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This study investigated the evolution of the web site of a large southern university's alumni association from the fall of 1995 through the spring of 1999. It looked at how the alumni association developed and evolved their web policies regarding content and design. This included what material they published and the layout of the site and the navigational schema. It looked closely at those people who have been involved with the web site and how each person influenced changes. There is not one path to follow in creating a strong web presence for an organization, but this study aimed to identify a set of steps to follow in creating and maintaining a large, effective, dynamic, interactive web site.

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THE EVOLUTION OF AN ALUMNI ASSOCIATION'S WEB SITE:
DECISIONS, MISTAKES AND SUCCESSES

by
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INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the evolution of one organization's web site. It looks at how one organization had developed and evolved their web policies regarding content and design. This includes what material to publish and the layout of the site and the navigational schema. It looks closely at those people who have been involved with the web site and how each person has influenced changes. There is not one path to follow in creating a strong web presence for an organization, but by looking at one organization's successes and failures, possibly other organizations can avoid the same mistakes and find similar successes.

Web sites have become a necessary part of any business or organization's information dissemination process, whether to advertise, sell, or simply inform. "[T]hese days, you need a website simply to be considered a professionally run organization (not being on the web is like not having a fax machine: people think you are a fly-by-night)" (Nielsen, 1997).

As the World Wide Web (WWW) continues to grow exponentially every year, its capabilities have also evolved at an incredible rate. According to NUA Internet Surveys in February 1999, there were 153.5 million users on the Internet, with 87 million of those users in the United States and Canada (Nua Internet Surveys 1999a). That is up from 147 million users in September 1998 and 76 million users in November 1997 (Nua Internet Surveys 1999b). Today the users of this network expect more and more services to be available electronically at the sites they visit. Static web pages are no longer competitive

or satisfactory. (Static web pages are web pages that always appear the same, and do not allow for user interaction.) Consumers expect interactive abilities such as security for credit card transactions and search capabilities for the site. Consumers are also becoming critical of the design and layout of web pages. They resent wading through a conglomeration of information; they want clearly organized sites.

“The web is no longer an experiment: it is mainstream. You have to rely on the ability to do business on the web, and people get very annoyed when they can’t: Limited sites are seen as a sign of corporate incompetence” (Nielsen, 1997). So how do organizations develop and maintain competitive web sites?

The web site of an alumni association for a large southern university was examined as a case study. The evolution of their web site was analyzed in detail. A focal point of this study was the path which led the alumni association to create the new position of Online Coordinator, to take on the responsibility of their web site as well as other electronic communications. This study looked specifically at the collaboration and communication involved in this decision process, from the time the position was proposed through the time the position was filled (for the second time). The surrounding circumstances and influencing factors that brought the alumni association to the decision that the position of Online Coordinator was necessary for their organization and its web site were also included.

This study looked at the specific case of the alumni association’s web site and tried to answer these research questions:

1. What policies govern the alumni association’s web site?
2. How and why did the alumni association develop these policies?

3. What were the factors resulting in the decision to create the Online Coordinator position?
4. What did the alumni association look for in a candidate for this new position?

After answering these questions, I have developed a set of steps to take and issues to examine when creating and maintaining a web site based on the alumni association's experience. This process could be used as a guideline for other organizations that wish to create and maintain an impressive site on the WWW.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When looking at the literature concerning web development and management, little is based on empirical or systematic research. Most articles are based on personal experience and often parts are outdated quickly as technology and user expectations change. However, one thing is generally agreed upon, no matter what technology is used or what the users expect, a good web site takes planning.

Initially web development may appear simple. There are tools such as Netscape Composer and Microsoft FrontPage, which can create HTML pages through a user-friendly text editor. Kindergarten children can create their own personal web pages with such tools. Creating one page is simple, “the real challenge is to design the complete site and not just individual, disconnected pages that don’t have a navigational structure” (Nielsen, 1995).

Web development and management are complicated. There are many types of decisions to be made, decisions regarding design and content as well as decisions regarding the technical (hardware/software) aspects of how the web site is going to function. The outcome of these decisions needs to be made into a web policy for any organization striving to produce an effective and worthwhile web site. “The most compelling justification for spending time to develop the necessary policies and procedures behind web page creation is that a web page is the most highly visible representation” of an organization (Lingle & Delozier, 1998).

Jakob Nielsen, who is well known for his work in hypermedia usability, writes a bi-weekly article for his Alertbox web site concerning issues relevant to web developers. In one of these articles, Nielsen (1997) outlines the “Top Ten Mistakes of Web Management.” First on the list is not knowing why an organization should have a web site. Everyone is aware from the hype that to be competitive an organization needs to have a web site. But not everyone takes the time to determine why they should have a web site and what should be on it.

Lingle and Delozier (1998) in their article “Policy Aspects of Web Page Development” compiled a list of both content aspects and technical aspects of web policies as they related to library web sites. While this article was written for libraries, much can be applied universally.

On the content development side of web policy these four aspects should be addressed: 1) Mission Statement, 2) Target Audience, 3) Scope/Content and 4) Maintenance/Updating (Lingle & Delozier, 1998). The mission statement is an outline of what the web site is meant to accomplish and how it fits into the goals of the organization. The target audience is the group for which the site is designed. The target audience is usually comprised of more than one group. If this is the case, then the groups should be prioritized, one becoming the primary audience and the others being the secondary audience (often the Internet user in general). Scope and content are directly related to the mission statement and the target audience. The material/information chosen for the web site should be tailored to the target audience(s) while promoting the goals of the mission statement. Lastly, the maintenance and updating of the site should be considered. A web site can be a dynamic medium. That is one its primary advantages

over print as a medium. But it is only a fully taken advantage of if it is regularly updated and altered. Users will not return to a static, boring site time and time again. If all a web site contains is email, phone and address information, there is no reason for a user to return to the site after they have retrieved this information. If an organization wants to use the web as a way to interact with users and provide up-to-date information, that organization needs to constantly change material, add new material and new capabilities, to keep the attention of the web surfer. "The web currently changes so rapidly that a major redesign is needed at least once per year simply to avoid a completely outdated look and to accommodate changing user expectations. Additional maintenance is needed throughout the year to bring fresh content online, reorganize and revise old pages, and avoid linkrot" (Nielsen, 1997). In writing a web policy, each of these content issues should be considered and rules made for dealing with each.

After considering the content sides of web development for an organization, it is time to look at the technical side. Again pulling from Lingle and Delozier's (1998) article, there are three aspects relating to technical and procedural aspects of web policy development: 1) Administration, 2) Confidentiality/Security Levels and 3) Budget Information (Lingle, 1998). Administration includes issues such as who is going to be responsible for updating and maintaining the web site and who is going to have access to the server? This runs into confidentiality/security levels from an internal perspective. There need to be policies about who gets access to which parts of the server and what types of access. Then from an external viewpoint, what information is password protected? What type of security is necessary for transactions? Does the information being filled out in forms need to be encrypted? If so, how can this be done? Finally,

budget information includes hardware, software and staffing or outsourcing money.

Nielsen advocates, “as a rule of thumb, the annual maintenance budget for a website should be about the same as the initial cost of building the site, with 50 percent as an absolute minimum” (Nielsen, 1997). This may seem high, but an organization needs to make a financial commitment to its site, if it wants it to be successful.

Once a web policy has been developed the next question is, whether this project should be done in-house or outsourced? Nielsen (1998) wrote an entire article in response to the question: Should You Outsource Web Design? His answer, “No, web design is a core competency for the network economy, so you need to build up your own organizational knowledge in the area” (Nielsen, 1998). This is also the conclusion that the alumni association came to, but what needs to be considered in making this decision?

Today more and more people are using the Internet to find information about companies, taxes, how to repair their house and where to buy the products or services to get their repairs done, to mention but a few topics. For many customers an organization’s web site is their first impression. If the experience is frustrating they will not come back and they will tell their friends and relatives not to use this company. If the experience is pleasant and they find what they are looking for easily, they are likely to come back and use the services again. It is important for an organization to carefully plan out what they should have available on their web site and to try to figure out what the perspective of the typical users coming to visit the site. Remember that no one knows an organization better than those who work there do. Even if the decision is made to outsource web work, someone within the company still needs to work closely with the vendor to ensure that the look, feel and organization of the site represents the image the organization wants

to create. A web site takes planning. As with any project it is important to have clear goals from the beginning. This plan should include the seven content/design and technical aspects outlined by Lingle and Delozier (1998) as well as an outline of the path information should follow to get posted on the web. There is a path of checks an article must follow to get published in print and there needs to be one for electronic web publishing as well.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As the student webmaster for the alumni association, I was in a unique position to analyze the state of the alumni association's present web site. To gather information on events that occurred before I began working for the alumni association, I conducted interviews with the key players in the creation and evolution of the alumni association's web site. Interviews are the best way to gather information about the past, the perspectives and ideas of those involved, and hopefully, to find out why things occurred as they did. These interviews began with the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems in the Alumni Records and Information Systems Department, who was instrumental in creating the alumni association's web site. Second was the Editor in the Alumni Publications Department, whose department ultimately inherited responsibility for the web site. Next on the list was the Assistant Editor in the Alumni Publications Department. Since she began working for the alumni association in 1997, she has taken on much of the responsibility of supervising and running the web site in addition to her other job responsibilities. I also interviewed the Network Administrator in the Alumni Records and Information Systems Department, who deals with the server and many of the technical aspects of the web site. The questions were structured for each interview to concentrate on those aspects of the web site that the interviewee was most closely involved in. For example, some of the technical aspects, which concern the Network Administrator, were not discussed with the Editor.

The information that I discovered in these interviews led me to one more interview with the Advertising Director and Promotions Coordinator. Her name was mentioned repeatedly as someone with progressive and different ideas about the alumni association's web site. She is responsible in her role as Promotions Coordinator for keeping a finger on the pulse of the whole organization.

With the participants' permission the interviews were taped for my use only, and then transcribed and coded for analysis. Each interview lasted less than one hour.

In addition to the interviews, I looked at the alumni association's mission statement and other formally written documents that touch upon their web policies. I have also included information gathered during informal contact as supplementary data, such as statistics collected since February 1998 on the traffic and usage of the alumni association's web site.

IMPORTANCE OF THE WEB SITE

The first mistake in web management, as listed by Jacob Nielsen, is not understanding clearly why a web site is needed. Why is a web site important specifically for an alumni association?

The goal of the alumni association is to inform and involve the university's alumni and friends who wish to maintain ties with the university, their alma mater. According to the Director of Records and Information Systems,

The World Wide Web is the perfect tool for alumni associations, a perfect resource for them to have in their role as an organization to inform... the web provides another avenue besides print for each of the departments to get their messages out that is not measurable (interview, January 21, 1999).

The alumni association has a very targeted audience: the graduates of the university and others wishing to stay connected to the university. However, that audience is not confined to the university town, the university state or even to the United States (see Appendix A). Members of the alumni association are all over the world. The web provides a tool that transcends all boundaries. It provides one of the most convenient ways for alumni to keep in touch with the alumni association and the university.

Before the web, the alumni association's only method to inform and involve alumni was direct mailing. Up until 1994, they had two quarterly publications, a magazine and a newspaper. In January 1995 those publications were merged into a bimonthly magazine. These publications are only sent to members of the alumni association, which accounts for approximately 33% of all the university's living alumni.

The alumni association also sends out postcards, brochures and letters to select groups from their alumni database. The alumni association maintains a database of all the university's alumni. This database includes information such as graduation year, sex, address, employment, family, awards, and participation in past programs. This database is used to sort for the best possible mailing list for a given program. Print materials are expensive to produce and mail, thus the alumni association can only afford to send out a limited number of brochures or postcards for each event they sponsor. There is also a lag time associated with printed materials. They must be developed and designed, proofed, sent to the printers, gotten back and finally mailed and from that point perhaps the recipient will receive the material in two to three days. The alumni association has not replaced any of their direct mailing with the web site. They do, however, replicate most of their print material on the web allowing them to reach a larger audience than they can afford to in print. They are contemplating replacing some direct mailing with emailing.

Presently, the web site is being used more for informing than involving, but the alumni association has plans to alter that. Some of the most popular pages in their site are those which allow for user input. The form to allow alumni to update their own address is consistently one of the highest hitting pages according to WebTrends reports from the web server logs. Following is a list of interactive content the alumni association developed in the spring of 1999 and responses these pages received.

1. Purchased VeriSign secure socket layer software in order to encrypt information provided by users in forms.
2. They utilized this software with a form to join or renew membership using credit card payment securely online.

3. The first week the form was filled out and sent by an average of five people a day. The alumni association averages 500 renewals a week, so the secure form was only 0.01% of the total renewals. That is significant considering this option was not advertised except for on the front page of the web site.
4. On March 23, 1999, the alumni association premiered individual pages for each of the approximately 100 alumni clubs, dynamically created using Active Server Pages (ASP) and a Microsoft Access database. The information is stored in a database and depending on the location the user picks, a page is created from a template with information about the club in the location chosen.
5. For the month of March, the new club home page was ranked the 19th most viewed page on the site.

This shows that the users of the alumni association's web site like interactive material and the alumni association is working towards providing more interactive content.

Of the Internet users who responded to the Graphics, Visualization, & Usability Center's WWW Surveying Team from Georgia Institute of Technology's 10th WWW User Survey conducted in October 1998, 28.5% claimed to have at least some college education and 33.9% to have a college degree (Georgia Institute of Technology, 1998). Overall 87.8% of the users claimed to have at least some college education. Based on this data, the alumni association could conclude that their target audience is more likely than average to be on the Internet.

The alumni association is a membership based organization, although many of their events and services are open to non-members. According to the Advertising Director and Promotions Coordinator,

The web site is a remarkable resource for us in the sense that except through direct mail we don't have a lot of outlets to reach non-members. Right now, to my knowledge, the way we talk to non-members is through membership appeals (interview, March 25, 1999).

The web provides an inexpensive outlet to reach many people.

The web is an important tool for the alumni association because 1) it transcends the physical boundaries of where alumni live, 2) it makes available another communication medium to inform and involve alumni with the alumni association and the university, 3) it provides another way for the alumni association to interact with alumni, 4) the alumni association's audience are likely candidates for Internet users, and 5) it gets messages to non-members as well as members of the alumni association.

HISTORY OF THE WEB SITE¹

In early 1995 the university was doing a redesign of its web site. The Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems had the foresight and the connections within the university to get a first level link to the alumni association's web site from the newly designed university home page. He convinced the university designers that alumni deserved to be on the home page. The next step was to create an alumni site. Again through connections, this time with the Associate Registrar, the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems was able to get space on a web server at the Registrar's Office. The alumni association shared a student worker with the Registrar's Office for site updates and maintenance. The alumni association paid the student \$50 per month and that was their only cost, other than the time the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems put into the project. The first student at the Registrar's Office lasted for about a year. Over the next year the Registrar's Office and the alumni association employed 2 or 3 more students to work on their web sites.

The Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems was really the only one from the alumni association who was involved with the web site while it was located at the Registrar's Office. Although he always foresaw the web site migrating to the Alumni Publications Department, at the time they were not prepared for the added responsibility.

The alumni association has five departments: Administrative, Membership and Benefits, Programs and Activities, Alumni Publications and Alumni Records and

¹ A timeline summarizing the major events can be found in Appendix A.

Information Systems. The original site was quite simple. It consisted of a look at each of the five departments in the alumni association and the services they offer and three or four main articles from the alumni magazine or the newspaper. It was static and only provided basic information about the alumni association's functions and how to contact them via email, mail, phone or fax. It also apparently had a gray background with the university mascot repeating, which everyone now says was awful. I have not seen it since no one seems to have kept a copy of it for posterity.

In the spring of 1997, a year and a half after the alumni association's first web presence, they made the commitment to have their web site in-house. This represented a significant increase in the alumni association's financial commitment to the web site from \$50 per month to the cost of an NT server and someone to maintain the server as well as hiring two graduate students to redesign, update and maintain the site. But according to the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems this was not a hard sell. One of the things that helped convince the President and the Board of Directors that the alumni association needed its own server was that in November 1996 the Registrar Office's server crashed. The alumni association's web site was lost. The Registrar Office's backups were sparse and had not been checked to make sure that they worked. Because a web site is such a visible part of any organization, the alumni association realized it was important for them to have more control over it. They needed a permanent professional they could charge with making sure that the server was up and running all of the time.

In the fall of 1997 the alumni association hired two graduate students from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Each student worked 10 hours a week. Their job was to redesign the site in preparation for the move from the Registrar Office's

to the new Microsoft IIS web server on the alumni association's new NT server. This new site would be completely under the control of the alumni association. Once the newly designed site was up, the two graduate students continued to work for the alumni association through the following spring/summer of 1998, updating and maintaining the site.

During the fall of 1997, the new design went through many iterations. Since there were not any full-time employees who could devote all of their time to the web site, most of the work on the design and navigational schema fell into the hands of the two graduate student workers. The student workers would not have been aware of everything that goes on at the alumni association, only what was told to them. Thus the design went through many revisions as the students learned about the services that the alumni association offers and wanted included in their web site. In designing the new site, these two students worked hard on a design and developing templates, only to have them corrected and altered time and time again in meetings with the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems, the Editor and the Assistant Editor.

The new site finally went live on January 21, 1998.

On February 17, 1998 the alumni association began logging statistics on their web server. This information was then pulled and compiled by a program called WebTrends, which the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems ran on a weekly basis. He also ran monthly reports. The statistics he pulled were used to show the Board of Directors how many people were accessing the web site (see Appendix B). The Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems chose to focus on the total number of visitors, the average number of visitors per day, the total page views, the average number

of page views per day and the average visitor session in minutes. He also got a listing of the top twenty most viewed pages. The page to update your alumni record has been consistently in the top ten and ranked as the second most viewed page during the period from February 17, 1998 to January 13, 1999. Not surprisingly, the top ranked page was the site's home page.

Shortly after moving their web site in-house in January 1998, the alumni association came to the realization that they had a hole to fill in managing their web site if they wanted to maintain a well organized, dynamic, current site. Contributing causes of this realization are discussed in later sections. The alumni association became concerned about continuing the level of service they had come to expect of themselves in other areas and wanted to provide for their users. In searching for a solution to this problem, the alumni association discussed three possible paths: 1) outsourcing the web site 2) dividing the responsibilities of the web site among several members of the current full time staff and 3) creating a new full-time position to care for the web site.

Outsourcing the web site was never considered a strong solution by the alumni association. The Editor pointed out that even if the decision was made to outsource the production of the alumni association's web site, someone would still have to coordinate with the vendor. Who would that person be? There were also doubts that a vendor could provide the level of service that the alumni association demands of itself. The alumni association had already made the decision that they wanted to have a dynamic, current web site, not a static information site. They did not think it was possible to achieve this through an outside vendor. Therefore this avenue was never seriously explored. The alumni association never solicited any quotes from outside vendors for web services.

The second option was dividing the responsibilities among current staff members. This was basically the current situation in early 1998. The coordination of the web site was divided between the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems, the Editor and the Assistant Editor. There was no formal division of duties between these three. It was generally agreed that the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems would deal with the more technical aspects and the Editor and Assistant Editor would deal more with the content and design. But this did not mean that the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems could not answer questions about or have opinions on content and design issues. It was more likely that the Editor and Assistant Editor would not be able to field technical questions, but not impossible. This meant that the student workers had at least three supervisors to work with and little in the way of guidelines as to whom to ask which questions. It also meant great amounts of coordination efforts were necessary for everyone involved to keep up to date on what was happening with the web site and to make sure that everyone agreed on the direction the web site was going and on the decisions being made. It was not the most efficient situation, resulting in many meetings in an attempt to keep organized.

The Director of Records and Information Systems was slowly lessening his role in the web site as he continued to work with the Editor to pass the responsibility of the web site over to the Alumni Publications Department. The Assistant Editor had just begun working at the alumni association in a new position the previous fall and found herself with the most amount of time to devote to the web site in early 1998. Also because part of the Assistant Editor's position is responsible for the section of the alumni magazine which promotes the upcoming events, she already needed to be aware of the programs the

other departments were planning. She became the most frequently used liaison between the alumni association and the student workers. It was easy for her to pass information onto the student workers about upcoming events for web development. But there was not one set path, so some information came through the Editor and some through the Director of Records and Information Systems.

Things were slow for the Assistant Editor at the beginning of 1998, and she spent her time learning HTML and Microsoft's FrontPage (the web authoring tool the alumni association had purchased for managing and developing their site). Finding both easy to learn and straightforward she offered to develop content when the student workers were not there in addition to assisting in the overall coordination of the web site.

However as people in the association learned that the Assistant Editor could do web development, it then became expected that she pick up the slack when the student workers were unavailable, rather than just when she had extra time left after completing her other duties. Many of the web work requests were being filtered through the Assistant Editor already. Now people were expecting her to immediately complete the web development work as well. She found that the requests she was receiving for web related work was taking up more and more of her time and her other responsibilities were suffering. There were weeks she said that she spend 80-90% of her time on web related activities. No one at the alumni association really had a good idea of how much time it took to put things together for the web. Many people thought because the web was so malleable, unlike printed materials, that it could be changed instantly. For example, the Assistant Editor would get a request to make a photo a quarter of an inch smaller. The person making the request believed this should only take a minute since everything is

electronic, but actually it would take closer to 10 minutes, assuming all went well the first time. The photo would need to be brought up in Adobe PhotoShop, resized, and then compressed for quicker download time using Ulead SmartSaver compression software. Then the Assistant Editor would have to alter the HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) code of the page(s) where the photo appeared, check to make sure the page still looked good in both Netscape and Internet Explorer. Then republish the page and the photo.

A good example of the time and commitment necessary to maintain a current dynamic site occurred in March 1998. The university was involved in a prominent sports tournament and the alumni association wished to cover this event and its related events on their web site. Information updates on hotel accommodations, sites for events, and details about events, ticket packages were coming in every half-hour. Decisions were being made regarding game parties and activities for non-ticket holders game by game as the university's team continued through the tournament. There was also coordination with other university-related organizations in putting these events together and publicizing them. It was not realistic to expect a student worker to be available to drop everything to wait for these updates or to expect them to be able to coordinate the entire effort, thus the task fell to the Assistant Editor. She was pleased with her work on this event and felt that the alumni association's web site was the only one of the coordinating organizations' web sites to be consistently updated. However, she began to realize how important it was for the web site to have a point person, someone full-time on staff to take on this responsibility. From this experience the alumni association learned how beneficial and necessary for what they wanted to do with their web site it was to have a full-time employee who was readily available when needed for web development.

It became clear to the Editor that if the Assistant Editor could spend 80% of her time on the web site and was suggesting that the web related work constituted a full-time position, it was something to seriously consider. It appeared the web site needed someone to coordinate it, direct it and take on responsibility for it. It was this realization that pushed the alumni association towards the third option, creating a new position.

One of the reasons the Editor was anxious to have the alumni association committed to a full-time position rather than having it picked up in pieces by other publications employees was because she felt they needed someone who could be really attentive to the potential of the web site. She said, “we can all sit around with good ideas, but we may not have the time to execute them” (Interview, January 27, 1999). She felt that it was important for the alumni association to create the Online Coordinator position in order to move forward with their web site and not remain static. The Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems also felt this way. He said, “if you reassign what other people do, that would allow us to maintain the it (the site), but it wouldn’t allow us to do much more advanced things” (Interview, January 21, 1999). The Assistant Editor’s comment was “You wouldn’t have a publication without an editor” (Interview, February 4, 1999). The web site is another publication of the alumni association and needed to begin to be treated as one. The decision was made by the publications department to begin pushing for a new position. This represents a raise in the perceived status and importance of the web site.

According to the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems, the approval for the Online Coordinator position again was not a hard sell. One of their peer organizations was about 3 months ahead of them in advertising for a similar position.

The argument was made that this was not an unrealistic investment, nor one that they alone were jumping to make.

The Online Coordinator position was approved by the President of the alumni association the end of May/beginning of June 1998 and approved by the Board of Directors for the 1998-1999 budget at the June 26-27 board meeting. The position was filled in September 1998.

The first Online Coordinator at the alumni association only lasted for three months. This was a learning experience for the alumni association. Despite the wording of their job description for the new Online Coordinator position (see Appendix C), which emphasizes coordination skills, the alumni association found itself with one seriously considered applicant who possessed advanced programming skills. Although this applicant did not have much work experience, the alumni association was excited about the possibility of having someone on staff who could do advanced scripting and decided to hire him. However, according to the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems, the alumni association discovered that they did not have a continual need for advanced scripting. There was a continual need for coordination and organization of the web site. The person filling the Online Coordinator position at the alumni association needs a willingness to be doing everyday things with the web site, such as putting articles and programs information online, as well as working with a number of different entities to get a particular area improved. The first Online Coordinator did not feel that he possessed the coordination skills necessary for the job. He decided he preferred a job where he could do more “nitty-gritty” programming. In the end both sides decided that it was not a good match and parted on good terms. The alumni association learned that

coordination skills were more important in an Online Coordinator than advanced programming skills to fill their needs of their organization.

The second Online Coordinator was hired from the original batch of applicants and she began work in February 1999.

The transfer of the web site from the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems to the Alumni Publications Department was an evolutionary process. It was discussed and planned for from the beginning. As mentioned earlier, this was always a step that the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems felt should happen, since the web site is a form of communication and that falls into the Alumni Publications Department realm. The IT support provided by the Alumni Records and Information Systems Department is also necessary and integral to the web site and the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems and the Network Administrator continued to be involved with the web site. However the alumni association decided that the main responsibility should be in the Alumni Publications Department.

The current Editor began working at the alumni association in December 1994, eight months before the alumni association's first web presence. When she first began at the alumni association, the Alumni Publications Department was in a process of transition. They were merging their two printed publications into one. They had published a magazine and a newspaper quarterly and were evolving to one publication, a bimonthly magazine. The publication staff members were relearning their roles and time schedules. During that time, the Alumni Publications Department did not feel that they had the resources to support the web site. They felt that all of their resources were already being used to produce the magazine. Since 1995 the Alumni Publications Department

has created three new positions, first an Assistant Editor and a Designer and later the Online Coordinator. The Designer position works mostly with the Managing Editor and Art Director on the layout and design of the magazine, but she also helps create graphics for the web site. The Assistant Editor as already mentioned has been directly involved with the web site, shouldering much of the responsibility of supervising the student workers. The addition of these two positions, especially the Assistant Editor helped the department begin to feel that they had the personnel resources to handle the full responsibility of the web site. The following creation of the Online Coordinator position was the real turning point in the transfer of the responsibility. The Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems became less involved with the content. Technical questions, requests, or problems were still directed to either his or the Network Administrator's attention. But the Online Coordinator has become the point person for the web site, as was intended.

One of the projects the second Online Coordinator was working on in the spring of 1999 was a redesign of the site. Remember Jakob Nielsen (1997) recommended a redesign at least once a year and for the alumni association it had been over a year since the last one. This was the perfect time for them to reexamine the focus and goals of their web site. Part of the redesign process is rethinking the navigational schema and the layout of the site. In the fall of 1997 the alumni association worked hard to think of a navigational schema which took into account the perspective of the incoming user. They came up with two main sections, "(name of the university town) Events" and "Events in (name of the university state) and Beyond." The thought process behind this was that the user would have different needs and interests depending on where they are living. If they

are living outside of the university town, they may not be able to take advantage of events in the university town. However in practice this division is confusing. For example, reunions, a popular kind of event, have been placed under “(name of university town) Events” because they occur in the university town. But most of the alumni come from out of town to attend reunions. The focus has become more the event’s location than the

Another problem is the user group current students, got lumped under “(name of university town) Events” where it is not intuitively found. This confuses me and I am familiar with the site. If they have decided that current students are one of their audiences then it would make sense for them to have a link off of the home page, their own path to follow. For example many corporate sties include a section for investors which is a link off the main page of the site. This allows those who have invested in their company or those thinking about investing to go directly to that information without picking through all of the other company information. Some universities are moving towards separate sections of their web sites for perspectives students versus current students. They have come to realize that they serve several different and distinct audiences and are now attempting to make the site easier to navigate for each group.

I think the alumni association needs to take a step backwards and reexamine and write down the mission of their web site and the audiences they want to serve. Then it will be easier for them to develop an effective user-friendly navigational schema with a written document laying out the goals of the web site to refer to.

INFORMATION FLOW

In addition to having written documents laying out clearly the goals and aspirations of the web site, an organization needs to have a path for information to reach the person coordinating and publishing the web site.

Much of the confusion and inefficiency that took place regarding the alumni association's web site concerned the flow of information within the organization. "To get work done, people divide up responsibilities among roles and coordinate with each other while doing it" (Beyer 1998).

The alumni association has five departments and a total of about 35 employees. The alumni association decided its web site should be used by each of the employees to promote the services they provide for members, alumni and friends. Therefore their web site needs to be able to represent each of these employees and the aspect of the organization they represent and whoever is coordinating the web site needs to be able to integrate the needs of each of the employees into the web site.

The alumni association did not developed a set path for their employees to follow to get their program/event/service information posted on the web site. This caused a lot of hit or miss as to how material was published on the web. Some programs, typically those programs that are handled by employees who had a strong interest in the web, have been more aggressively publicized on the web site. The programs of employees who did not have the interest or the time to spend on web promotion were scantily represented. Their programs did not get the front-page advertising perhaps they warranted. The

decisions regarding publication on the web site were being made based on which employees had an interest in the web, not on which programs the users of the web site would like to know more about. This was a problem.

In January 1999 I attended the beginning of a Programs and Activities Department's weekly meeting. This was during the period after the first Online Coordinator left and before the second Online Coordinator started. I went to the meeting with the Editor so she could introduce me and inform the members of Programs and Activities that I would be providing for their web needs during the transition period. There was a discussion as to how to get information to the web developers. The Director of Enrichment talked about how his material "magically" appears on the web site.

There was clearly a need for someone to organize the flow of information going to the web developers. The person in the best position to do this is the Advertising Director and Promotions Coordinator. She already works with the Programs and Activities Department from the beginning of their implementation of a program. The Programs and Activities Department has the most rapidly changing information within the alumni association. The Advertising Director and Promotions Coordinator keeps tabs on what is going on at the alumni association and how it is being promoted. She helps the Programs and Activities Department to lay out a schedule of what type of publicity is appropriate to use for each program and when material needs to be ready for print jobs. It would be easy for her to add a discussion of web treatment and a deadline for materials for the web. It would make sense since the web site is another form of promotion for the alumni association. She could pass material for the web on to the Online Coordinator. She would need to discuss a time frame with the Online Coordinator and determine how

much time was needed to produce web materials as well as keep up to date on the other demands the Online Coordinator may have on her time. This would not be difficult since their offices are next to each other, (which I do not believe was planned, but more a matter of where space was available), which could end up being beneficial in allowing the Advertising Director and Promotions Coordinator and the Online Coordinator to communicate conveniently and frequently.

When I spoke with the Advertising Director and Promotions Coordinator about this she said,

I think my role in this position as Promotions Coordinator is talking with the Program's people and almost at the onset being more proactive in their planning... deciding the press release, the web treatment, the (email message service name) application perhaps, and the timing of those things. I have to say that a little bit of this so far has been reactive, in the sense that the direct mail goes out and the article and the ad go in the alumni magazine and then it is like, we still need more folks, perhaps we need a press release. (Interview, March 25, 1999).

This would set a clear path for the Programs and Activities Department which has been the most problematic in getting current materials in a timely manner to the web developers. It has often been the case that Program and Activities' people begin thinking about web material after the print material has been mailed or is close to being mailed. They are not thinking about the web from the beginning.

As for the other departments, it would probably be easiest for them to work directly with the Online Coordinator. This again should be easier now that there is one point person in charge of the web site. There will not be the confusion of deciding if web information should be given to the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems, the Editor or the Assistant Editor. The responsibility should go both ways. The Online Coordinator needs to keep up with what the departments are doing and be thinking of

new and interactive ways to promote the different department's services. The other departments need to keep the web site in mind as part of promoting their services and talk with the Online Coordinator about the best ways to take advantage of the web in their particular situation.

Once the material has found its way to the web developers, the next step is deciding how prominent the material should be and how much space it should get.

DECISION PROCESS

The issue of control of the web site came up in relation to having the site hosted in-house. But this issue should also be addressed in regard to the web sites design and content decision process. There needs to be someone to take control and responsibility for the web site and the decisions regarding it. The creation of the Online Coordinator could eventually solve this problem for the alumni association, but for the first couple years they had a web site, the control was shared. At least three people had to be consulted when a problem arose. In addition, the decisions were mostly reactive, not proactive. They reacted when there was a problem, rather than looking ahead to avoid a problem. This was because no one was devoting 100% of their time to the web. Again the Online Coordinator could solve this problem for the alumni association.

For the first couple of years, the alumni association had no set decision process for their web site design and content decisions. The Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems and the Network Administrator generally handled technical decisions. But making web content and design decisions consists of a lot of people talking and trying to come to some consensus, according to the Editor.

None of the research for the alumni association's web site has been terribly formal. It has mostly rested on different employees at the alumni association having an avid interest in it and just walking around sharing ideas they have heard or seen. An example is a few weeks after the newly designed site went up in 1998, the Editor and the Advertising and Promotions Coordinator went to a Council for Advancement and

Support of Education (CASE) Conference. There they attended a web workshop. At one point during the workshop they were showing all of the attendees' sites. When it came the alumni association's turn they were embarrassed to see that their site did not fit on the monitor. It was necessary to scroll horizontally to see the entire page. After returning from the conference, there was discussion among the web people at the alumni association as to how to solve this problem. They reacted to the problem. They went in search of web design rules that addressed this issue, and found something that said 595 pixels is the maximum ideal width of a web page to be viewed on all monitors. Now a table with a width of 595 structures all of their pages. This rule is not written anywhere, nor is the source of this information documented anywhere. It is possible that this problem could have been avoided if the alumni association had had someone full-time devoted to the web in 1997. There are many such tidbits of knowledge necessary to create a web site that looks good on all monitors, with all browsers, on all platforms, that cannot be absorbed completely when only half or less of a person's time is devoted to learning this knowledge.

As mentioned earlier, in 1998 with a newly redesigned site and their own student workers for their site, the responsibility for coordinating this effort was divided among three people, the Director of the Records and Information Systems, the Editor and the Assistant Editor. The Assistant Editor took the brunt of the responsibility. This was not an ideal situation and often things fell through the cracks. Pages were posted without being reviewed by another person and pages were placed indiscriminately within the structure of the site.

At that time, there was little direction as to what was being posted on the web site and where. As her role in the web grew, the Assistant Editor said it became more nebulous. She did not know what her responsibilities were or when or how to say no to a request from a coworker even though she had other tasks to accomplish. There is nothing in her job description about the web site. She was hired primarily to work on class notes and the university news section of the magazine.

No one at the alumni association had taken the time to write any web policies. They took the time in meetings to hash out ideas and come to consensus about what to do. These were rational decisions, but the reasons were never written down. The next time there was a similar question there had to be another meeting, another discussion, because there was no written document to point to and say, "This is the goal of our web site and this questionable content does or does not fit our goals," or to say, "This is the written rationale behind our navigational schema and after refreshing my memory by reading this, it is clear that this page should go in this section of the site."

For example, at the top of the side navigational bar for the site there are graphics of different symbols relating to the university. I have been told that at one time there was a system to follow to determine which symbol was placed on a page depending on which section of the site the page fell into. Today no one can remember the system. When new pages were created the navigational side bar was cut and pasted from an old page with no regard to which section it came from or into which section it was going. This practice persisted long enough that now it is impossible to figure out which symbol belongs to which section. There were never any written rules to follow as to which symbol were to be used with which section of the web site and the reasoning has been forgotten. On one

hand, nobody cares or really pays attention to these symbols. These symbols are not critical to the site, so perhaps it does not matter. But on the other hand, this is what happens to decisions over time if they are not written down. One day they are just forgotten.

This is similar to the process of posting material to the web site. Things are done one way once and then forgotten and the next time something similar comes along it gets different treatment. This is most common with the programs the alumni association sponsors that do not fit into any of the program categories that were incorporated in the last design of the navigational schema. This material is only linked to the web site from the front page and the What's New page. How long should material stay on the front page or in the What's New section? There is no policy so the length of stay varies. The programs that do not have links from anywhere else stay longer because if they were taken off users would no longer be able to get to them. In the redesign there will be a place for these programs, but none the less it would help to have some variable to weigh in deciding what should stay on the front page and what should be pushed off.

Despite the fact that the alumni association does not have any written documents or policies directly pertaining to their web site there does seem to be, at least among those directly involved, a good idea of what these unwritten policies are. The Director of Records and Information Systems, the Editor, the Assistant Editor, and the Advertising and Promotions Coordinator all have the same general ideas about the mission statement, target audience, scope/content of their web site as well as about the maintenance/updating of the site. The overall mission statement of the organization is to inform about and involve alumni with the alumni association and the university. It is the specifics that get

fuzzy. The Alumni Publications Department has its own statement of purpose, which was last revised in March 1995. However, it does not include anything specific about the web site since the web site did not exist until August of that year. This document is due for revision. The Editor has entertained the idea of the development of a separate document outlining the mission statement of the web site. However, she cannot see how the mission goals that are put forward in the publications mission statement apply differently to the web, because they are fairly broad and general (see Appendix D). In the Alumni Publications Department's long-range plan (see Appendix E), they do outline specific goals regarding the web site.

It would benefit the alumni association to take the time to write out a mission statement and a list of prioritized target audiences for their web site. This would give them a guideline for decisions regarding scope and content. Right now the content is mostly a reproduction of printed materials, the magazine, news articles, brochures, pamphlets, etc. The alumni association has been fairly successful in creating a dynamic site. Updates and additions are made on a daily basis and they have reasons for what they post, but especially as the site grows a written document to refer to would assist them in continual success with their web site.

What should the alumni association write out? They should write out what Lingle and Delozier (1998) talked about in their article. First they should write a mission statement specific to the web, laying out the goals of the web site. Second they should write a list of target audiences for the web site: alumni, students, friends of the university, members, non-members, etc. The alumni association should prioritize this list and look at the goals of the site again, making sure the goals fit the audiences they want to serve.

Third they should lay out the scope and the content of the site based on the goals and the audience. Again this will be very helpful in the redesign of the navigational schema of the site. It will provide a framework to check that everything is being included. Fourth, the Online Coordinator needs to look at the updating and maintenance of the site and how long individual projects take. She should sketch out a long-term calendar, writing in projects and showing an approximation of how long she judges they should take. For example, it is known that the alumni magazine is published bimonthly. The Alumni Publications Department knows well in advance what their deadline is to get copy to the printers. If the Online Coordinator knows this date she can plan to get the copy the same time as the printers. She can mark this on her calendar and plan to spend the few days following the date she gets the copy working on the online version of the magazine. As the Advertising Director and Promotions Coordinator notifies the Online Coordinator of programs deadlines these can be added to the calendar. The Online Coordinator should also keep a running prioritized list of projects that do not have a specific deadline, such as getting the secure online membership join/renewal form up. This was something the alumni association wanted to have and it was a priority, but the project did not have an exact date by which it had to be done.

In addition to what Lingle and Delozier (1998) laid out, I believe the alumni association's web site would benefit from a written style manual. They have a style manual for their print publications. But that document does not cover some of the style aspects possible in web documents. For example, the alumni association decided that each of their pages should be contain within a table with a width of 595 pixels. This is different from specifying the width of a column in the magazine. Also on the web there

is the option of listing several fonts for displaying text. The user's browser then displays the text in the first font it recognizes. A style manual could be especially beneficially to student workers on the web site. They would not have to guess what to do based on what they see was done previously, as I did. They could look up what fonts are used in the magazine text in the style manual. The style manual may not be as necessary for the student workers after the redesign of the site. In addition to redesigning the site the Online Coordinator has purchased new site management software, Macromedia Dreamweaver. This software allows for the importing of libraries. Libraries can be used to specify the style guidelines for a page. Once these have been created, ideally the developer will just have to import the correct library for a new page depending upon where in the site the page is going to be placed.

That is a total of five recommended documents: a mission statement, a list of target audiences, a calendar of projects, a list of prioritized projects without a deadline date, and a style manual. I believe these documents will enable the alumni association to keep their web site focused and organized.

TECHNICAL DECISIONS

I have spent most of this paper discussing the content and design aspects of web policy. This is because the technical decisions are fairly straightforward and simpler than most content and design decisions. Technical decisions typically do not include philosophical debates. They are based on facts: cost, usability, and support.

The three technical aspects Lingle and Delozier (1998) mentioned in their article were administration, confidentiality/security, and budget.

The administration of the web server at the alumni association was the complete responsibility of the Network Administrator. She did not let anyone else tamper with it because she would be the one up at three in the morning if the server crashed. She may train the Online Coordinator to reboot the server and other simple tasks, but she wants to remain in control of the server since it is her responsibility.

The confidentiality/security of the web server internally is simply that only those who need access to the web server are given access. This has been the Network Administrator, the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems, the Assistant Editor, the student workers and now the Online Coordinator. No one else has permission to the web server. Externally, the Members Only section of the site is password protected by a script written by the university programmer. Starting in the spring of 1999 with the purchase and installation of the VeriSign secure socket layer software, anything in a subdirectory off of the web root called "secure" is now encrypted. This is used to accept credit card payment for membership and fees to other programs as they arise.

The budget for the web has been flexible at the alumni association. They have received the money to purchase what they justify they needed. I am not aware of any time when a request for a web related item was turned down. Thus it has not been an issue in the evolution of the alumni association's web site.

The alumni association has gone through a series of small technical decisions over the years. They chose a domain name, they purchased a web server, they purchased an HTML editor and site management software, they purchased another HTML editor, and then a second site management software package. Each of these decisions was made without a lot of discussion or debate.

The first small technical decision the alumni association had to make was what their domain name should be and where to get it. The decision on the domain name was, according the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems, a simple one. Everyone agreed to "alumni dot" (alumni.) and then the university domain name and there was no competition within the university for that name. Because the name they chose was within the university's domain they received their domain name through the university.

When the decision was made to bring the web site in-house, the Director of Records and Information Systems and the Network Administrator sat down and discussed their platform options. No one else was involved in this decision for two reasons. First, they were not aware of the differences between the operating systems being discussed, Unix and NT. Second, only the Network Administrator was going to have to deal with learning, installing and maintaining the server. The decision would only directly affect the day to day work routine of the Network Administrator. According to the Network

Administrator the main factor considered when looking at platforms was ease of use, since maintenance of the additional server was going to be added on top of her already full work load. UNIX has a long learning curve and is completely text based. The user has to memorize most of the commands. NT has a nice graphical user interface (GUI) and is similar to Windows 95, which the Network Administrator was already familiar with. Decision made.

The next decision was what HTML editor and site management software to purchase. This decision was made based on what software package the two graduate student workers had used before. They were familiar with Microsoft FrontPage, so the alumni association bought FrontPage.

After those students left and in the fall of 1998 the first Online Coordinator and a new student worker (me) began work at the alumni association, another HTML editor was purchased. Both of the new web developers were familiar and had worked with Allaire's HomeSite. Since HTML editors are generally inexpensive, the alumni association purchased this software for the new web developers.

In the spring of 1999 when the second Online Coordinator began work at the alumni association she looked at site management software. Since Microsoft FrontPage was no longer being used to update the web site, its site management portion was also not being used. HomeSite does not include any site management. The new Online Coordinator researched the available site management software, downloaded three products, tested them and wrote an email comparing them along with her recommendation for one product and sent it to the Director of Alumni Records and Information Systems, the Editor, the Assistant Editor and the student worker. They all

agreed with her assessment of the products and she was given the okay to purchase two copies of the software of her choice, Macromedia's Dreamweaver.

The technical decisions were all simple to make for the alumni association.

CONCLUSION

This study's goal was to identify the path that the alumni association's web site has taken and examine the decisions, mistakes, successes they have experience over the years in hope of learning what decisions are crucial to creating and maintaining an effective web site. From this information I have developed a set of steps to take in creating and maintaining a web site, with emphasis on the larger more dynamic site the alumni association chose.

1. Decide what type of site the organization wishes to create, a simple informational site or a large dynamic interactive site.
2. Planning (should be done by employees of the organization), including:
 - Mission statement
 - Target audiences
 - Scope/content
 - Maintenance/updating
 - Administration
 - Confidentiality/security
 - Budget

This information should be written down as the organization's web policy. All of this should be done before writing any code or developing any pages. Surf the web, see what other companies are doing, and find things that would work well for the organization's situation.

3. Design the site based on all of the planning
4. Designate one person ideally, (if necessary two people) to be responsible for the organization and coordination of the web site.
5. Map the information flow within the organization to the web developers. Make sure that it is clear to everyone providing content for the site where they should pass information.

6. Keep a calendar of projects to be done and their deadlines. This calendar should also include dates for materials to be removed from the site, such as programs after they have occurred.
7. Allow for ideally multiple ways for users to provide feedback on the site.

A successful web site takes careful planning and a lot of work, especially if it is a large dynamic site. Remember, a web site is as Lingle and Delozier (1998) pointed out “the most highly visible representation” of an organization. It is a promotion and publication of its services and should be treated as such. The layout and content should be carefully chosen and edited. Do not be taken in by the fact that the content of a web site is more easily altered than printed material, double check everything and get it right the first time.

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Appendix A:

**Alumni Association Web Site
Time Line**

Time Line

August 1995	First web presence on Registrar's Office server
November 1996	Registrar's Office server crashed, no backup, lost site
Spring 1997	Commitment to have site in-house (get own server)
Fall 1997	Hired two graduate students to maintain site and develop/design new site on in-house server
1998	Responsibility for web site migrated to Alumni Publications Department
Beginning of 1998	Move site to server at AA from Registrar's Office with newly redesigned site
February 17, 1998	Began logging statistics on web server
Spring 1998	Laid out push for new Online Coordinator position
1998	Approval for Permanent position of Online Coordinator
September 1998	First Online Coordinator began work
December 1998	First Online Coordinator quit
February 1998	Second Online Coordinator began work

Appendix B:

Web Site Statistics

**Alumni Association Web Statistics
February 17, 1998 to January 13, 1999**

Total # of Visitor	123,621
Average # visitors per day	373
Total Page Views	360,448
Average # page views/day	1088
Average visitor session (min)	5:18

20 Most Active Countries

Countries	User Sessions	Countries	User Sessions
1. United States	91015	11. Spain	84
2. Canada	739	12. Korea (South)	80
3. UK	455	13. Brazil	78
4. Japan	264	14. Switzerland	66
5. Germany	248	15. Ireland	61
6. Australia	141	16. India	58
7. France	139	17. Taiwan	54
8. Netherlands	96	18. Denmark	50
9. Sweden	93	19. Mexico	49
10. Italy	87	20. Hong Kong	43

20 Top North American States & Provinces

State	User Sessions	State	User Sessions
1. North Carolina	25385	11. South Carolina	1055
2. Virginia	21147	12. Maryland	963
3. California	5920	13. Illinois	951
4. Georgia	5244	14. Massachusetts	815
5. New Jersey	2532	15. Tennessee	702
6. New York	2467	16. Minnesota	621
7. Ohio	1562	17. D.C.	602
8. Florida	1480	18. Michigan	539
9. Texas	1479	19. Washington	503
10. Pennsylvania	1363	20. Connecticut	421

Appendix C:

**Online Coordinator
Job Description**

Online Coordinator

The Online Coordinator works with GAA staff in the development, coordination and delivery of the _____'s online communications, including the _____'s Web site.

Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- overall content and direction of the _____'s Web site and online communications;
- writing and editing material for the Web site and online communications, ensuring that the content is accurate and dynamic;
- layout, design and production of Web pages utilizing online graphic and production tools, including creating and maintaining Web site copy and pages, and ensuring that the look and feel of all pages is consistent across the site;
- conceiving, researching, recommending and developing concepts for online communications services and products;
- assisting in providing marketing and technical vision for the Web site's growth.

In tandem with the appropriate _____ staff, the Online Coordinator will ensure that the _____ Web site is an integral part of the _____'s communication plans. The coordinator also will work with appropriate _____ staff to develop marketing plans for online services and create plans for promoting the services. The coordinator will drive the creative implementation of new ideas on the _____ Web site and online offerings and will exercise primary day-to-day responsibility for all aspects of the _____'s Web site and online offerings. The coordinator will participate in establishing the _____'s long-range plan regarding its Web site and its online communications.

Characteristic Duties and Responsibilities

Online and Web site administration and management

Work with staff to develop content for the _____'s Web site. Manage the content development process, including:

- analyzing needs and recommending solutions for content to be published;
- writing content as needed and soliciting, reviewing and editing content provided by others;
- coordinating with external HTML programmers and graphic designers as necessary;
- obtaining approvals when necessary (legal review, copyright, etc.) before publishing;
- investigate, recommend and implement features that will enhance interactivity. Manage the feedback received on the site, ensuring questions are answered by appropriate staff and suggestions are acknowledged.

Assist with Web server architecture design, organization and maintenance of directories and links.

Manage Webcast offerings, including the capture, editing and encoding of programs.

Design, develop and maintain programming scripts, as necessary.

Prepare reports summarizing the activity on the external Web site. Provide input for future Web and online initiatives.

Supervision

The Online Coordinator reports directly to the editor of Alumni Publications, is responsible for exercising independent judgment in setting work priorities and works with other _____ staff on a project basis.

Qualifications

Required:

A bachelor's degree or equivalent combination of education and experience.

Minimum of 1 to 2 years experience in copy editing and content creation for a newspaper, magazine or Web site.

Minimum of 1 to 2 years experience building and maintaining corporate, institutional or association Web sites.

Comprehensive technical understanding of HTML, including forms, tables and frames; Adobe Photoshop; and Web programming languages.

Strong communications skills, project management and writing skills.

Demonstrated ability to work independently, to coordinate efforts across multiple departments and to exercise judgment in setting work priorities.

Desirable:

Knowledge of [the university](#).

Knowledge of MS Office, MS Frontpage and interest in Active X and Java.

Familiarity with Webcasting using RealAudio and RealVideo, including recording and editing software.

Appendix D:

**Alumni Publications Department
Statement of Purpose**

ALUMNI PUBLICATIONS STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

____ Alumni Association
The University of ____

Our purpose in alumni publications is to generate justified alumni pride in The University of ____ and to further life-long relationships between alumni and the University. We must strive to represent in a balanced way the University's combined mission of teaching, research and public service and to interpret for our readers how these elements work together to make the University what it is.

The (name of alumni magazine) is designed to inform readers about their University — its people and programs, challenges and achievements — and to involve them in the important issues and tasks of institutional advancement.

This publication must reflect a wide range of current University endeavors and campus life in a way that increases alumni understanding and appreciation. Selected stories should represent a mix of topics, designed to appeal to wide-ranging reader interest. Contents must be relevant to the University and its alumni. Current significant news should be summarized. Alumni involvement, leadership and achievements should be recognized and reinforced. In-depth topics of broad appeal should be explored regularly.

The contents should be selected on an issue-by-issue basis that work together to achieve more than just the production of the publication, that do more than present well-written, interesting stories. We need to deliver to our alumni on a regular basis:

- (1) A good balance of news and information that represents the entire University;
- (2) Stories that identify, encourage involvement and recognize alumni commitment;
- (3) Intellectual challenge to stimulate thinking and bring alumni back to the joys of learning;
- (4) A forum for exchange of viewpoints and ideas by alumni, faculty, staff and students;
- (5) News and information about the ____ Alumni Association, its activities, projects, philosophy and people.

It is our continuing challenge to try to achieve this in a comprehensive and timely way. To do so we must be committed to editorial flexibility and independence and to an unabashed belief that a stronger University of ____ is a nobler endeavor.

Because the alumni magazine is published by the ____ Alumni Association, which is independent of the University, this publication, likewise, should continue to be independent of University control. However, with this independence comes additional responsibility. The publisher and editors must always seek to evidence fair play, objectivity, truth and accuracy in presenting news, information and opinion. While it is sometimes appropriate for the magazine to be critical of the University, such criticism should always be constructive. This publication, like the Association, is to serve as a conscience for the University.

Since out-of-town, out-of-state alumni frequently rely upon the alumni magazine as their principal source of information about the University, the publication should provide appropriate coverage to meet these readers' needs.

The magazine is concerned with interpreting the University and its work and provide analysis of campus life and of issues facing both the University and higher education. The publication should engage in "friend raising" rather than overt fund raising.

The magazine is intended to keep alumni in touch with each other through class notes and alumni profiles and to serve as a link between alumni and current students. It also serves as a recruiting tool for alumni who recognize talented potential students and in a general way promotes membership in the ____ Alumni Association. The publication seeks to record and document milestones in the life of the University and the Association.

Finally, the alumni magazine is a tool to assist the Association in meeting its purpose as affirmed in its Constitution and Bylaws: "The ____ Alumni Association is dedicated to the continuing service of the University and its alumni. Through its programs the Association shall promote the spirit of fellowship and loyalty among the alumni, shall provide a continuous flow of information on the progress and needs of the University and shall encourage united alumni support for its advancement."

3/28/95

Appendix E:

**Alumni Publications Department
Long Range Plan**

II. Publications

As _____'s most visible contact with its membership, Alumni Publications offer an irreplaceable means of communicating with alumni and friends about _____ activities, services and news, as well as assisting the University in sharing University news with alumni and friends. Accordingly, Alumni Publications should:

1. World Wide Web:
 - a. Fresh redesign of the _____ Online site by January 1999.
 - b. Create a student intern position for online content.
 - c. Explore full-time staffing needs for online communications.
 - d. Continue to assess applications of the Web to the Association's mission.
2. Acquire desktop-accessible electronic search and retrieval of back issues of the (name of alumni magazine).
3. Continue effort to attract and develop the best outside resources, including writers and photographers.
4. Update the media kit and review advertising rates for 1999.
5. Continue to maximize Alumni Publications' abilities in collaborating with other _____ departments to execute the Association's various communications needs.
6. Continue regular contacts with staff members at other alumni magazines, including attending professional conferences to enhance our individual contributions to the _____.
7. Expand Alumni Publications' "one-to-one" marketing tools, including creating more tailored editions of the (name of alumni magazine), utilizing false covers, tip-ins and targeted marketing messages to reach appropriate readers.
8. Conduct an in-depth readership survey (2000).