she had to find time to chat on her personal phone due to time constraints during work hours. I was appreciative of this, as it showed me that she did care about my project and maintaining that point of contact. Though I was initially concerned about a lack of communication, it got easier once fall semester rolled around. Danielle, Cathy and I e-mailed once a week (or more) and set up weekly conference calls with one another and were in constant communication from September until November 2014. We also were able to successfully plan and execute one in-person/in-house meeting in September 2014, though we were unable to meet in person on a regular basis due to time and location constraints. The challenge of communication was more of

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

a struggle during October, November and December. I often had to rely on phone and e-mail with Danielle in order to get in touch with Cathy. At times, I would wait on a reply from Cathy for one to two weeks. Though Danielle was a good resource, this method was somewhat ineffective because Cathy was often the person I needed to speak to. This was a point of frustration for me, though I tried my best to stay on top of things and contact both individuals as often as I needed to (even to the point of sending multiple e-mails in one week). Overall, this challenge taught me that sometimes, you have to be the one to take the initiative and get into contact with someone. Depending on the situation, you need to keep at it to the point of annoyance in order to get the answers or reply that you need.

In addition to the difficulty of constant communication, I also experienced challenges in serving as an out-of-house intern. It was a bit of an adjustment for me, as I am not used to having to work from home or schedule meetings via conference call. In my prior internship, I was able to come into work from 9 to 5 p.m. each day and meet face to face with my coworkers and clients at daily and weekly meetings. I did have to work from home on one occasion, though it was nothing compared to the past three semesters. With my project, I was not able to complete my work in the ASC's administrative office, nor did I work on a fixed schedule. The majority of the work that I did was completed via Google Docs and Microsoft Word. From there, Danielle and Cathy would either make the edits themselves, track changes in Microsoft Word or e-mail me the edits that needed to be made. It often felt like these assignments were just extra homework—any time that I had outside of class, work or extracurricular activities was split between my actual homework and my project. Often, it was a challenge to find time to complete these assignments, which made me feel as if I was putting my project on the backburner. It was made a little easier with specified deadlines given to me by both Cathy and Dr. Hickerson; I

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

typically had a week or more to complete each assignment and could prioritize them amidst tests and other homework. I also attempted to set my own personal deadlines in order to best prioritize my work and ensure it was completed in time. Typically, I tried my best to finish writing or editing assignments anywhere from two to seven days before each deadline, depending on my schedule. Though finding time to complete each assignment and meeting each deadline was difficult (especially with some overlapping deadlines for both my advisor and the ASC), I was confident in the work I had produced for each. I received praise for my work from both Cathy and Danielle, which was published in local publications and on Twitter. Now, I feel that I have a better understanding of what it takes to meet deadlines and produce valuable work in public relations. I've realized the importance of setting deadlines for myself and completing work in advance to allow for revisions and edits. I also have a better grasp on my own work ethic and what I need to do in order to produce the best work possible in a timely manner. Overall, this juggling act enabled me to get a feel for how I will need to prioritize my time, multitask and remain motivated in order to best meet the needs of my future client(s) and employer.

Another challenge that was present in working with a client from a distance was the process of meetings, which were often scheduled via e-mail and executed via conference call (from my apartment or the local Starbucks). This gave me a glimpse into what it may be like to work for a company with multiple non-local or international clients. I assume that the same challenge would present itself in that situation—meetings and all work done would be scheduled via telephone and e-mail. I am appreciative that despite some trouble with communication, Danielle, Cathy and I managed to keep all of our scheduled conference calls with one another. This was advantageous because we could not meet in person regularly—the conference calls helped me to get further assistance and explanations when needed. This was the most effective

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

form of communication we had because it allowed me to gain a better understanding of what they wanted, clearly explain my own thoughts and ideas and communicate more efficiently overall.

In addition to communication, working with a non-profit organization presented its own set of limitations. When I began working with the American Shakespeare Center, I was familiar with the organization and had seen one show during a “Pay What You Will Night” at the Blackfriar’s Playhouse. I had some introductory knowledge of working with non-profit organizations from my summer internship but did not anticipate the challenges I would encounter in working with the ASC. I found that, due to time, budget and other organizational constraints, some ideas and tactics that I had planned to implement would be impossible. For example, I pitched the idea of an Instagram scavenger hunt and “Playtime in the Playhouse” event to expand the organization’s audience reach and promote its productions. Cathy and Danielle liked the scavenger hunt idea at first; however, by the end of my internship, nothing resulted from that idea. There was so much going on with their application launch, holiday season and holiday Twitter account that we did not have any time for extra events or tactics. Likewise, there was likely no extra money in the budget to accommodate any events besides productions. This was a bit of a tough pill to swallow because I was proud of my ideas, excited about implementing them and wanted to do as much work as I could for the organization. I almost felt as if I was letting Cathy and Danielle down—I’d come up with these tactics that I thought could help to expand their educational goals and grow their audience (especially in the 18 to 24 year old age range), yet they didn’t get off the ground. This was difficult for me to accept but it taught me that you can’t always do everything you want to do (especially within the time and budget constraints of a non-profit organization). I also learned that, just like with my

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

previous internships, the intern can only do so much work. This was emphasized particularly during November and December 2014. Aside from managing the Twitter account (which I could do on my own), my internship had come to an end. Danielle, Cathy and I started communicating solely on an as-needed basis; we no longer needed to hold conference calls or weekly e-mail conversations because there was nothing left for me to work on. This helped me to understand that you simply cannot do it all. In the end, it may be most effective to focus your efforts on multiple smaller projects to reach a larger audience (as with Twitter and Facebook) than one large project with a more limited reach. Even though I was sad to realize that my internship was coming to a close, I knew that I had done all that I needed to for the organization.

In spite of numerous challenges, my internship with the ASC proved to have several positive aspects. First, working with this specific non-profit organization helped me to gain a more focused understanding of what I want to do within public relations. I started my adventure with the ASC because I knew I had a passion for both public relations and the arts; it was familiar to me and comfortable. Little did I know that working with a non-profit came with challenges that would push me outside my comfort zone! I also came to realize that even though I love the performing arts, it may not be the exact fit for my professional life. I do not want to restrict myself to just working with the arts. Instead, I want to be able to use my knowledge and experience in public relations to make a difference—whether that is with a non-profit organization, in healthcare or elsewhere. I hope to keep an open mind and to continue pushing myself into unfamiliar territory in order to grow as an individual and in my field.

In addition to providing a new experience, my project made me feel like I was truly making a tangible difference for the ASC. I had a good working relationship with both Danielle

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

and Cathy; they were open to my ideas and made me feel as if I was part of the ASC family. It felt like, though I was just an intern, I had a voice in the organization. Additionally, I felt as if the work I did was valuable and made a tangible difference. For example, I wrote and helped edit a press release for the application launch, which was published locally by the *Staunton News Leader* and *Augusta Free Press* (see Appendix A). I also helped the ASC (and an elf named Crumpet) gain 14 new followers from November 2014 to February 2015. Each of these examples demonstrates that the work I completed for the ASC achieved tangible results and was effective at reaching an audience. It allowed me to feel like the work I had done was worthwhile and made a meaningful contribution to the ASC. I look forward to seeing my work continue to impact the organization, as some of the Facebook posts I created will be used by the ASC throughout 2015.

Finally, my internship at the ASC and project with the Honors Program has been a positive experience in and of itself. It was an absolute joy to work with both Cathy and Danielle—they helped me to tap into my full potential and understand where I can continue to improve. They also pushed me to grow as a leader by bestowing responsibilities on me, such as the management of their Twitter account. Overall, this project has pushed me to better understand all that is involved within a public relations campaign. I was challenged to juggle multiple responsibilities and tasks at once, as well manage the project as if it was a real campaign. This meant that I was required to conduct research, analyze my organization and its target publics and build part of a campaign from the ground up. The project took me through all aspects of a campaign—from research and analysis to goals, tactics and implementation—essentially on my own. It also required me to adapt to many of the challenges and experiences I may encounter in the workplace; I worked individually and with a “team” to brainstorm, design and implement public relations tactics. I also had to attend weekly and monthly meetings and

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

conference calls with “management.” Finally, this project showed me firsthand what it takes to successfully plan, organize and implement and see results within a public relations campaign. I was able to develop my leadership skills and learn what it takes to manage an entire campaign/project. As a result of my experience, I feel better equipped to continue furthering my knowledge, skills and experience with a career in public relations.

If I were to do the project all over again, I would want to change my expectations, not the project itself. I did not anticipate the struggle that I would have getting into touch with Cathy and Danielle—sometimes, I was sending two to three e-mail reminders per week. Fortunately, they knew that they were tough to pin down and apologized for it on several occasions. This taught me that even if you hope for or expect a response within 24 hours, it may not always happen. This helped me to have more patience with my client and realize the importance of staying on top of things, even though sometimes it felt as if I was pestering them. I will admit that it was very frustrating and there were times when I doubted whether or not working with them was going to be the best fit. I was torn because I had my heart set on working with them; I couldn't understand why it was so hard for them to return my calls or reply to my e-mails. Despite this frustration, I am glad that I stuck it out and worked so hard to maintain communication with them. Sometimes I was sending three e-mails a week! This proved to be beneficial and necessary; had I not been persistent, my project may not have gone anywhere. I am also glad that I stuck with this particular client because it allowed me to learn the ropes (both difficult and rewarding) of non-profit public relations. I was also able to form a positive working relationship with two coworkers that I've really enjoyed getting to know and collaborate with.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

In addition to my expectations (or lack thereof) of the difficulties of communicating with a non-profit client, I would have liked to change the amount of work that I attempted to complete. My project was unique in that it was a mixture of a couple different major “events” and social media tactics—it was not as if I stuck to working on one social media platform or promoting one single event. That being said, I was eager to continue the “campaign” for the ASC with a family friendly educational event and Instagram. If I had the opportunity to turn back time, I would make sure that I did not get too ahead of myself. I wanted to do a lot of work for my client in a little amount of time, which led to disappointment when I realized my time was up. I was able to channel my work and energy into the tasks I had in front of me; however, I should have had more realistic expectations of what could actually be done in a three to four month time period. As I’ve come to realize, though you may want to do multiple tactics in a short period of time, it may be unattainable and impossible for your client and your own schedule. In all, while my experience with the ASC positively impacted my understanding of and passion for public relations, my project would have been easier to tackle had I been better prepared to expect the unexpected.

At the end of every play, the lights fade to black and the curtain falls. After the applause, all that the actors and audience are left with are the memories of what they just experienced. Though my internship and honors project with the American Shakespeare Center has come to a close, the skills and experience I developed was anything but ephemeral. The project enabled me to develop my skills as a leader in public relations as I sought to meet the needs of a client and build their presence on social media. It provided me the opportunity to create tangible, meaningful work for my client to help promote their application and build their audience in the local and online communities. Despite the challenges with communication and scheduling, the

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

creative work, results and experience I gained during my internship made it all worthwhile. As the curtain falls on my honors project and the ASC's application launch, I am content in knowing that the connections and social media presence that I helped to establish will continue to earn the organization a much-deserved applause.

Appendix A

Below is the news release created in collaboration with the ASC’s marketing department, which promoted the application and was featured in two local news publications.



News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Cathy Bagwell Marsh

540.885.5588 ext. 26

cathy@americanshakespearecenter.com

Discover Your Shakespeare Personality With The American Shakespeare Center

STAUNTON, VA (October 15, 2014) – If Macbeth was spending the day in Staunton, where would he grab a quick bite to eat? With the introduction of the “What’s Your Shakespeare Personality?” quiz and web-based application, the American Shakespeare Center has uncovered the answer. The application is the first of its kind for the ASC, connecting users to Shakespearean characters and local businesses within the city of Staunton.

At the touch of the tablet or click of the mouse, the web-based application is available for download to users with an internet connection on their tablets, laptops and desktops. The application, which will go live the first week of November, includes a personality quiz that matches them with their Shakespearean character counterpart.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

Based on their character, the user is instantly matched with a weekend-long itinerary and recommendations of local hotels, restaurants, and ASC shows that best suit their personality traits. The results also explain the character's personality and motivations, including which shows they would attend at the ASC and where they would sit in the Blackfriars Playhouse today. Users can utilize their personalized itinerary to explore the city and attractions within Staunton, decide which ASC performance to attend, and earn discounts when they check in at a participating restaurant, shop, attraction or hotel included in their individual quiz results.

"We are thankful for the opportunity we were given to develop the application and are excited to see how it will bring people into Staunton and into the Blackfriars Playhouse," said Cathy Bagwell Marsh, Director of Marketing and Sales at the ASC. The application's development has been ongoing at the ASC since April 2014, thanks to the financial support of a local BRIGHT Idea Innovation Grant. This funding opportunity, the first of its kind, was made possible by the Staunton Downtown Development Association, the Staunton Department of Economic Development, the Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge, and the Staunton Creative Community Fund.

To learn more about the characters, "What's Your Shakespeare Personality?" application and ASC's fall season, visit their website at www.americanshakespearecenter.com.

The American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Virginia, recovers the joys and accessibility of Shakespeare's theatre, language, and humanity by exploring the English Renaissance stage and its practices through performance and education. The ASC's Blackfriars Playhouse, the world's only recreation of Shakespeare's indoor theatre, is open year-round for productions of classic plays, which have been hailed by *The Washington Post* as "shamelessly entertaining" and by *The Boston Globe* as "phenomenal...bursting with energy." Founded in 1988 as Shenandoah Shakespeare Express, the organization became the American Shakespeare Center in 2005 and can be found online at www.americanshakespearecenter.com.

###

Appendix B

Below are the sample Facebook and Twitter schedules created to help the ASC promote the launch of its application, “What Shakespeare Character Are You?”

Facebook:

Enter stage right: the ASC’s new “What’s Your Shakespeare Personality?” quiz and application for your computer, tablet and smartphone. Take the quiz, get matched to a character and discover your very own personalized itinerary for a day in Staunton- all at the touch of the tablet!

Does your idea of a perfect Saturday night include “The Bachelorette,” Pinterest and a glass of champagne? So does Luciana’s! Want to know what else you have in common with the *Pericles* character? Download the “What’s Your Shakespeare Personality?” app and take the quiz at [www...](#)

What happens in Denmark stays in Denmark...? Talk about a party- especially when your personality is like that of Laertes in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*! “Say you so? Come on. Play” with our new “What’s Your Shakespeare Personality?” quiz and app available now!

Did you know that many of the phrases we use today are thanks to Shakespeare? Check out this article from *Business Insider* to learn more!
<http://www.businessinsider.com/everyday-phrases-from-shakespeare-2013-9>

Diamonds (and gold!) are Gertrude’s best friend! Walk in Hamlet’s mother’s shoes down to Crown Jewelers in Staunton for the royal treatment- and be sure to find your Shakespeare personality match with our “What’s Your Shakespeare Personality?” quiz and app!

Looking for something fun to do on a rainy day? Dromio would agree that there’s nothing wrong with having a little fun! Check out an assortment of classic toys at Pufferbellies or get spooked at a Ghost Tour of Staunton- and while you’re there, show them your “What’s Your Shakespeare Personality?” quiz results for a discount!

Hungry for a great burger? Want to channel your inner Macbeth? Head to George Bowers for a bite to eat, grab drinks at Red Beard’s and catch an action flick at the Visulite Cinema. Explore these locales and more with our “What’s Your Shakespeare Personality?” quiz and application.

Girl’s night out? This calls for some inspiration from Gertrude and the ASC’s “What’s Your Shakespeare Personality?” quiz and app! Get a new ‘do at Tease Hair Salon, grab a little black dress from Design @ Nine and join us at the ASC on Juliet’s balcony for a night fit for a queen!

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

Twitter:

Luciana or Ophelia? Find your perfect Shakespearean match with our “What’s Your Shakespeare Personality?” quiz and app!

Are you a Hamlet or a Dromio? Discover your inner Shakespearean character and take the quiz today!

“I could never endure a husband with a beard on his face.” -Beatrice. Are you with or against Beatrice? Take our quiz and find out! (Possibly relate the quote to “No Shave November,” if appropriate)

Need a way to “break the ice” at your next holiday get-together? Download our new Shakespeare personality app and pass the tablet around!

“This above all: to thine own self be true.” - Polonius, *Hamlet*

What’s YOUR Shakespeare Personality? Take the quiz and download the app on your tablet or smartphone to find out!

Planning a trip to Staunton? Discover the city’s top tourist destinations with our “What’s Your Shakespeare Personality?” quiz and app!

Monica & Rachel. Woody & Buzz. Beatrice & Hero. Grab your best friend and discover your Shakespeare personalities with our new app!

“Though this be madness, yet there is method in’t” - Polonius, *Hamlet*

Appendix C

The original Twitter schedule for @ASC_Crumpet sought to promote the ASC's production of *The Santaland Diaries*, increase the pre-existing number of followers and provide Crumpet's followers with a few laughs. Of the sample tweets, 11 were used from November to December 2014 while additional tweets were created on the spot.

November 2014

Macy's SantaLand isn't the only center of excitement around here... Coming soon to the ASC: "The SantaLand Diaries"

Is in Santa's Village, surrounded by candy canes and gingerbread shacks... Where are the holidays taking you this year?

It is an elf's lot to remain merry in the face of torment and adversity. And you thought we just made toys!

An elf in SantaLand is one thing, an elf in Sportswear is something else all together!

The walk from SantaLand to the China department in costume is the real walk of shame.

Santa Elf, Emergency Exit Elf, Magic Tree Elf, Cash Register Elf, Water Cooler Elf... which kind of Elf are you?

Forget the exclamation points and enthusiasm. I think I'll be a low-key sort of elf.

Everything elves say has a forced exclamation point on the end of it... Does this make everyone uncomfortable or is it just me?

Fill in the blank: Step on the magic star and you can see _____! Cher? Mike Tyson? Santa?

December 2014

A lazy elf could ruin an entire roll of film... So could yawning Santa. Do you have any Christmas photos gone wrong?

Once a child starts crying on Santa's lap, its over.

We all are unique... but sometimes, it all comes down to the fingerprints.

Parents, whatever you do, PLEASE don't bring all of your camera equipment with you to see Santa. Just don't.

Some Santas are wild and wonderful while others take their job way too seriously. Where have you seen the best Santa?

Sometimes, I think this green velvet elf costume is worse than my ugliest Christmas sweater.

"Try and love other people as much as they love you" is the mantra for the Santa looking to make parents cry (and some extra cash).

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

Watch out for the other elves—Snowball is adorably flirtatious and Jerome is unpredictable.

All of the adults ask Santa for a BMW or a Gold Card. Somehow I don't think that'll fit in the sleigh.

What's your favorite Christmas carol? "Rudolph?" "Jingle Bells?" "White Christmas?"

Christmas Eve in Macy's SantaLand isn't for the faint of heart. Do you go shopping on Christmas Eve?

Merry Christmas Eve, everyone! Enjoy your day off—I know I am!

Appendix D


Pictured below is the Twitter profile for Crumpet the Elf, one of the two characters featured on the American Shakespeare Center’s seasonal holiday accounts. Crumpet’s account, tweets and personality are based upon that of the character in David Sedaris’ book, “The Santaland Diaries,” which inspired the ASC’s one-man show of the same name.




Appendix E

These screenshots showcase the additional tweets that were created for Crumpet the Elf. Some of the tweets were edited and adapted from the original schedule while others were created spontaneously to reflect current trending topics.

 **Crumpet the Elf** @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 2
Guess who's back for this holiday season! Warning: if you're hoping for holiday cheer, you won't find it here.
← ↻ ★ ...

 **Crumpet the Elf** @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 3
The real walk of shame is the one you take from the China department and Santaland... still dressed in velvet tights and pointy shoes.
← ↻ ★ ...

 **Crumpet the Elf** @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 6
Why are the hobbits at [@TheHobbitMovie](#) getting all of the attention? They don't have a whole season devoted to them like us elves do!
← ↻ ★ 1 ...

 **Crumpet the Elf** @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 7
Surrounded by gingerbread and little (screaming) people who only come up to knee height... where are the holidays taking you this year?
← ↻ ★ ...

 **Crumpet the Elf** @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 7
Santa is currently trending on Twitter... I'd be trending too if I was fat, jolly and left presents under the tree. [#Crumpet](#) [#humbug](#)
← ↻ ★ ...



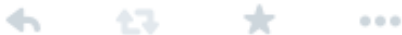
Crumpet the Elf @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 23

Just heard a parent ask Santa for a lifetime supply of @Starbucks and a new fully-loaded @bmw. I don't think that'll fit in the sleigh...



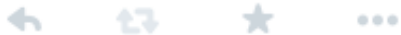
Crumpet the Elf @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 23

Once a child starts crying on Santa's lap, it's over. Have you ever had an awful experience with Santa? I have. For the past 23 days.



Crumpet the Elf @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 24

Nothing says "Christmas Eve" like an entire day full of whining children, camera flash & itchy tights. And Santa thought his job was hard!



Crumpet the Elf @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 24

It's hard to believe tonight is the last night I'll have to wear these awful tights... At least until next year! Merry Christmas Eve!



Crumpet the Elf @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 26

I'm calling it quits at #ASCSantaland today- no more elf antics until 2015! But hey- if @OfficialNYRE needs a Baby New Year, I'm available!



Crumpet the Elf @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 26

Can you believe Christmas is over? That means no more itchy tights or reoccurring nightmares about the cash register!



Appendix F

During Crumpet's time on Twitter, he conversed, complained, planned and plotted with Mary Dates from the ASC's holiday production of *The 12 Dates of Christmas*.

The screenshot shows a series of tweets from December 2nd to 6th, 2014. Crumpet the Elf (@ASC_Crumpet) and Mary Dates (@Mary_Dates) discuss the holiday season, specifically mentioning Paul McCartney's repetitive Christmas songs. Crumpet complains about listening to Christmas music for eight hours a day, and Mary Dates suggests a more creative elf name like 'EGGNOG'. Crumpet asks for suggestions for elf names, and Mary Dates suggests 'ReindeerPoo', 'StockingStench', and 'Santa'sHemorrhoids'.

Crumpet the Elf @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 2
@Mary_Dates Least favorite part of the holiday season. Ready- go!

Mary Dates @Mary_Dates · Dec 2
@ASC_Crumpet that repetitive Paul McCartney song. Please, no one utter the lyrics... Your turn.

Crumpet the Elf @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 3
@Mary_Dates It's between the Vomit Corner and being forced to listen to Christmas music for eight hours at a time. Every. single. day.

Mary Dates @Mary_Dates · Dec 3
@ASC_Crumpet: Hmm, I thought for sure you'd say it was the tights...

Mary Dates @Mary_Dates · Dec 4
@ASC_Crumpet, I thought long and hard about it, and I've decided if I ever need one, my elf name would be EGGNOG. #ASC12dates

Crumpet the Elf @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 6
@Mary_Dates Brilliant! Mine might change depending on how grueling these next 19 days are... any suggestions?

Mary Dates @Mary_Dates · Dec 6
@ASC_Crumpet: Hmm how 'bout... ReindeerPoo, StockingStench, or Santa'sHemorrhoids?

10:12 PM - 6 Dec 2014 · Details



The image shows a vertical scroll of four tweets. The first tweet is from Crumpet the Elf (@ASC_Crumpet) on Dec 23, replying to Mary Dates (@Mary_Dates) about 'Operation T.P.' and the North Pole. The second tweet is from Mary Dates (@Mary_Dates) on Dec 23, replying to Crumpet about the snowy landscape and suggesting coal. The third tweet is from Crumpet the Elf (@ASC_Crumpet) on Dec 23, replying to Mary Dates with ideas like coal slingshots and barricades. The fourth tweet is from Mary Dates (@Mary_Dates) on Dec 24, replying to Crumpet about stopping at an ex-fiancé's house.

Crumpet the Elf @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 23
@Mary_Dates tomorrow is December 24. Is Operation T.P. the N.P still a go?

Mary Dates @Mary_Dates · Dec 23
@ASC_Crumpet: The TP is on. Just afraid it won't stand out so well against that snowy N Pole landscape. Let's do something with coal.

Crumpet the Elf @ASC_Crumpet · Dec 23
@Mary_Dates Coal slingshot? Front door barricade made of coal? Weighted sleigh full of coal?

Mary Dates @Mary_Dates · Dec 24
@ASC_Crumpet I like all these options. Can we stop by my ex fiancé's house on the way?

Appendix G

Several of Crumpet's tweets received favorites, retweets and mentions by his followers.

★ **Ronda Grizzle** favorited your Tweet Dec 6

Dec 6: Why are the hobbits at @TheHobbitMovie getting all of the attention? They don't have a whole season devoted to them like us elves do!



★ **Leslie Pietrzyk** favorited your Tweet Dec 14

Dec 10: Forget the exclamation points and enthusiasm. I think I'll be a low-key sort of elf...



↻ **Clifford Garstang** retweeted you Dec 14

Dec 10: Forget the exclamation points and enthusiasm. I think I'll be a low-key sort of elf...

 **Cathy Bagwell Marsh** @ASC_CathyB · Dec 8
I love conversations btwn @ASC_Crumpet & @Mary_Dates. Suggested elf name from Mary: Santa's Hemorrhoids. #ASCSantaland #ASC12Dates
← ↻ ★ 1 ...

 **ASC** @shakespearectr · Dec 8
MT @ASC_Crumpet: Santa trending on @Twitter... I'd be trending too if I was fat, jolly & left presents under the tree. #ASCSantaland #humbug
← ↻ ★ ...

 **ASC** @shakespearectr · Dec 4
MT @asc_crumpet: Santa Elf, Emergency Exit Elf, Magic Tree Elf, Cash Register Elf, Water Cooler Elf... which kind are you? #ASCSantaland
← ↻ ★ ...


 **Corey A. Hickerson** @cahickerson · Dec 4 📍
Stinks to be a elf. "@ASC_Crumpet: between the Vomit Corner & being forced to listen to Christmas music for 8 hours. Every. single. day."
← ↻ ★ ...

Appendix H

In addition to favorites and retweets, Crumpet attracted an audience of 14 new followers from November 2014 until February 2015.

 **Corey A. Hickerson** and 3 others followed you Dec 4



 **Bobbie Howell** and 4 others followed you Dec 3



 **Robin Amato** and **Michael Hendry** followed you Dec 23



 **Monique Calello, darrell** and **Sarah K** followed you Feb 5



References

Edwards, J. (2014, April 11). Most people on Twitter don't actually tweet. *Business Insider*.

Retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/twitter-user-statistics-2014-4>

Kroguer, Ken. (2014, August 6). 31 Twitter Tips: How To Use Twitter Tools And Twitter: Best

Practices For Business. *Forbes*. Retrieved from

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kenkroguer/2013/08/30/31-twitter-tips-how-to-use-twitter-tools-and-twitter-best-practices-for-business/>

National Endowment for the Arts. (2008). *All America's a stage: Growth and challenges in*

nonprofit theater. Retrieved from <http://arts.gov/publications/all-americas-stage-0>

National Endowment for the Arts. (2013). *How a nation engages with art: Highlights from the*

2012 survey of public participation in the arts. Retrieved from

<http://arts.gov/publications/highlights-from-2012-sppa>

National Endowment for the Humanities. (2015, March 30). *NEH Grants*. Retrieved from

<http://www.neh.gov/grants>

Pew Research Center. (2014, July 17). *Social networking internet fact sheet* [Data file and fact

sheet]. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/social-networking-fact-sheet/>

Smith, A. (2014, February 6). *6 new facts about Facebook*. Retrieved from

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/02/03/6-new-facts-about-facebook/>

Smith, C. (2014, August 17). Here's why Instagram's demographics are so attractive to brands.

Business Insider. Retrieved from [http://www.businessinsider.com/instagram-](http://www.businessinsider.com/instagram-demographics-2013-12)

[demographics-2013-12](http://www.businessinsider.com/instagram-demographics-2013-12)

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

The American Shakespeare Center. (2015). *About us*. Retrieved from

<http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com/v.php?pg=5>

The American Shakespeare Center. (2014). *Beliefs that drive our actions*. Staunton, VA: The American Shakespeare Center.

The American Shakespeare Center. (2008, May). *Employee Manual*. Staunton, VA: The American Shakespeare Center.

The American Shakespeare Center (2014, October 3). *Social media guidelines for The American Shakespeare Center*. Staunton, VA: The American Shakespeare Center.

The American Shakespeare Center. (2011). *2011-2012 Market Research Report*. Staunton, VA: The American Shakespeare Center.

United States Department of Commerce. (2015, March 30). *Selected social characteristics in the United States: 2008-2012 American community survey 5-year estimates* [Data file].

Retrieved from

<http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

Tugend, A. (2014, November 6). It's unclearly defined, but telecommuting is fast on the rise.

The New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/08/your-money/when-working-in-your-pajamas-is-more-productive.html?_r=0

Tweedie, Steven. (2014, August 22). Most Americans download zero apps every month.

Business Insider. Retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/how-many-apps-people-download-per-month-2014-8>