

Masthead Logo

Latham Science Communication Project

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My Experience as Editor-In-Chief of Stemosphere

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Abstract:

Working as the editor in chief of the Stemosphere website, I started with a plan to make posters of a Stemosphere logo and use them to attract new website users. Plans changed due to unforeseen circumstances, and instead, I focused on working on the website layout and making a blog posting guide while providing content with the help of various University of Iowa organizations. Throughout the semester, I wrote blog posts on a variety of science related subjects and adapted my writing style to make them sound interesting to non-scientists. We finished the logo to end off the semester, so future Stemosphere editors and managers must work with future Latham Fellow to agree on a logo for the website.

Narrative:

As editor-in-chief of the Stemosphere website, my goal with this project was to increase the variety and amount of content provided to the users so that the number of users would grow. The users I wanted to attract initially were community members and fellow students, this would allow the Stemosphere website to gain traction so that it could grow into something bigger. One way I wanted to grow Stemosphere's user base was to create a new logo, make posters with the new logo on them, and to see where I could post them in Iowa City. After switching locations several times, I wanted to analyze which locations spurred particularly large gains in followers and use those as permanent poster locations. After several face-to-face meetings with graphic design student, Griffin McEniry, I realized that a logo is not something that can be ordered up and shipped off quickly. It takes time and after over ten meetings and many thrown out sketches, we arrived at a logo that we both thought fit the Stemosphere ideology. The image labeled *Image A* that I have included is the logo that Griffin and I designed. Now it is up to future Latham Fellows to decide between this logo and several others on which they like best for Stemosphere since, unfortunately, we ran out of time.

The change of pace with the logo idea accompanied by an update that changed the website format lead to a change in how I would achieve my goal. Early on in the semester I was able to write blog posts with ease thanks to Cassandra Poulos, the former editor-in-chief's, help and some guides that previous Stemosphere editors had compiled. After an update that completely changed how the blog editing software worked, I continued to write blog posts in addition to several guides on the new software format for the next editor-in-chief of Stemosphere. With the help of tutors at the University of Iowa's Writing Center I focused on adapting my typical no-nonsense, science-based writing style to one that readers could enjoy. I also worked to educate myself on a wide range of topics using news sources such as CNN, online science websites, and lectures from various science professors here at the University of Iowa so that I could post educated blog posts. With the help of several University of Iowa's IDEAL tutors I also changed the website interface to improve its functionality. Some of the changes included menu items, menus themselves, and adding accordion items to different pages of the website.

This semester has taught me many things about running a website and working with others. I have learned that getting something as important as a logo right is not a process that can be completed quickly, and that checking timelines with project partners is absolutely necessary. The progress on increasing Stemosphere's user base can be seen in *Image B* that I have included. The data from Google Analytics was used to uncover that the number of unique users had grown substantially over the semester, and the website was reached through many different platforms in many different countries around the world. Although there were hiccups, I have made progress with the website and have made additions that will make it easier to use for the next editor-in-chief and will also enable the integration of the Stemosphere's social media pages in the future.