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Company History: Corporate Archives' Public Outreach on Fortune 100 Company Websites

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Marie Force

INTRODUCTION

Just before commercialization of the Internet, corporate archives communicated with the public via museums and exhibits, books and articles, educational curricula, television, anniversary publications, and nostalgic packaged goods.[1] By 1996, as growing numbers of companies experimented with their first Web sites, corporate archivists such as Philip F. Mooney at Coca-Cola found a new, "unparalleled opportunity for outreach."[2] Mooney and his colleagues at Chevron, Ford Motor, J.C. Penney, Levi Strauss, Texas Instruments, and Wells Fargo were among those contributing early content to company Web sites, such as the J.C. Penney "History Page," with its illustrated timeline, founder's biography, video clip, and museum/archives

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[1] Arnita A. Jones and Philip L. Cantelon, eds., *Corporate Archives and History: Making the Past Work* (Malabar, Fla.: Krieger Publishing, 1993).

[2] Philip F. Mooney, "Corporate Culture and the Archives," in *Leadership and Administration of Successful Archival Programs*, ed. B. W. Dearstyne (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001), 95.

contact information.[3] A decade later, Company History sections of one or more Web pages are common—only seventeen of the Fortune 100 companies of 2008 did not have one on their Web sites—and maturing, as content and design refresh to engage repeat visitors and incorporate changing technology. If a company has an archives program, its Company History section often extends beyond a timeline to share legacy collections, activities, and communications with the public. This outreach on company Web sites is little discussed in archival literature, as studies of corporate archives and technology tend to focus inward on serving clients within the company.

To examine the online public outreach of corporate archives, this study analyzed the content of Company History sections on the Web sites of Fortune 100 companies. Findings demonstrate that the company Web site is a means for the public to communicate directly with the company, an opportunity for the company to create or increase an emotional bond with customers, and a venue to show the strength and continuity of the brand. Corporate archives engage in a type of public-relations outreach that is different from online outreach of non-corporate archives open to the public and is shaped by marketing messaging, partnerships with other business units, and the necessity to integrate with company objectives. The Web has improved archivists' ability to serve their corporate missions by connecting them with a diverse audience, ranging from customers to key company stakeholders. Contributions from archivists help build their corporations' Web sites into marketing brand extensions for their companies, and data collected here can assist archivists and others developing and benchmarking the Company History Web site section.

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[3] John A. Fleckner, "Reaching the Mass Audience: Business History as Popular History," in *The Records of American Business*, ed. J. M. O'Toole (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1997), 336; "Corporate Websites with a Historical Component," *Society of American Archivists Business Archives Section Newsletter* (August 1997): 8 <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/bas/news/aug1997.pdf> (accessed November 20, 2009); Jerry Probst and Michael Ponder, "Internet Outreach and Copyright Protection at JCPenney.com," *SAA Business Archives Section Newsletter* (August 1997): 23-25 <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/bas/news/aug1997.pdf> (accessed November 20, 2009).

CORPORATE ARCHIVES AND VISIBILITY

Corporate and non-corporate archives preserve and provide access to collections, but significant distinctions exist, based on the mission, clientele, and unique realities of corporate archives; these differences extend to the Web. Online, both types of repository share diverse audiences, but differ in their definitions of effective outreach. Academic archivists Laura Botts and Lauren Kata found that although the Web has increased expectations of archives' accessibility, online outreach still serves the same diverse users of pre-Internet days, including teachers and students, genealogists, writers and historians, government employees, and the media.[4] A study of Fortune 100 Web sites describes a company's public Web site as a tool not just for communication with customers, but as a means for reaching "multiple audiences": vendors, stockholders, employees, job seekers, financial analysts, the media, students, researchers, and the general public.[5] Companies establish archives to meet business objectives, so resources there primarily serve internal projects and departments rather than external researchers. Although most corporate archivists do provide some type of external reference services by e-mail, Web site, telephone, fax—even in-person visits—the proprietary nature of their archives means there is no consistent open-door policy for all users; rather, everyone is addressed on a case-by-case basis. These restrictions affect the depth and format of archival communications on company Web sites. Repositories open to the public offer online finding aids and virtual archives of primary documents to researchers. To the extent that a Company History section is a reference service, it answers frequently asked questions from external users, most of whom, in the words of Kraft Foods' Becky Haglund Tousey and Elizabeth W. Adkins, formerly at Ford Motor Company,

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[4] Laura Botts and Lauren Kata, "Are the Digital Natives Restless? Reaching Out to the Ne(x)t Generation," *Provenance* 24 (2006): 3-21.

[5] Monica Perry and Charles Bodkin, "Content Analysis of 100 Company Web Sites," *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* 5, no. 2 (2000): 95.

want "a simple answer to a simple question. And they do not ask, nor do they need, to physically visit the archives to get the answer."[6]

Archival catalogs are usually retained internally on private corporate intranets. Virtual "archives" open on a company's public Web site often do not involve the corporate archives: materials are recent and posted online as created by business units, e.g., annual reports from Investor Relations or press releases from Corporate Communications.

Underlying these differences in clientele and content are two definitions of effective online outreach. Repositories open to the public use Web sites for marketing, to promote collections, and to show value to institutional stakeholders, but overall, according to Donald Waters, former head of the Digital Library Federation, "the promise of digital technology is for libraries to extend the reach of research and education, improve the quality of learning, and reshape scholarly communication."[7] For corporate archives, online outreach is always about more than reference services. The principal function of a company Web site is public-relations outreach: to promote brand and company identity while engaging audiences. In digital design, explains corporate designer Alan Topalian, a company projects and largely controls corporate identity—the "articulation of what an organization is, what it stands for, what it does and how it goes about its business"—in order to shape corporate image, the "impressions and expectations of an organization in the minds of its stakeholders and public."[8]

As corporate digital communications have evolved, the business units that archives partner with online have also changed. In 2005 a group of Fortune 500 corporate archivists

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[6] Becky Haglund Tousey and Elizabeth W. Adkins, "Access to Business Archives: U.S. Access Philosophies," Japan-U.S. Archives Seminar (May 2007), 3 <http://archivists.org/publications/proceedings/accesstoarchives/10_B-TOUSEY_E-ADKINS.pdf> (accessed January 14, 2010).

[7] Donald Waters quoted in Abby Smith, "Why Digitize?," *CLIR Issues* 8 (March/April 1999) <http://www.clir.org/pubs/issues/issues08.html#why> (accessed January 14, 2010).

[8] Alan Topalian, "Experienced Reality: The Development of Corporate Identity in the Digital Era," *European Journal of Marketing* 37, no. 7/8 (2003): 1119-1120.

described Web site duties shifting from Public Relations to Marketing departments, creating "sales-oriented" Web sites with content linked to company branding and targeted to users' interests. They agreed that archival Web content must be personalized to connect to audiences and tailored to company strategy to prevent marginalizing archives' presence on company Web sites.[9]

Online and off, corporate archivists seek to support business objectives while promoting the value of heritage to the company itself. The importance of visibility and technology (inherent in Web publishing) is frequently discussed in relation to corporate archives. A "visible" archives is "relevant and indispensable to the company whose main concern is not history,"[10] is a well-known resource, and extends beyond the collections with good reference services, outreach, and promotion—often using the tools of technology. Former AT&T archivist Marcy Goldstein is one of many urging corporate archivists to actively position the archives within a company's network of knowledge, utilize the computer as a "conduit of information," and create products and services that meet business needs.[11]

Visibility is important to the success of corporate archives continually challenged by company downturns and mergers, profit-based metrics, mission and branding redirections, and

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[9] Gregory S. Hunter, "Meeting Notes" (minutes, Eighth Annual Meeting of the Corporate Archives Forum, May 18-20, 2005) <http://www.hunterinformation. com/CAF%202005.pdf> (accessed January 14, 2010).

[10] Ibid.

[11] Marcy Goldstein, "The Evolving Role of In-House Business Archives: From Tradition to Flexibility," in *The Records of American Business*, ed. J. M. O'Toole (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1997), 43. See also Richard J. Cox, *Archives and Archivists in the Information Age* (New York: Neal-Schuman, 2005); Philip F. Mooney, "Archival Mythology and Corporate Reality: A Potential Powder Keg," in *The Records of American Business*, ed. J. M. O'Toole (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1997); and Elizabeth Yakel, "Knowledge Management: The Archivist's and Records Manager's Perspective," *The Information Management Journal* 34, no. 3 (July 2000): 24-30.

changes in key stakeholders.[12] Archives can easily be hidden or discounted within a corporation: resources often support other departments' projects and programs, access is restricted to collections, and perceptions abound of musty, old records not relevant to the present company.

This study moves the discussion of archival visibility and technology to the company public Web site where diverse audiences, including other business units, see and interact with the corporate archives.

Study Methodology And Design

This study used an evaluation methodology developed by communications scholar Irene Pollach to analyze corporate Web sites' "About Us" company information section—the area of Web sites most likely to have content provided by the archives. Pollach applies linguist M.A.K. Halliday's categorization of three functions of language to Web sites, defining the textual function of structure and organizing as text, navigation, and hypertext linkage patterns; expanding the ideational function of processes and concepts to include Web user behavior; and interpreting interpersonal function as both text and interactive Web features used to establish a relationship between a company and its audiences.[13] Pollach's methodology offers a way to identify and evaluate how language, text structures, linkages, and Web interactives present archival content to the public.

Of the Fortune 100 companies in 2008, thirty-nine (see Appendix A for companies and web addresses)[14] met the following criteria: all had a Company History section in the About Us area of their Web sites and either an entry in

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[12] Hunter, "Meeting Notes"; Ken Wirth, "Advocating Business Archives," *Society of American Archivists Business Archives Section Newsletter* (August 1997) <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/bas/news/aug1997.pdf> (accessed November 20, 2009).

[13] Irene Pollach, "Corporate Self-Presentation on the WWW: Strategies for Enhancing Usability, Credibility and Utility," *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* 10, no. 4 (2005): 285-301; M.A.K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978).

[14] Cable News Network, "Fortune 500," CNN Money <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune500/2008/> (accessed January 14, 2010).

the *Directory of Corporate Archives in the United States and Canada*,[15] an employee who was a Society of American Archivists member, or a reference on the Web site to historical collections maintained by company staff or vendors. Keyword searches using the terms "history," "archives," "archivist," and "anniversary" found content elsewhere on the sites that was not linked to the Company History section.

Drawing on Pollach's study, variables for structure and navigation were established. Variables for online corporate archives and company history were also identified (see Codebook in Appendix B). Data from the Web sites were keyed to the variables and then analyzed quantitatively. (Web site content and structure may have altered since data collection in July-September 2008; and with the current economic crisis, archives in this study may have closed or their parent companies may no longer exist as independent entities.)

Findings

Of the thirty-nine Web sites from 2008's Fortune 100 companies that were studied, the ten with the most prominent archival content, ranked by the presence of twenty-seven codes as defined in Appendix B, were General Motors (27 codes), Coca-Cola (22), IBM (22), Intel (22), Hewlett-Packard (21), Wells Fargo (21), Sears (20), Walgreens (20), Johnson & Johnson (18), and Motorola (18). In the following analysis, examples of findings are frequently pulled from these Web sites to demonstrate the range of communication formats, archival visibility, and corporate messaging in the Company History section. Although the Sears corporate archives is currently dormant, its history site SearsArchives.com, created by vendor The History Factory in 2002,[16] is still live, provides

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[15] Business Archives Section, *The Directory of Corporate Archives in the United States and Canada*, 6th ed. (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2008) <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/bas/directory/corporat.asp> (accessed January 14, 2010).

[16] Dennis Preisler, former Sears historian/corporate archivist, e-mail messages to author, September 8 and 14, 2009.

e-mail contact for reference services "by volunteer staff,"[17] and continues to be cited as a recommended resource by various blogs and libraries.[18]

Content Packaging

Archives were rarely mentioned in Company History section titles. The term "History" was used on thirty Web sites (77%), "Heritage" on five sites, and "Story" twice. Only IBM and Sears named their Company History sections "Archives."[19] Content was packaged in twelve formats (see Table 1). All but three Web sites had at least one historical image. After photographs, the most common visuals were advertisements;

Table 1: Company History Content on Corporate Web Sites

Format	Web Sites
Photograph	34 (87%)
Company History Essay	33 (85%)
Company History Timeline	31 (79%)
Scanned Document	27 (69%)
Retired Logo	24 (62%)
Fact Sheet	23 (59%)
Story/Quote/Speech	18 (46%)
Company "Firsts"	13 (33%)
Object	12 (31%)
Audio/Video	12 (31%)
Biography	11 (28%)
Anniversary Celebration	9 (23%)

[17] Sears, Roebuck and Co., "Contact Sears Holdings Archives," Sears Archives <http://www.searsarchives.com/shared/feedback.htm> (accessed August 30, 2009).

[18] Harvard Business School, "Sears Archives" <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/4338.html>; Librarians' Internet Index, "Sears Archives" <http://lii.org/cs/lii/view/item/3045>; and Wendy Waters, "Urban Community History: Sears Homes" (April 16, 2007)<http://allaboutcities.ca/urban-community-history-sears-homes/> (all accessed August 30, 2009).

[19] IBM, "IBM Archives [Homepage]," IBM Archives <http://www-03.ibm.com/ibm/history/> (accessed April 22, 2009); Sears, Roebuck and Co., "Sears Archives Homepage," Sears Archives <http://www.searsarchives.com/> (accessed April 22, 2009).

then images ranged widely from ephemera, like sheet music for State Farm's commercial "Like a Good Neighbor" by Barry Manilow,[20] to retired brands and products.

Companies offered a variety of lively, in-depth presentations of historical content for extensive browsing. Twelve companies used Macromedia Flash to animate slideshows, quizzes, and timelines. Kraft Foods packaged its Company History section into one animated timeline.[21] Hyperlinks led to historical content on the Web sites of affiliated museums and institutions, or elsewhere on the company Web site in media centers, image galleries, anniversary sites, and blogs. Keyword searches found related content not linked to the Company History section, such as "Ford ArteHouse," a virtual archive of historical images under "Owners Services" on Ford Motor's Web site,[22] and Boeing's "Historical Perspectives" column in its online *Frontiers* magazine.[23]

Corporations also used Company Histories to highlight heritage brand extensions. Brand extension is the use of an established brand name to launch new products in different categories,[24] such as sunblock-maker Coppertone's recent line of sunglasses. Examples of brand extension of a company's heritage include merchandise with vintage logos, a corporate museum, or a traveling exhibit. Of the thirty-nine Web sites in the sample, fourteen (36%) had information about heritage brand extensions, such as Boeing's factory tours and the World

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[20] State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, "State Farm—1960s and 1970s," State Farm Story <http://www.statefarm.com/about/sf_1960.asp> (accessed April 23, 2009).

[21] Kraft Foods, "History" About Kraft Foods <http://www.kraftfoodscompany.com/About/history/> (accessed April 30, 2009).

[22] Ford Motor Company, "Ford ArteHouse," Owner Services <http://ford.artehouse.com/perl/home.pl> (accessed November 20, 2009).

[23] The Boeing Company, "*Frontiers* Online," News <http://www.boeing.com/news/frontiers/index.html> (accessed April 23, 2009).

[24] Franziska Völckner and Henrik Sattler, "Drivers of Brand Extension Success," *Journal of Marketing* 70 (2006): 18.

of Coke museum,[25] either within the Company History section or hyperlinked with Company History in the About Us navigation bar. Five Web sites presented the Company History section as a virtual visit to a physical site, e.g., "Visit Bank of America's History Center" and "Visit the Intel Museum."[26]

Visible Corporate Archives

In addition to presenting historical content, some Web sites made the corporate archives explicitly visible. Seventeen (44%) of thirty-nine Web sites offered windows into restricted-access facilities, services, and staff, revealing the archival functions of appraisal, arrangement and description, reference and access, and preservation, in five content formats (see Table 2). The most visible archives were those of General Motors, Hewlett-Packard, Intel, Motorola, Sears, Wells Fargo, Coca-Cola, and IBM.

Table 2: Archival Descriptions and Access on Corporate Web Sites

Format	Web Sites
Description of Holdings	14 (36%)
Contact Information	13 (33%)
Donation Guidelines	10 (26%)
Archives Staff	6 (15%)
Research Guidelines	4 (10%)

Archival appraisal was evident in descriptions of collecting policies and donation procedures. Archives identified what they did or did not collect and missing items. Lockheed

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[25] The Boeing Company, "Tours," About Us <http://www.boeing.com/companyoffices/aboutus/tours/index.html> (accessed April 22, 2009); The Coca-Cola Company, "New World of Coca-Cola," Heritage <http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com/heritage/worldcocacola.html> (accessed April 22, 2009).

[26] Bank of America, "Welcome," Newsroom <http://newsroom.bankofamerica.com/index.php?s=community> (accessed April 22, 2009); Intel Corporation, "Company Information," About Intel <http://www.intel.com/intel/index.htm?iid=hdr+about> (accessed April 22, 2009).

Martin posted a donation form for download and return of contributions to its "Legacy Program."[27]

Since finding aids and databases are retained internally, arrangement and description for the public often went no deeper than facility level. Several companies did mention specific, notable collections, such as IBM's counting and reckoning tools and equipment.[28] IBM and Intel also posted virtual "exhibits," offering visual clues to the depth and range of their collections.[29]

Company History sections functioned partially as virtual reference for the public: content could answer frequent questions from archives' external users and thirteen of the Web sites offered direct communication with archival staff by online request forms, e-mail and mailing addresses, and comments on blogs. IBM was the only archive where researchers with requests "requiring extensive staff time" were "encouraged to visit the IBM Corporate Archives in person."[30]

Preservation activity was mainly implied in the images of artifacts retained by the company, but several Web sites also showed archival boxes, film cans, art racks, and white-gloved hands holding items.[31] A General Motors slideshow had the

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[27] Lockheed Martin Corporation, "Donation of Historical Items," Legacy Program <http://www.lockheedmartin.com/aboutus/history/legacy/donations.html> (accessed April 23, 2009).

[28] IBM, "Antique Attic, Vol. 3," IBM Archives <http://www-03.ibm.com/ibm/history/exhibits/attic3/attic3_intro.html> (accessed April 23, 2009).

[29] IBM, "Exhibits," IBM Archives <http://www-03.ibm.com/ibm/history/exhibits/index.html> (accessed April 23, 2009); Intel Corporation, "Online Exhibits," Intel Museum <http://www.intel.com/museum/onlineexhibits.htm> (accessed April 23, 2009).

[30] IBM, "Terms and Conditions," IBM Archives <http://www-03.ibm.com/ibm/history/request2/terms.html> (accessed January 14, 2010).

[31] The Coca-Cola Company, "Welcome to My Blog," Coca-Cola Conversations, entry posted on January 23, 2008 <http://www.coca-colaconversations.com/my_weblog/2008/01/welcome-to-my-b/comments/page/2/> (accessed April 24, 2009); Hewlett-Packard, "Outfitting the Garage," Rebuilding HP's Garage <http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/abouthp/histnfacts/garage/outfitting.html> (accessed April 24, 2009); Wells Fargo, "Wells Fargo Corporate Archives," Wells Fargo History.com <http://www.wellsfargohistory.com/archives/archives.htm> (accessed April 24, 2009); Wells Fargo, "Archives Q&A," Guided by History, entry posted on March 31, 2006 <http://blog.wellsfargo.com/GuidedByHistory/2006/03/archives_qa_1.html> (accessed April 24, 2009).

most extensive views of archival facilities.[32] Text also mentioned preservation: "Since 1975, the JPMorgan Chase Archives has promoted the firm's legacy by collecting and preserving historical documents. . . ."[33]

Establishing Authority

    A company uses its Web site to establish itself as the official authority of its brand and legacy. One way this message was conveyed was through the archivist persona. Dave Smith, founder of the Walt Disney Archives, was introduced as "the ultimate authority on all things Disney," and author of the "unparalleled reference work, *Disney A to Z: The Official Encyclopedia*."[34] Anna Mancini at Hewlett-Packard determined authenticity in restoration of the 1930s garage where the company started.[35] Archivists at Coca-Cola and Wells Fargo offered preservation tips and clues for recognizing fake collectibles in their blog articles; value estimates for Coca-Cola collectibles frequently appeared in the comments sections.[36] Although Hewlett-Packard, Walgreens, and Wells Fargo could do no value appraisals for the public, Wells Fargo and IBM

[32] General Motors Corporation, "The Archive," GM Heritage Center <http://www.gm.com/corporate/about/heritage/archive/index.jsp> (accessed April 24, 2009).

[33] JPMorgan Chase & Co., "Archives," History <http://www.jpmorganchase.com/cm/cs?pagename=Chase/Href&urlname=jpmc/about/history/archives> (accessed April 24, 2009).

[34] The Walt Disney Company, "Meet Dave Smith," Disney Archives <http://disney.go.com/vault/read/dave_smith.html> (accessed December 17, 2008).

[35] Hewlett-Packard, "Outfitting the Garage," Rebuilding HP's Garage http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/abouthp/histnfacts/garage/outfitting.html> (accessed April 24, 2009).

[36] The Coca-Cola Company, "Lessons Learned: How to Sell a Coke Piece," Coca-Cola Conversations, entry posted September 30, 2008 <http://www.coca-colaconversations.com/my_weblog/2008/09/lessons-learned.html> (accessed April 24, 2009); Wells Fargo, "Holiday Cheer, Archives Style," Guided by History, entry posted December 26, 2006 <http://blog.wellsfargo.com/GuidedByHistory/2006/12/holiday_cheer_archives_style_1.html> (accessed April 24, 2009).

archivists did post advice, data sheets, and related resources for artifacts frequently presented for valuation and provenance.[37]

Citing numbers and statistics was another means to convey authority in the Company History. The age of a company and date of founding were often mentioned to inspire trust and respect for the company's legacy. Descriptions of archives attempted to impress with the size of holdings: General Motors' Media Archive "houses 15,000 linear feet of shelving,"[38] while IBM Corporate Archives has "more than 300,000 photographs, slides, negatives and transparencies."[39] Once established, authority can be transferred. Ten of the thirty-nine Web sites (26%) linked or listed resources outside the Company History section, offering alternatives to restricted archives in the form of guidance to organizations and publications trusted by company-history experts. Of the ten most visible Company History sections, 70 percent had related resources.

Interactivity and Customized Content

Twenty of the thirty-nine Web sites (51%) offered personalized interchanges by e-mail, weblogs or "blogs," RSS feeds, quizzes, shopping, and free take-aways of recipes, photographs, and computer wallpaper. Nine of the ten most visible Company History sections offered interactives. The most complex was the Generations of General Motors Wiki, a "digital

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[37] Hewlett-Packard, "FAQ," HP History <http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/abouthp/histnfacts/faq.html> (accessed April 24, 2009); Walgreens, "Donations," Walgreens History <http://www.walgreens.com/about/community/history/donations.jsp> (accessed April 24, 2009); Wells Fargo, "Frequently Asked Questions," History, Museums and Store <https://www.wellsfargo.com/about/history/faqs> (accessed April 24, 2009); and IBM, "Exhibits: Clock Corner," IBM Archives <http://www-03.ibm.com/ibm/history/exhibits/cc/cc_intro.html> (accessed April 24, 2009).

[38] General Motors Corporation, "The Archives," GM Heritage Center <http://www.gm.com/corporate/about/heritage/archive/index.jsp> (accessed December 17, 2008).

[39] IBM, "Exhibits: Vintage Views," IBM Archives <http://www-03.ibm.com/ibm/history/exhibits/vintage/vintage_intro.html> (accessed January 14, 2010).

scrapbook" for users to "write GM's online living history."[40] Coca-Cola, Johnson & Johnson, and Wells Fargo also had blogs entirely dedicated to company legacy.[41]

Although Company History sections are characterized by general communications for multiple audiences, thirteen companies (33%) directly addressed three groups with additional content tailored to their interests: collectors/ enthusiasts, students/educators, and employees/retirees. For example, Walt Disney offered extensive educational materials for students and teachers,[42] and Sears connected enthusiasts with experts of its homes sold by mail order.[43] Three Company History sections linked to retiree group Web sites or asked longtime employees and retirees for stories.[44]

Humanizing the Organization

Irene Pollach found in her Web site study that "companies appeal to readers' emotions when they present

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[40] General Motors Corporation, "FAQ," Generations of GM Wiki <http://wiki.gmnext.com/wiki/index.php/FAQ> (accessed December 15, 2008); General Motors Corporation, "Help Write GM's Online Living History" Generations of GM Wiki <http://wiki.gmnext.com/wiki/index.php/Main_Page> (accessed January 14, 2010).

[41] The Coca-Cola Company, Coca-Cola Conversations <http://www.coca-cola-conversations.com/> (accessed April 24, 2009); Johnson & Johnson, Kilmer House <http://www.kilmerhouse.com/> (accessed April 24, 2009); Wells Fargo, Guided by History <http://blog.wellsfargo.com/GuidedByHistory/> (accessed April 24, 2009).

[42] The Walt Disney Company, "The Walt Disney Family Museum," Company History <http://corporate.disney.go.com/corporate/complete_history.html> (accessed January 14, 2010).

[43] Sears, Roebuck and Co., "Register as a Sears Home Enthusiast," Sears Archives <http://www.searsarchives.com/homes/registry.htm> (accessed April 24, 2009).

[44] The Walt Disney Company, "Disney Legends" Company History <http://corporate.disney.go.com/corporate/complete_history.html> (accessed December 17, 2008); Walgreens, "Walgreen Alumni Association," Our History <http://www.walgreens.com/about/companyhistory/default.jsp?cf=ln> (accessed April 24, 2009); General Motors, "Generations of GM Wiki," History <http://www.gm.com/corporate/about/history/> (accessed April 24, 1009).

the people behind the organization."[45] Most photographs and quotations were of company founders and leaders. Brands were made approachable by humanistic language and emphasis on the individual: the word "touch" was repeatedly used, as in "Kraft touches more than a billion people in more than 150 countries."[46]

Another way to foster connection between visitors to the Web site and the organization behind it is the choice of personal pronouns. Nineteen Web sites (49%) used first-person pronouns (we/us/our) and second-person pronouns (you/your) in section titles, such as "Our History / Heritage / Story," or in text, claiming relationships between the company and its audiences.

Enduring Legacies

Quotations, often by founders and leaders, spoke of founding principles and basic values the company promised to continue, while anniversary celebrations presented legacies connected and vital to current business. Section titles announced "A History of Exceeding Expectations" (Johnson Controls) and a "Heritage of Innovation" (Boeing).[47] Wells Fargo's blog "bridges events in the past with an outlook on the future,"[48] and United Parcel Service is "a company that has never shied away from reinventing itself."[49]

Corporations acknowledged that mergers were another form of legacy. Four companies designed their Company History sections to present complex, rich histories of today's

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[45] Pollach, "Corporate Self-Presentation on the WWW," 294.

[46] Kraft Foods, "History," About Kraft Foods <http://www.kraft.com/About/history/> (accessed December 17, 2008).

[47] Johnson Controls, About Us, "History," <http://www.johnsoncontrols.com/publish/us/en/about/history.html> (accessed September 28, 2009); The Boeing Company, "Heritage of Innovation," History <http://www.boeing.com/companyoffices/aboutus/tours/index.html> (accessed April 24, 2009).

[48] Wells Fargo, "About Guided by History," Guided by History <http://blog.wellsfargo.com/GuidedByHistory/about.html> (accessed January 14, 2010).

[49] United Parcel Service, "Company History," UPS Corporate <http://www.ups.com/content/corp/about/history/index.html> (accessed January 14, 2010).

strong business conglomerations. Boeing featured a collage of company logos.[50] ConocoPhillips's history was divided into three parts for its three predecessor companies, Phillips Petroleum, Burlington Resources, and Conoco, Inc.[51]

Discussion

Over the past decade, the Internet has made business archives more visible and accessible to the public than ever before in the Company History sections of corporate Web sites. The ten companies in this study with the most extensive and varied content—General Motors, Coca-Cola, IBM, Intel, Hewlett-Packard, Wells Fargo, Sears, Walgreens, Johnson & Johnson, and Motorola—also presented archival staff, work, and collections as relevant and engaged in current business objectives. These companies demonstrate how archival resources can build a Company History section into a strong heritage brand extension, where, as in a corporate museum, the public experiences "not passive collections of organizational artifacts" but "a type of organizational memory that is used strategically by the firm for identity and image development."[52] Messages conveyed in Company History sections spoke of rich heritages and enduring principles; strong, successful mergers; brands and products that bring meaningful (and fun) experiences into consumers' and clients' lives; and corporate innovation, reliability, and continuity.

This study of text, hypertext, and dialogue found corporate archives building trust in Fortune 100 companies and their Web sites. They leveraged nostalgia for past brands and products, offering personal, connective experiences through interactives and narratives. The most functional Company History sections had both easy-to-navigate introductory

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[50] The Boeing Company, "Heritage of Innovation," History <http://www.boeing.com/companyoffices/aboutus/tours/index.html> (accessed April 24, 2009).

[51] ConocoPhillips Company, "Company History," Who We Are <http://www.conocophillips.com/about/who_we_are/history/index.htm> (accessed April 24, 2009).

[52] Nick Nissley and Andrea Case, "The Politics of Exhibition: Viewing Corporate Museums Through the Paradigmatic Lens of Organizational Memory," *British Journal of Management* 13 (2002): S43.

materials and deeper resources, balancing visitors' need for quick ready reference and their desire for a rich experience, browsing and interacting in a company's past.

Usability

Studies of the About Us sections by Hoa Loranger and Jakob Nielsen in 2003 and 2008 show that usability has improved, but audience expectations have risen even higher.[53] Online visitors like important dates and events easy to scan and comprehend, preferably in vertical timeline layout. "People are particularly interested in milestones, such as how and when the organization was formed, when important products and services were invented and why they are significant, prestigious awards or recognitions."[54] Loranger and Nielsen caution archivists and Web site designers that before building an elaborate, interactive timeline, they should "carefully consider whether the approach helps users accomplish their tasks more easily and efficiently than a simple scaled-back version."[55]

Most Company History sections in this study were easy to find, with timelines and materials that gave users insight into company heritage. Section titles were usually some variation of the recommended "Company History" title that viewers know and understand. Thirty-one of the thirty-nine Web sites (79%) used a timeline to introduce company history; only seven (18%) were animated. The most cumbersome timelines required continual clicks and rollovers with the mouse to see small segments of information at a time. Hewlett-Packard's animated timeline was the easiest to scan visually as a whole.[56] Motorola's

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[53] Although usability increased from 70% to 79% between 2003 and 2008, users' satisfaction with About Us sections decreased from 5.2 to 4.6 (on a 1–7 scale). Hoa Loranger and Jakob Nielsen, *Corporate Image: Usability Guidelines for Presenting Company Information in a Website's "About Us" Area*, 2nd ed. (Fremont, Cal.: Nielsen Norman Group, 2008), 4-5.

[54] Ibid., 19.

[55] Ibid., 108.

[56] Hewlett-Packard, "HP Interactive Timeline," History <http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/abouthp/histnfacts/timeline/> (accessed April 30, 2009).

HTML-based timeline was clean, easy to comprehend, and offered a PDF file print option and a variety of language translations from a drop-down menu.[57] Wells Fargo showed versatility and relevance with a traditional HTML-based timeline, responding to current energy concerns with a "Green Timeline" of "documents and stories from our archives of Wells Fargo's involvement, commitment and proactive approach on environmental issues."[58]

For visitors wanting to know more, corporate archives with prominent Company History sections offered related resources, accommodating Web users as active information seekers. Corporate archivists should make sure historical content posted elsewhere on the corporate Web site for a particular event or audience is linked back to Company History, where users assume that content will be located. If a company has an affiliated museum or visitors' center, as General Motors and Wells Fargo do, links to that institution's Web site can also offer room for expanding archival content beyond the confines of the company Web site.[59]

BUILDING TRUST

Trust is a critical factor in interactions on the Web. Because anyone can put up a Web site and call himself or herself an expert, "Trust and credibility are major issues on the Web, where even the biggest company exists as only a few words and pictures in a browser window," writes Web site usability guru Jakob Nielsen. "Explaining who you are and where you come from does matter."[60] Using heritage resources in the Company History section establishes a company and its archives as the

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[57] Motorola, Inc., "Timeline," History <http://www.motorola.com/content.jsp?globalObjectId=7632-10812> (accessed April 30, 2009).

[58] Wells Fargo, "Wells Fargo's Green Timeline" History <http://www.wells-fargohistory.com/archives/greentimeline.htm> (accessed December 15, 2008).

[59] General Motors Corporation, GM Heritage Center <http://www.gm.com/corporate/about/heritage/> (accessed December 17, 2008); Wells Fargo, Wells Fargo History.com <http://www.wellsfargohistory.com/museums/museums_sf.htm> (accessed January 14, 2010).

[60] Loranger and Nielsen, *Corporate Image*, 8.

official sources of its history, brand, and products. Archivists are familiar with this role of "expert," notes Thomas J. Frusciano of Rutgers University. Many archivists serve with curators as "historical experts or institutional historians, and apply that knowledge to make informed appraisal decisions, craft comprehensive documentation plans, assist researchers in their quest for appropriate resources and information, and even conduct research to write history."[61]

Online, the archivist was presented as company-history expert, guiding visitors through a company's past and providing reliable information. A major contribution by corporate archivists to Company History sections is an understanding of what people want to know about a company's past. The majority of the ten most extensive Company History sections had information specifically posted in response to frequent requests, such as Wells Fargo's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page, which answered a range of questions on the company's beginnings, how to build a model stagecoach, responses to genealogical researchers, and information about certain objects.[62]

FAQ pages also revealed corporate archives' awareness that many online visitors are looking for provenance and value appraisals of old products they own (five of the top ten Company History sections mentioned such requests). The past decade that launched Company History sections also introduced the eBay online auction site and *Antiques Roadshow*, *Cash in the Attic*, and other appraisal television programs, heightening awareness of the potential value of collectibles and increasing requests to corporate archives for product values, dates, and authentication.

Value appraisal for the public is a complicated area for many corporate archives due to the volume of requests, difficulty determining condition remotely, fluctuation in prices, and possible liability to the company. Philip F. Mooney at Coca-Cola was the exception in providing product values in

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[61] Thomas J. Frusciano, "Sharing a Wealth of Experience: Archivists as Experts," *Journal of Archival Organization* 3, no. 4 (2005): 3.

[62] Wells Fargo, "Frequently Asked Questions," History, Museums and Store <https://www.wellsfargo.com/about/history/faqs> (accessed April 30, 2009).

collectibles columns and blog postings and occasionally inviting people to e-mail images of items directly to him,[63] but had to discontinue individual value appraisals completely after a year to keep conversations on topic and not just "commentary on what do I have and how much is it worth."[64] Several companies did provide specific information to assist with provenance of collectibles, and Company History sections as a whole can be considered starting places to learn about the place of a product in a company's past.

Personal, Connective Experiences

   "The Web is very depersonalized," note Loranger and Nielsen, "but from our earliest usability studies, we've seen that users like getting a sense of the company behind the website."[65] A *New York Times* reporter exploring online company histories agreed that an "essential element" to an interesting company Web site is "a corporate history that goes beyond nuts and bolts and shows an appreciation, nay, respect, for the product's special place in modern culture."[66] Archival staff and collections resources can be the basis of a Company History section that offers visitors personal contact and intimacy with a company and product culture that has been a part of their lives. Experimental research has shown that brand loyalty affects viewers' attitudes on a company Web site and their intentions to

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[63] The Coca-Cola Company, "Lessons Learned."

[64] Philip F. Mooney, "Coca-Cola Conversations: Connecting an Iconic Brand to Its Fans" (lecture, Business Development Institutes Social Communication Case Studies conference, New York City, May 12, 2009) < http://www.blogtalkradio. com/socialcommbroadcast/2009/05/12/business-development-institutes-social-communications-case-studies> (accessed November 20, 2009). See also Philip F. Mooney, "The Blog as an Archival Tool: Coca-Cola Conversations," *The Internet Archivist* (June 22, 2009) <http://www.lib.byu.edu/sites/interac-tivearchivist/case-studies/blog-at-coca-cola/> (accessed November 20, 2009).

[65] Loranger and Nielsen, *Corporate Image*, 8.

[66] Michael Pollak, "Screen Grab; On Some Corporate Internet Sites, It's Not All Business," *The New York Times* (September 7, 2000) <http://www.nytimes. com/2000/09/07/technology/screen-grab-on-some-corporate-internet-sites-it-s-not-all-business.html?scp=1&sq=%22on%20some%20corporate%20 internet%20sites%22&st=cse> (accessed November 20, 2009).

revisit the site.[67] Corporate archives house many products that inspire a tremendous amount of affection and nostalgia, often linked with memories of childhood, special experiences, and people. Company History sections offer new ways to interact with a company and its products, and links to communities of people with similar experiences and interests.

As Irene Pollach points out, audience involvement on corporate Web sites is "likely to be high, since people are unlikely to visit a company's Web site if they have no interest whatsoever in the company and its activities."[68] This study found the exchange of stories the most intriguing interactive in the Company History section—and a powerful means to convey the corporation's message to the public. American Express used "True Stories" of stellar customer service to illustrate its company values.[69] Wells Fargo requested "stories of your own experiences, or those of people you know. Because that is the best history—memories of people working together in response to big events."[70] Coca-Cola requested and offered stories from "hundreds of people . . . about how Coca-Cola has affected their lives,"[71] such as the "New Coke Stories" exchange that "reminds us that the New Coke episode, whether one supported the new formula or not, was a common experience that all Americans shared in the mid-1980s."[72]

Engaging to audiences, stories are effective educational devices. Recent research has found that "the human brain has a natural affinity for narrative construction. People tend

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[67] Magne Supplellen and Herbjorn Nysvenn, "Drivers of Intention to Revisit the Websites of Well-Known Companies," *International Journal of Market Research* 43, no. 3 (2001): 341-352.

[68] Pollach, "Corporate Self-Presentation on the WWW," 287.

[69] American Express, "True Stories," Our Story <http://home3.americanexpress.com/corp/os/true_stories.asp> (accessed April 30, 2009).

[70] Wells Fargo, "About Guided by History," Guided by History <http://blog.wellsfargo.com/GuidedByHistory/about.html> (accessed April 30, 2009).

[71] The Coca-Cola Company, "Coca-Cola Stories," Heritage <http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com/heritage/stories/index.html> (accessed April 30, 2009).

[72] Gregory Markley, "The Coca-Cola Company Archives: Thriving Where Dilbert, not Schellenberg, Matters," *Provenance* 26 (2008): 11-12.

to remember facts more accurately if they encounter them in a story rather than in a list."[73] Narratives in Company History sections are also part of an increasing trend of sharing life stories online—exemplified by Facebook, MySpace, blogs, and Listservs. Finally, story exchange adds to the archives by increasing the staff's knowledge base, adding resources for research and exhibits, and even building relationships that may lead to future donations.

Building connections between online audiences and the company through Web interactives, virtual access to the corporate archives, and content tailored to frequent users, the Company History site is an effective vehicle for corporate messaging. As online design grows increasingly personalized, the company is more attuned to the customer, but more importantly, according to designer Alan Topalian, "users are gradually drawn into the 'extended family' of organization. The inclusion of stakeholders into the corporate family constitutes a significant development of corporate identity."[74] Supporting new ways to build relationships between the public and the company will be the challenge and adventure of the next decade for corporate archives' outreach in Company History sections.

The success of a brand extension such as a Company History section is determined by audience involvement, but as Richard Thomsett, a director at consulting company Brand Architects, warns, "You've got to ensure the experience lives up to the brand, you must get the precise fit."[75] Regular evaluation by corporate archivists of their company's online history and user needs is critical, as William Landis confirms in his study of early archival Web sites: "Archivists have something to offer

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[73] Benedict Carey, "This Is Your Life (and How You Tell It)," *The New York Times* (May 22, 2007) <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/22/health/psychology/22narr.html?_r=1&em&ex=1180065600&en=4d426931b2330fae&ei=5087%0A> (accessed January 14, 2010).

[74] Topalian, "Experienced Reality," 1129.

[75] Quoted in Stefan Chomka, "Pulling Power: More companies are extending their brands using experiential marketing techniques," *Food Manufacture* (2004) <http://www.foodmanufacture.co.uk/news/fullstory.php/aid/468/Pulling_power.html> (accessed January 14, 2010).

this potential audience, but the audience also has something to teach archivists."[76]

CONCLUSION

Corporate archivists tend to focus their technology resources heavily on developing online services and products within their company, typically on private intranets. However, corporate archives have an important stake in obtaining space on companies' public Web sites. The Company History sections of corporate Web sites have developed over the past decade into vehicles with good capability—and greater potential—for promoting corporate identity, addressing diverse audiences, and making the actual corporate archives visible to both the general public and key company stakeholders.

Archivists, partnering with other business units on company Web sites, have varying degrees of influence over the final format and presentation of content, but they bring to that partnership the role of company culture expert. They know the brands and products that have inspired loyalty in consumers though the years and what external users ask most often about company history. They are storytellers and collectors of stories, tapping into strong intersections between the personal and the corporate. Inspiring trust in a company and its Web site, archivists and heritage resources build the Company History section into a virtual brand extension of rich content, engaging and educating audiences while actively aligning with their corporation's current business initiatives.

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[76] William Landis, "Archival Outreach on the World Wide Web," *Archival Issues* 20, no. 2 (1995): 146.

Appendix A:
Company Web Sites
Abbot Laboratories <www.abbott.com>
Aetna <www.aetna.com>
Allstate <www.allstate.com>
American Express <www.americanexpress.com>
AT&T <www.att.com>
Bank of America <www.bankofamerica.com>
Boeing <www.boeing.com>
Caterpillar <www.cat.com>
Chevron <www.chevron.com>
Coca-Cola <www.coca-cola.com>
ConocoPhillips <www.conocophillips.com>
Dow Chemical <www.dow.com>
Ford Motor <www.ford.com>
General Motors <www.gm.com>
Hewlett-Packard <www.hp.com>
Home Depot <www.homedepot.com>
IBM <www.ibm.com>
Intel <www.intel.com>
Johnson & Johnson <www.jnj.com>
Johnson Controls <www.johnsoncontrols.com>
J. P. Morgan Chase <www.jpmorganchase.com>
Kraft Foods <www.kraft.com>
Lockheed Martin <www.lockheedmartin.com>
Merrill Lynch <www.ml.com>
MetLife <www.metlife.com>
Microsoft <www.microsoft.com>
Motorola <www.motorola.com>
New York Life Insurance <www.newyorklife.com>
Procter & Gamble <www.pg.com>
Prudential Financial <www.prudential.com>
Sears Holdings <www.sears.com>
State Farm Insurance <www.statefarm.com>
Supervalu <www.supervalu.com>
Target <www.target.com>
TIAA-CREF <www.tiaa-cref.org>
United Parcel Service <www.ups.com>
Walgreens <www.walgreens.com>
Walt Disney <www.disney.go.com>
Wells Fargo <www.wellsfargo.com>

Appendix B:
Codebook
In this study, codes for structure and navigation, interactives, and Web user groups were based on Irene Pollach's study "Corporate Self-Presentation on the WWW: Strategies for Enhancing Usability, Credibility and Utility" (2005). Online archives and company-history variables were developed by the researcher, a corporate archivist, with reference to *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (2005), by Richard Pearce-Moses.[77]

Structure and Navigation Codes
1. Heritage brand extension: Brand extension is the use of a well-known brand name to launch new products in different categories. Examples of brand extension of a company's heritage include a line of vintage-logo merchandise, a corporate museum, or traveling exhibit.
2. Related resource: Hyperlink to a Web page within the company Web site or to other Web sites, or a text reference to a print publication.
3. Section name: The Company History hyperlink on the About Us page and heading on the Company History main page.

Archival Codes
4. Archivist: Manager of legacy collections. May be represented by a name, title, job description, photograph, and writings.
5. Contact information: Phone, mail, e-mail, or fax for archives staff.
6. Donation guidelines: Rules or legal-transfer documents related to acquiring items for corporate archives.
7. Researcher guidelines: Rules for researchers using historical collections.
8. Holdings: Any text describing collections in corporate archives, or image of a company's archival facility.
9. Appraisal: "The process of determining whether records and

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[77] Richard Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005) <http://www.archivists.org/glossary/> (accessed December 15, 2008).

other materials have permanent (archival) value."

10. Arrangement and Description: Organization and description of collections based on the principles of provenance (arrangement by creating entity) and original order.

11. Preservation: The safekeeping of items of enduring value to an organization.

12. Reference and Access: Either archives' contact information for virtual reference (assistance by telephone, mail, fax, or e-mail) or information about on-site reference (researcher may visit to use the collections).

Company History Format Codes

13. Anniversary celebration: A separate unit, e.g., Web page, Macromedia Flash movie, or PDF file, commemorating an anniversary of the company.

14. Audio/Video: Digitized sound or moving footage, including songs, speeches, commercials, or movies.

15. Biography: Personal history of company founder or other employee.

16. Company "Firsts": Highlighted industry-leading innovations and inventions.

17. Essay: At least one paragraph summarizing company history.

18. Fact Sheet: Web page that goes beyond summary company history with details about a particular subject, event, or program.

19. Object: A three-dimensional historical object presented in a contemporary (color) image—not in historical use, such as in an old ad or commercial.

20. Photograph: Color or black-and-white still image depicting company history, including people, events, objects, buildings, and grounds.

21. Retired Logo: A non-current, earlier company brand.

22. Scanned Document: Digital image of an ad or other historical print document.

23. Story/Quote/Speech: Quotation or speech in either audio/video or text format.

24. Timeline: Chronological list of significant events, branding, and/or awards in company history. May be in HTML or Macromedia Flash (still or animated) format.

Other Codes

25. Interactive: Web feature that actively engages users in

activity other than reading: either a traditional point-and-click or a Macromedia Flash animated feature. Exception: Audio/video players were not counted as interactives.

26. Personal pronouns (first person): we, us, our; (second person): you, your

27. User group: Specific audience targeted with content tailored to its common interest.