Using web sites to achieve organizational goals: are nonprofits doing it right?

Alisha Nicole Tillery
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, atille2@lsu.edu

USING WEB SITES TO ACHIEVE ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS: ARE NONPROFITS DOING IT RIGHT?

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Mass Communication

in

The Manship School of Mass Communication

by
Alisha Tillery
B.A., Southern University Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2003
August 2006

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researcher thanks her committee chair, Lisa Lundy, Ph.D. for her support and guidance throughout the research. In addition, she thanks her committee members, Lori Boyer, Ph.D. and Judith Sylvester, Ph.D. for participating and providing guidance as needed, as well Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research, Margaret DeFleur, Ph.D. She also thanks all faculty, staff and administrators in the Manship School of Mass Communication and Louisiana State University for working with her while she was away from the campus.

The researcher thanks her mother and father, grandmother, extended family, friends, classmates and colleagues for their encouragement and unwavering support during research. It has been invaluable. Lastly, the researcher thanks God for His strength and endurance.

This study is memory of the researcher's grandmother, Annie Mae Tillery, who was a teacher in St. Helena Parish for 41 years. This research is a testament of her undying belief in the personal betterment through education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This study examines how and to what extent nonprofit organizations are using their Web sites to fulfill their organizational goals and missions through volunteerism and fundraising. Through in-depth interviews of communication/public relations managers and executive directors at nonprofit organizations new information reveals factors that negatively affect nonprofits organizations' growth in Web site development and technology, as well as those factors that push nonprofits to break the digital divide. Four nonprofit organizations that provide youth services in Memphis, Tennessee were selected.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) play a significant role in society today. Research indicates that the nonprofit sector encompasses more than 1.5 million organizations. The 2005 estimate of one volunteer hour at a nonprofit organization is $18.04, according to the Independent Sector Web site (Independent Sector, 2006). In 1997, President Bill Clinton said, " …in many cases it is the non-profit organizations that convert philanthropy into results—in helping people in need, providing health care and educating our youth. The non-profit sector is an integral component of our national life" (Kensicki, 2004).

These statistics and personal views show that the nonprofit sector is a needed and respected component of American society. NPOs have slowly grasped the concept that they have an extreme need for organizational public relations practices and tactics to effectively achieve their missions.

What is Public Relations?

Since its evolution, public relations has been defined in various ways**.** *Public Relations News*, a now defunct commercial newsletter serving the field, defined the concept as the "management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance" (Cutlip, Broom and Center, 1994, p. 3). The Public Relations Society of America adopted another definition in 1982, suggesting that public relations "helps our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding along groups and institutions" (p. 4). Miller (1989) defined public relations as “a process that centers on exerting symbolic control over certain aspects of the environment…of attempting to exert symbolic control over the evaluative predispositions and subsequent behaviors and relevant publics or clienteles” (p. 47). Cutlip, Broom and Center (1994) also have a definition, which has been adopted by most schools of communication and public relations today. They define public relations as the “management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (p. 6).

Public relations—managed communication—makes organizations more effective by building relationships with publics that can constrain or enhance the mission of the organization. It follows logically that public relations departments must have certain attributes to be able to contribute to organizational effectiveness. By strategically managing communication programs, public relations can help the organization meet its goals—such as an increase in understanding, change in attitude or behavior, or mutually beneficial relationships with its stakeholders or supporters (Grunig & Grunig, 1991).

Public relations has grown to become one of the most important departments or functions of corporations and nonprofit organizations alike. The significance of public relations is based on the need to provide members with helpful information, while recruiting new members and promote a positive position, as well as social progress in the particular industry (Cutlip, Broom & Center, 1994).

Public relations includes several functions: (1) anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues that might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organization, (2) setting objectives, planning, budgeting, recruiting and training staff, developing facilities, (3) researching, conducting and evaluating on a continuing basis, programs of action and communication to achieve the informed public understanding necessary to the success of an organization's aims, which may include marketing, fundraising, employee, community or government relations (Cutlip, Broom & Center, 1994).

Over the last 25 years, technology has improved public relations significantly. Most recently, the insurgence of electronic mail and the World Wide Web has made it extremely easier and cost effective to spread messages to mass audiences (Johnson, 1997). Effectively delivering messages through media is especially important because today, companies face severely competitive and economic pressures that were unthinkable a few decades ago (Markus, 1995). As companies struggle to shed excess cost and to respond more nimbly to customers and competitors, they are being urged to adopt new organizational forms, tightened inter-organizational linkages and improved management practices (Russell and Lawrence, 1988). To support these "network" forms of organization, more and more firms, especially those that are large and geographically dispersed, are turning to electronic networks---advanced communication media, such as electronic mail. Use of these media for intra-organizational coordination is believed to increase personal and organizational productivity (Rice, 1992).

The World Wide Web has enabled public relations practitioners to identify media and supporter contacts, customize messages to contacts and keep track of those messages. They are able to research what reporters cover to pitch stories. Another advantage of technology in public relations is the diversity of information available online and the speed of access and delivery. This allows for early detection and identification of emerging issues pertinent to the organization's mission and goals (Johnson, 1997).

Significance of Study

Nonprofit organizations face similar challenges to corporations. Cutlip, Broom and Center (1994) say these organizations have neither the financial resources nor the expertise necessary for sophisticated efforts. The fulfillment of an organization's mission is dependent on the dissemination of messages to the public. Along with effectively sending out messages, they also struggle with the issue of achieving maximum results with minimum staff and low budgets. Since public relations has evolved to include many components and functions, such as media relations, marketing communication, internal communication, development and community relations, these functions are carried out through public relations and communications departments, that in most cases are made up of only one person who wears many hats, including public relations practitioner, marketing manager and development director.

The purpose of this study is to examine how nonprofit organizations use their Websites to achieve organizational goals. Do the web Web sites increase funds, volunteers, resources or awareness, or all of the above? Do their web Web site's features reflect the target publics? Nonprofits are often at a disadvantage concerning public relations; therefore, there must be documented research on what works best for these organizations to make improvements and advancements in the future. As NPOs have smaller staffs and smaller budgets, more manpower is needed to fulfill duties pertinent to the mission. It is vital that nonprofit organizations identify and use the most effective strategies to achieve goals to make their businesses thrive. If research is conducted and evaluated, other organizations with similar services will learn effective strategies and take advantage of the most beneficial PR practices to fulfill missions and organizational goals.

This study interviewed executive directors and public relations practitioners at three nonprofit organizations in Memphis that target children or youth to examine how and why their organizations use Web sites to achieve organizational goals. Perhaps public relations practitioners and executive directors (CEOs) will have different views on how and why they implement the features and objectives they do for their sites.

Grunig's IABC research group found that chief executive officers (CEOs) and executive directors in general value public relations highly, especially when it is excellent, but communications managers underestimated the value assigned to the function by the CEOs and executive directors (Grunig & Grunig, 1998). Some public relations practitioners function as technicians, according to Cutlip (1994). Communication technicians write and edit employee newsletters and news releases and feature stories, develop Web site content and deal with media contacts. Practitioners in this role usually are not present when management defines problems and selects solutions. These practitioners implement the communication programs, but do not participate in the decision-making process that planned the programs (Johnson, 1997). They are brought in later to produce the communications and implement the program, sometimes without full knowledge of either the original motivation or the intended results. Even though they were not present during the discussions about a new policy or management decision, they are the ones given the job of explaining it to employees and to the press. Dozier and Grunig (1992) add that technicians do not participate in management decision making, but carry out the low-level mechanics of generating communication products that implement policy decisions made by others.

The public relations manager's role calls for research skills, an aptitude for strategic thinking and a tendency to think in terms of the outcome and impact of public relations activities. Managers do not limit their tactics to communications. They use organizational intelligence, negotiation, issues management and program evaluation as public relations tools (Dozier, 1995).

Following the objectives of excellent public relations, CEOs believe that public relations practitioners or departments should be characterized by participation in strategic management, symmetrical communication, as well as two-way symmetrical communication. They have a critical role in fostering excellence in communication, therefore, understanding and supporting the public relations function (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1992).

Research Questions

Through this study, the researcher seeks to explore the following questions regarding Web site practices in nonprofits rendering services to youth:

(1) How do nonprofit organizations use Web sites to reach organizational goals?

(2) Do Web sites significantly affect fundraising/development at nonprofit organizations?

(3) What Web site maintenance/management tactics do respondents perceive to be the most effective in achieving organizational goals?

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History of Public Relations

To grasp the vitality and need for research in public relations, one must know and understand the role and function of public relations in an organization. Most researchers would suggest that public relations evolved from press agentry. Press agentry is defined as creating newsworthy stories and events to attract media attention and to gain public notice. Press agentry began in the late 1800s with Phineas T. Barnum who used trickery and deception to promote theater (Cutlip, Broom & Center, 1994). Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified the press agentry/publicity model, which emphasizes generation of media coverage of the organization or individual by any means necessary (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995).

Ivy Ledbetter Lee, sharpened the concept of press agentry, being among the first to use the "handout system" and the term "publicity." Lee worked as the Pennsylvania Railroad's first publicity agent. He received fame though, when he garnered major press coverage for the coal operators in summer 1906 (Cutlip, Broom & Center, 1994). Both Lee and Barnum practiced the public information model, which is one-way communication emphasizing the flow of information outward from an organization to various publics (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995).

Edward Bernays, known as the father of public relations, coined the term "public relations counsel" in *Crystallizing Public Relations*, the first book on public relations. He is also responsible for the concept of "engineering consent," the first two-way symmetrical communication, which requires the organization to gather information about the publics they are trying to reach to make good managerial decisions. Communicators may use feedback from publics to persuade or even manipulate them into compliance with the organization's objectives (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995).

Background of Nonprofit Organizations

There is a large body of literature dedicated to public relations practices in corporations and other for-profit organizations, but not enough on practices in non-profits and how they fulfill their organizational goals. According to the Nonprofit Resource Center, a "nonprofit corporation is an organization formed for the purpose of serving a purpose of public or mutual benefit other than the pursuit or accumulation of profits." (Nonprofit Resource Center, 2005) The Internal Revenue Service classifies a not-for-profit as an activity, such as a hobby and a nonprofit as an organization established for purposes other than profit making. The IRS and other government agencies use the term "tax-exempt," rather than non-profit. Section 501 of Title 26 in the United States Tax Code lists several types of organizations that can be considered tax-exempt including charitable organizations, social welfare organizations, labor and agricultural organizations, business leagues, social clubs, fraternal societies and political organizations (IRS, 2005).

Because nonprofits are often compared to for-profit organizations, they tend to be overlooked. There are several important features that distinguish nonprofits from for-profits. Regarding tax purposes, some researchers suggest that NPOs have an advantage over for-profit organizations. There is a claim that various policy and regulatory advantages that nonprofits receive are the driving force that places for-profits in unfavorable market positions (Yongl, 2004). In addition to tax exemptions, NPOs receive lower postal rates.

NPOs tend to have smaller operating budgets. They face a nondistribution constraint enforced by law. They cannot use the revenue from either operations or other sources to compensate board members, trustees or other incorporators beyond an economic salary. A corollary of this constraint is that a nonprofit must use all its resources for purposes compatible with its nonfinancial objectives. Together with the nonfinancial objectives, the nondistribution of their products and/or services as long as their financial resources can support their activities. Second, the socially beneficial nature of nonprofits enables them to seek support from donors and government. However, they are faced with declining government support and a decrease in private giving (Dart & Zimmerman, 2000). Also, for-profits are active in most industries that nonprofits historically have operated, such as health care, childcare, family counseling and arts and education. Salamon and Anheier (1998) report that nonprofits and for-profits account for the 51 percent and 17 percent of U.S. hospitals, respectively. Of nursing homes, 20 percent are nonprofits and 75 percent are commercial.

According to researchers Sam Dyer and Mashere Harrison (2002), nonprofits hold $2 trillion of assets, have an annual income of $1.1 trillion employing one twelfth of the American workforce (Carr, 2000). The Jacksonville Community Council, widely seen as a national model for public involvement in analyzing and solving community problems, reported to its citizens in a formal report the following:

> The non-profit sector touches every aspect of community life. The “good works” of non-profits serve, maintain, inspire and entertain us. Non-profits are there in times of disaster, serving people in need. They protect and support babies, children, the ill and the frail elderly who cannot care for themselves. They help people cope with the disease and life’s challenges, build skills, believe in and achieve aspirations. The community relies on the services and activities non-profits provide. (Jacksonville Community Report, 1998)

Despite the good works of non-profits, they still struggle with many setbacks. Kang and Norton (2004) believe for NPOs, the public relations struggle is reaching potential publics with generally limited financial means, in turn accomplishing organizational goals with smaller staffs. Corporations and government agencies have significantly larger communication departments, based on number of employees. In contrast, nonprofit organizations and associations have roughly half as many employees in their communication departments (Dozier, Grunig and Grunig, 1995). Regarding public relations, Dyer and Harrison (2002) suggest that the role of public relations in NPOs is not well developed and there is limited research found. Micro businesses, those with 19 or fewer employees, are often not considered in the development of public relations theory and research, yet they constitute about 90 percent of all U.S. businesses.

Public Relations Role in Nonprofits Organizations

Nonprofit organizations, particularly social service agencies, take a different approach to public relations, but promoting public service and build public trust are common to all. Most nonprofit organizations seek to the following: (1) to gain acceptance of an organization's mission and goals, (2) to develop communication channels with those publics it serves, (3) to create and maintain a favorable climate and relationship for fundraising and development, (4) to support the development and maintenance of public policy that's favorable to an organization's mission and (5) to inform the motivate key constituents to dedicate themselves to the mission and objectives. They try to accomplish these objectives through volunteer support and fundraising (Cutlip, Broom, Center, 1994).

Though the objectives remain the same, there is a constant changing climate in the public relations sector. There has been a shift in the responsibility for public service and assistance from government programs to voluntary organizations. Competition has increased among charitable groups for financial and volunteer support. There is also a growing concern about the credibility and accountability of nonprofit organizations, as well as an increase in cost and difficulty in fundraising. A more pressing issue is dealing with professional staff who tend to "job hop" for career advancements

As a result of the changing climate, there have been significant changes in the way public relations is practiced. Marketing has become an important part of the communication strategy (Cutlip, Broom & Center 1994). Marketing communication has been named a function of public relations, according to Argenti (2003). The marketing communications department coordinates and manages publicity relating to new or existing services and also deals with activities relating to the publics. Technology has also extended communication selectivity, raising some questions about ethics, privacy, etc. Nonprofit organizations, particularly the health care sector, are also using paid advertising as a public relations tactics more today. They are also being pressured by leaders, such as the board of directors and trustees to seek assistance from professional public relations firms, such as Thompson and Thompson or Olgilvy Public Relations. Lastly, building relationship with outside communities and empowering those who seek the services calls for non-traditional public relations tactics (Cutlip, Broom & Center, 1994).

Cutlip (1994) suggests that nonprofit agencies, specifically social welfare agencies, are an outgrowth of the conflicts and maladjustment produced by the country's high-speed living and the recognition that not everyone had equal access or resources to acquire services. Nonprofit organizations, unlike corporations, face challenges in bridging the gap of communication between ethnic communities and inner city and outer-city, according to Cutlip, Broom & Center (1994). They cite “come-and-get-it services and other traditional messages of nonprofits as communication failures to reach those in need, specifically those in the inner-city.

In a study about public relations practices for micro-organizations, researchers found that practices and the overall environment in these organizations are informal (Dyer & Harrison, 2002). Participants took “public” as a special meaning. The head of a state regulatory agency said, “I feel like a public servant. I feel that I must try to do the best job for the public.” Another employee also said, regarding internal communication, “We literally tell across the room… We just talk openly. We don’t even see the need for something on paper, because it would be kind of weird to do a newsletter on stuff we could just talk about.”

Dyer and Harrison (2002) reported in a study of nonprofit public relations practices that most interviewees expressed the general theme of “getting the word out.” Rosenstock (1991) found that individuals who perform public relations many times do not understand the mechanics and “oversimplify, or even ignore, key PR components. Nonprofit PR practitioners operate under the public information model, meaning there is a sole practitioner who assumes the responsibility of volunteer management, fundraising, event management, information campaigns, board relations and communication interface (Dyer and Harrison, 2002). Identifying stakeholders of an organization and addressing the specific communications needs of those stakeholders is a key concept in public relations.

Regarding Web sites, most research surrounds corporations and other for-profit organizations exclusively. Rouner and Camden (1988) suggest that nonprofit organizations are not part of the "technical revolution" as they should be. Taylor, Kent and White reported regarding nonprofit organizations, "They are not yet fully engaging their publics in two-way communication. Moreover, it appears that the activist organizations are better prepared to address the needs of member publics rather than media needs." (Taylor, Kent & White, 2001, p.263) Coombs (1998) also says nonprofits can use Web sites to build links with their publics.

Web Sites

Since the emergence of the Internet, businesses of all kinds have been able to instantaneously and effectively communicate with their targeted publics. The World Wide Web is global in reach, available 24 hours a day and has multimedia capabilities, in addition to encouraging response and interaction (Rowley, 2001). Today there are more than 225,801,428 Internet users in North America, a 108.9 increase from 2000-2005 (World Internet Stats, 2006). The Internet gives viewers the discretion to attend to particular messages within the medium (Klein, 2003). A large body of literature suggests that Web sites are a form of symmetrical communication, thus a key characteristic in excellent public relations. Concerning organizations' messages, the Web site is considered a form of advertising because the Web site marketer or management plans both the message and the content (Hwang, MacMillan & Lee, 2003).

Chaffey, Mayer, Johnston and Ellis (2000) identify these characteristics of the Web, which qualify it as a new communication medium: 1) primarily pulls or pushes users to seek information, rather than organizations offering it through alternative methods, such as newsletters or emails, though these are still highly effective, 2) provides easy interaction and 3) allows one-to-one with customized communications from the organization to an individual.

Nonprofit organizations should give attention to their public relations strategies in order to maximize the funding and support they receive the numbers using their services. The need to attract and retain supporters is a continuing issue for all charities. An effective Web site can be a valuable part of this process. The Web offers a new communications medium with which to achieve this (Wenham, Stephens and Hardy, 2003).

However, as noted before, nonprofits do a lot with a little, with minimal financial means and staff. Kang and Norton (2004) suggest that the World Wide Web offers these organizations the unique opportunity to interactively reach multiple publics without enormous financial burdens. Creating an effective Web site does not depend solely on having a large quantity of monetary and human resources available, but in management adopting a proactive approach, with one or two individuals identifying the potential Web site development (Wenden, Stephens and Hardy, 2003). Nonprofits' Web sites can functionally utilize the principles behind successful commercial Web sites, such as simplicity and public outreach. (Corby & Sowards, 2000). The Web page becomes a highly targeted clearinghouse for messages in various forms. The system may be a little costly to set up, but once it's running, it can be highly effective. Eighty percent of reporters still prefer to get information in the form of a printed press release, but that number will drop as more members of the media become comfortable with newer technologies (Lordan, 2001).

There is an abundance of literature cited that gives information on how nonprofits can take advantage of the technology. Chaffey, Mayer, Johnston and Ellis (2000) identify the key elements of effective Web sites: 1) capture: carry out Web site promotion to ensure users visit and revisit the site, 2) content: provide interactive content and personalization to encourage return visits, 3) community: develop online discussion groups to build communities that will increase repeat visits, 4) commerce: ability to make transactions and complete other calls to action and 5) customer orientation: target customer segments and personalize content.

Researcher Edward J. Lordan (1999) says organizations must be aware of how they will use their technology system to fulfill objectives. The delivery system is part of the message and contributes to the overall image, so the practitioner should consider how that system affects the client, the product, and the audiences. They should also be aware of their audiences. Ask the following questions of their publics: Do they have access to the distribution systems you are considering? Do they have the skills and knowledge to use these systems? Do they navigate the Web? Aside from that, many sites still provide only standard information for a general audience and do not take advantage of the opportunities offered by personalization (Wendam, Stephens and Hardy, 2003).

There are challenges, however, for nonprofit organizations in setting up and maintaining Web sites. Nelson and Hodgkinson (2001) suggest that recruiting and retaining employees and keeping up with new technology is a challenge in itself.

Nonprofit organizations that seek to recruit technology specialists are competing in a very scarce market with large corporations. In addition, the creation of new technology and the growth of the Internet pose some management problems for nonprofits. Web sites and communications systems are expensive and demand technically adept staff in planning, implementing and training staff in the use of technology. The researcher also suggests that nonprofits are behind in learning how to use this technology effectively and efficiently (Nelson, 2001). Site management is one of them. Nonprofits currently use simple measures to access the usage of their Web sites, such as the number of hits and pages requested, according to Saxton and Game (2002). These measures, though not thorough, provide some indication of the popularity of their site, which allows the impact of changes to the site to be assessed

Once those issues are discussed, there are several other factors organizations must consider when using Web sites for organizational goals. One factor is keeping the Web site updated with current information. Lordan says the following:

> Yes, a Web page can be a cost-efficient communications tool when you consider the minimal media costs. But once it's up and running, you've got to keep it fresh, and that means a continual allocation of time and specialized resources. In the hyper speed model of communications, nothing is older than information that is both outdated and online. And to information consumers used to a steady diet of "barely off the press" information, your Web page will cease to be a source if it isn't kept current. If you're going to have a presence on the Internet, you have to budget for regular maintenance. Otherwise, you are putting a sign up that says "too cheap to be relevant" (Lordan, 1999, p. 15).

Fundraising (Online Giving)

Issues in fundraising in nonprofit organizations have been sited by many researchers. Donor-supported agencies must get the bulk of their funding from upper-and-middle income groups. The feeling of strong sense of responsibility to the cause must be built in the middle-income group to avoid dependence on the government for major support (Cutlip, 1994).

Recently, there has been a transition in venture philanthropy to e-philanthropy, which reflects the desire new donors have to exercise more control over their contributions and to become more involved with the beneficiary organizations. E-philanthropy entails giving online. Donating on a Web site allows nonprofits to offer an audience, which is already willing to donate offline, a new way to connect with their cause (Saxton and Game, 2002). According to a publication by Convio (2006), an Internet software company, nonprofits are just beginning to realize the advantages in e-philanthropy, such as cost-effectiveness, timeliness, fast results, insights into donor behavior and giving trends. However, many nonprofit organizations still do not have this feature because they cannot maintain privacy for their donors, according to Nelson and Hodgkinson (2001). E-philanthropy is expected to grow in the next decade to accommodate the habits of younger donors (Nonprofit World, 2005).

Those organizations with Web sites have an opportunity to make them “donor friendly.” With the advancement of technology, organizations can educate donors about their missions, programs and objectives through activities such as polls, quizzes and games. These functions give prospective and current supporters a fun way to gain information because results are immediate and offer instant gratification. Specifically, organizations can offer Web site visitors giving level options because not all donors want to give on the same level. They should also offer convenient transaction processing. Providing this service allows the organization to receive the funds immediately, without having to wait for a check in the mail. Last, organization should give ongoing feedback about how their donations helped the organization is always a plus (Convio, 2006).

However, with the emergence of thousands of Web sites daily, the credibility of Web sites has been in question. The sixth edition of the Middleberg/Ross Media 2000 in Cyberspace indicated that the majority of journalists surveyed thought Web sites lacked credibility, bur they would consider using a story idea or covering an issue if it was confirmed. Chat rooms and forums lacked credibility extremely (Middleberg, 2001). Chaffey, Mayer, Johnston and Chadwick (2000**),** sites credibility as a key element in an effective Web site, as it establishes a strong and high-quality brand identity and provides information that establishes who the organization is and that it's a trustworthy source.

Characteristics of Excellence in Web Sites

Usability

A site that is not technically competent will not be a success. The key element in a successful site is it must be easy to use (Palmer and Griffiths, 1998). Kang and Norton (2004) examined how NPOs present usability, usefulness of information and relational communication functions on their Web sites. According to researchers, Taylor, Kent and White (2003), there convenient usability when a user visits an NPO site can determine his/her impression and future return. The first place a visitor goes is the home page, which is the gateway to the site, or the page that has potential to either engage or drive away the visitor (Neilson, 2000). The Web site home page is seen as a key communication component, playing a pivotal role in either luring consumers or prospective supporters into a Web site or driving them away (Geissler, Zinkhan and Watson, 2001). When visiting a Web site, he/she has control over the information flow or what he/she wants to view (Ariely, 2000). Visitors who come to Web sites for informational purposes, or even for curiosity, should find sites easy to understand and efficient to use (Taylor, Kent and White, 2003). Kirk Hallahan (2001) says efficiency for many users can drop drastically when a site contains photographs and elaborate graphics.

Michael Ryan (2000) notes "the new technologies are useful only when they are applied in reasonable, productive ways—and with users in mind. Professionals cannot just establish a site and then forget it. Practitioners must continuously monitor their technical applications or their companies and organizations may find their publics think poorly of them, or have abandoned them (p.20)." Second, the site should be the platform to provide visitors with timely and adequate information. Practitioners note that either the lack of monetary support or time to devote to the Web site are problems within their organizations. The lack of technical support from the organization is a factor, also (Ryan, 2003).

Some features increase users' experiences, according to Saxton and Game (2002), including establishing reciprocal links to other Web sites, knowing the target audience and arranging hyperlinks with likely sites, registering with search engines. Organizations should register with the top search engines, such as Google, Yahoo, HotBot and InfoSeek, which account for 95 percent of Web sites' daily hits (Lordan, 1999).

Interactivity

Research by Wenden, Stephens and Hardy (2003) indicate that nonprofits need to develop greater entertainment value and interactivity in Web sites to change visitor attitudes and making them take action and support the organization. Interactivity represents the facility for individuals and organizations to communicate directly with one another regardless of distance or time (Berthon, Pitt, & Watson, 1996). Steuer (1992) defines interactivity as the extent to which users can participate in the message content in a computer-mediated environment. The definitions of interactivity also include the following three types: interaction between senders and receivers, between humans and machine and between messages and its users. Though scholars have different and multiple definitions of interactivity, the common characteristics reflect mutual relations interactions between the message provider and the recipient (Jo and Kim, 2003).

Newhagen and Rafaeli (1996) consider interactivity to be one of five characteristics of Web-based communication. The other four include multi-media, hyper-textuality, packet switching and synchronicity. In a Web site, the visitor can interact with the medium itself, which is called “machine interactivity” (Steuer, 1992). Interactivity calls for user action or invites them to think about their communication behavior, particularly the courses of action they could take or the choices to avail themselves of on screen.

There are five dimensions of interactivity: playfulness, choice, connectedness, information, collection and reciprocal communication. Playfulness is the extent to which users feel excitement or psychological gratification. Choice refers to the extent to which users can navigate and choose. Connectedness allows users to jump easily from one point to another. Information collection refers to the likelihood of data gathering by visitors. In addition, collection depends on the organizations’ willingness to provide information through their sites. Reciprocal communication enhances the dialogue and exchangeable vies between the message sender (the organization) and the message recipient (public). Kent and Taylor (2003) suggest that dialogic communication is one of the most important theoretical constructs. Dialogic communication is allowing users to ask questions, express concerns or opinions about services or products, if any. This process enables communicators to constantly refine and redevelop services to satisfy and attract publics (Ryan, 2003).

Researchers argue that interactivity is and if not, should be strategic in a Web site (Sundar, 2004). Harvey (1997) says in his expanded interactive media model that interactivity is one component of the persuasion process. O'Malley and Irani's (1998) study assessed the interactivity's effect on attitude change and behavior. Results indicated that higher amounts of information and interactivity would increase the intention of revisiting a Web site, therefore directly relating interactivity to relationship building. However, Jo and Kim found otherwise in their 2003 study on relationship-building and Web sites.

> From the perspective of relationship building, the results (of the study) suggest that displaying state of the art technology does not enhance favorable attitudes as the organizations might expect. Rather, publics perceive and evaluate the organization with more fundamental criteria such as reputation, community involvement, commitment and satisfactory experience. Although the new medium can enhance the relationship components positively, the findings suggest that simple reliance on the new medium does not guarantee good relationships between organizations and publics (p. 204).

Speaking of Web sites that specifically target youth, Lieberman (2001) says professionals who design educational campaigns for children and adolescents see great potential in interactive communication. She also says "interactive media teach via participation and by individualized responses to each user's input." (2001, p. 273) Kang and Norton (2004) indicated that of the Web sites sampled, most used simple design in their sites by providing minimal animation.

In a study by M. Ryan (2003), public relations practitioners noted two-way communications links as a factor in an effective Web site. The study indicated that the majority of the practitioners agreed that interactive links for submitting comments, suggestions or complaints. Eighty-four percent agreed that it's vital that Web sites have links to contact the public relations manager or department directly, to engage in interactive communication and help organizations gather their publics' interests and ideas. While practitioners seem to agree on this aspect of Website features, there is not much research on how well professionals are answering those contacts from Web site visitors, which exhibits poor public relations. If a message is not answered in a timely fashion, the final result may be a current or prospective supporter with a negative impression of the organization's interest in its publics.

There is a drawback to interactivity. Previous research suggests that interactive media is not always positive for the visitor because he/she is required to invest processing resources in managing the information flow. The need to manage the information received while making simultaneous decisions to control or respond to that information has raised several questions about the navigation process in interactive Web sites (Sicilia, Ruiz & Munuera, 2005). In a study by Sicilia, Ruiz and Munuera (2005), research showed that individuals exposed to interactive Web sites processed information more thoroughly than individuals exposed to a non-interactive Web site. While interactive Web sites enhance a consumer's freedom, control and fun, having the control over the site impacts his/her ability to remember, integrate and understand inputs to their judgments, thus increasing the effectiveness of the messages.

Research also indicated that for smaller expense compared to offline public relations activities, financially limited NPOs could easily reach out to various publics on the Web through online discussions. To support this view, Kang and Norton (2004) examined NPOs with low expense were more likely then those with high expense to use simplified main menus and legal disclaimer/privacy functions. Indications prove that the Web provides NPOs with smaller budgets new opportunities to thrive in cyberspace. In this view, the Web is a potential medium to equalize public relations performance among NPOs in various financial brackets (Kang & Norton, 2004).

Features to Promote Relationship Building

Building and maintaining relationships is a major concern for organizations, especially with the dominance of the World Wide Web and Web sites. Relationship building has become a major issue in public relations research. The purpose of public relations is to build favorable relationships with publics through two-way symmetrical communications (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

The desired outcomes of the public relations practice are public relationships (Ledingham, 2003). The growth of the World Wide Web has changed the way public relations is practiced. Organizations can now reach wide audiences efficiently through time and cost savings (White & Raman, 1999). The Web brings the organization members to a relational space together and can be a relevant channel NPOs to communicate their messages and erect public support for confronting issues. The relational perspective is said to define the organization function of public relations (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998) and clarify the role of communication within that function and provide a process for determining the contribution of public relations to the attainment of organizational goals (Ledingham, 2003). Public relations initiatives should generate understanding and benefit both for organizations and publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Grunig and Ehling (1991) suggest reciprocity, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction and mutual understanding as the key elements of the organization-public relationship. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) found that "organizational involvement in and support of the community in which it operates can engender loyalty toward an organization among key publics when that involvement and support is known by key publics." Organizations must follow through a process that includes but not limited to (1) focusing on the relationships with their key publics and (2) communicating involvement of those activities and programs that build the organization. To be effective in building and maintaining relationships, relationships need to be seen as mutually beneficial. The organization must understand what must be done in order to initiate, develop and maintain that relationship (Ledingham, 2003).

Including links to similar industries will increase hits and steer visitors back to your site. By providing links to local or national branches or press releases, the likelihood of visitors' should be determined. However, they are not utilizing the benefits of the Web to attract more visitors with statements inviting them to other NPO sites. (Kang & Norton, 2004).

An important function needed to build relationships is to provide information about the organization to the news media, clients, investors, customers and other users. Esrock and Leichty (1999) say most organizations do not use media releases on their

Web sites for reporters and other news media only. “Indeed, decisions about Web page structure seem to be made with a multiplicity of audiences in mind.” (p. 457)

Regarding e-philanthropy, organizations should communicate with its visitors and donors regularly via the Web site. E-newsletters, surveys and polls are features used to get vital information from and about visitors to promote positive relationships between the organization and the Web site visitor/supporter (Convio, 2006).

Theoretical Foundation

The researcher will base the study on James E. Grunig’s theory of public relations excellence. Public relations and communication management describe the overall planning, execution and evaluation of an organization’s communication with both internal and external publics, or groups that affect the ability of an organization to meet its goals (1992).

Public relations is a function separate from all other functions. Many organizations, nonprofit and for-profit, make public relations a support function for others, such as marketing, human resources, etc. Excellence in public relations departments is dependent upon various approaches to build relationships with publics, stakeholders, constituents, etc. An analysis by Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (1992) indicated that there are more differences in excellence communications in nonprofits, corporations and government, rather than in various nations and cultures.

The basic theory of public relations includes and addresses organizational effectiveness (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Effectiveness in public relations is defined as “an external standard of how well an organization or group is meeting the demands of various audiences or organizations that are concerned with activities (Pfeffer

& Salancik, 1978). Because excellence has such a broad meaning, many researchers had tried to measure effectiveness. Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1992) believe that “the value of public relations as a contributing factor to organizational effectiveness or even survival cannot be overstated.” (p. 70)

The public relations theory consists of laws or propositions are most familiar to practitioners. The laws suggest the following: (1) If an organization is credible, then their communication tactics will be more persuasive, (2) If an organization is socially responsible, they will experience less interference from the government and (3) If targeted publics are involved with the consequences of what an organization does, they will actively participate and be proactive.

According to Grunig (1992) public relations theory is based on communication programs that are two-way symmetrical, meaning they use research and communication to manage conflict and improve understanding with strategic publics. Dozier and Broom (1995) agree and go a step further suggesting that both two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical flow from the systems theory. Organizations with two-way symmetrical communication function as open systems. The public relations practitioner ensures that the environment or publics have information necessary for adaptation or change to take place. Excellent public relations departments at nonprofits use this approach, as opposed to the one-way communication model or press agentry public relations model, which are less effective and sophisticated. The two-way symmetrical model’s intent is to develop relationships between an organization and its publics, not merely to further an organization’s goals (Johnson, 1997). Communicators develop messages that persuade publics. The two-way symmetrical model is tool used for negotiation and compromise or a means to accomplish a win-win solution for conflicts between publics and organizations (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1992).

There is a specific excellence theory that can be applied to how nonprofits use Web sites to achieve organizational goals. The systems theory emphasizes the interface between organizations and their environment, as well as between subsystems within the organizational whole. The theory suggests one perspective from which to explore the notion of effectiveness in organizations. Organizations do not have simple goals, but instead must be evaluated on the bases of systems characteristics, such as growth, equilibrium or decline. Also called natural systems model or systems resource approach says that an organization is composed of interrelated subparts, the performance of any single subsystem will affect the entire system. Thus, the public relations department contributes to the success or failure of an organization. Management relies on communication professionals and practitioners to maintain positive relationships with external publics (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The researcher used qualitative research in the study. For the purposes of this study, qualitative research helped to gain a new perspective on non-profit public relations through Web sites. Strauss and Corbin (1998) claim that qualitative methods are appropriate in situations where one needs to first identify the variables that might later be tested quantitatively, or where the researcher has determined that quantitative measures cannot adequately describe or interpret a situation. It seeks to answer a question, systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the research question, collects evidence and produces findings that were not determined in advance. The key difference between qualitative and quantitative methods is the flexibility. The study design for quantitative research methods is stable and unchanging from beginning to the end while in qualitative research, the exclusion or wording of particular interview questions can are flexible and changeable (National Science Foundation, 2006).

Qualitative methods were used in this study to measure the following regarding public relations in NPOs: consensus and instrumental utility. According to Eisner (1991), consensus is the condition in which the readers of a work concur that the findings and/or interpretations reported by the investigator are consistent with their own experience or with the evidence presented. Instrumental utility is usefulness of the study. A good qualitative study can help readers understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing.

Patton identifies and describes 16 types of purposeful sampling. These include: extreme or deviant case sampling; typical case sampling, maximum variation sampling; snowball or chain sampling, confirming or disconfirming case sampling. The most useful strategy for the naturalistic approach is maximum variation sampling. The researcher will use Patton's purposive sampling, specifically, maximum variation. Patton says maximum variation sampling involves picking a wide range of variation on dimensions of interest, documents unique or diverse variations that have emerged in adapting to different conditions and identifies important common patterns that cut across variations.

Research methodology included in-depth interviews and Web site analysis. In-depth interview is a dialogue between an interviewer and an interviewee, with the goal of eliciting rich and detailed material that can used in an analysis (Lofland, 1995). According to Patton (1990), there are three types of interviews: 1) informal, conversational interviews; 2) semi-structured interviews; and 3) standardized, open-ended interviews. Interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions. In in-depth interviews, the interviewer hopes to encourage free and open responses and capture respondents' perceptions in their own words. This allows the evaluator to present the meaningfulness of the experience from the respondent's perspective (National Science Foundation, 2006). The interviewer becomes an attentive listener who shapes the interview process into a comfortable form of social engagement or a conversation, so quality information can be obtained. The amount of information obtained is also dependent on the interviewer's personality and skills (Patton, 1990).

The advantages of in-depth interviews are the following: permits face-to-face contact with respondents, allows interviewer to experience the affective and cognitive aspects of responses and allows interviewers to explain or help clarify questions to allow for better answers. The disadvantages of in-depth interviews are the following: can be expensive and/or time-consuming, interviewee feels the need to please the interviewer and flexibility can result in inconsistencies across the interviews. Perhaps the most common problem with qualitative research is large gap between the respondent's knowledge and that of the interviewer. Sometimes the respondent may not be completely familiar with the matter discussed during the interview. In most cases, it is best for senior staff to conduct such interviews (National Science Foundation, 2006).

There are three approaches in recording interview data. The first approach consists of the interviewer listening to tapes and writing a verbatim account of everything that was said (National Science Foundation, 2006). Tape recording ensured that the entire interview was captured and provided complete data for analysis. Listening to the recording can recognize cues that were missed the first time. By listening and the noting the intensity and feeling in the interviewee's voice it is possible to detect positivity and negativity, certainty and uncertainty and enthusiasm and reluctance. The second approach consists of taking notes, rather than recording the interview word for word. Lastly, the third approach requires no tape recording, but detailed note taking during the interview (National Science Foundation, 2006). The researcher's interviews were digitally recorded for a number of reasons. The interviewer was able to concentrate on listening and responding to the interviewee and was not distracted by writing down responses incorrectly. In notetaking there is an increases risk of interviewer bias because the interviewer is likely to make notes of the comments, which make immediate sense or are perceived as being directly relevant or particularly interesting. The interview also included a viewing of the Web site, as well as review of documents, such as downloadable information from the actual Web site or Web site reports from Web companies or designers. The researcher transcribed each interview verbatim to analyze data.

Validity and Context

All interviews were conducted in the interviewees' offices, thereby increasing the understanding of the environment in which they work. Computers were used to access the Web sites for a clear understanding of content and the interviewees' feedback.

Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) offer 13 specific tactics for the analysis of qualitative data**:** noting patterns/themes, clustering, making metaphors, counting, making contrasts/comparisons, partitioning variables, subsuming particulars, factoring, noting relationships between variables, finding intervening variables, building a logical chain of evidence and making conceptual/theoretical coherence. Miles says these tactics test and confirm meanings, avoiding bias and assure the quality of conclusions.

Because in-depth interviews were done, research was interpreted, summarized and integrated. Findings are supported by quotations and case descriptions.

Site Selection

The researcher conducted interviews with a non-probability sample of local/independent and national non-profit organizations that provide youth services in Memphis, Tennessee. The non-profit organizations interviewed were the following: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Memphis, Inc. (www.bbbsmem.org), Girls, Inc of Memphis (www.girlsincmemphis.org), Boys and Girls Club of Greater Memphis (www.bgcm.org) and Girl Scouts Council of the Mid-South (www.gsmid-south.org).

These organizations were selected because they provide youth services in the greater Memphis area.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Memphis, Inc.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Memphis (BBBS) is a nonprofit organization that matches children ages 7-14 from single parent homes with qualified adults who serve as mentors. Mentors or “Bigs” help children to develop character, life skills, self-esteem and self-confidence.

A part of the national organization, Big Brothers Big Sisters, BBBS of Memphis has been in existence for 37 years and promotes the following community programs: CORE, which targets children in single-parent homes specifically, to combat negative behavior before it starts. Adult Mentors Investing in Group Opportunities & Service (A.M.I.G.O.S.) is a special group-mentoring program designed to provide social, cultural and educational activities. Adults Lifting Hands for Positive Achievement (A.L.P.H.A.) is a national partnership with African American organization, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, in which African American men serve as mentors to young African American males on the BBBS waiting list. Campus Connection is a program in partnership with Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. Traditionally, student-athletes, today both athletes and non-athletes mentor children to stress the importance of education, in addition to life balance. The program has been in operation for seven years.

The Bigs 4 U program is a partnership with the Memphis Department of Children Services, with the goal of recruiting mentors for children ages 7-17 to provide a one-on-one friendship and guidance in areas where it is most needed. AMACHI is a national program that recruits volunteers and mentors to work with children of incarcerated parents.

There is also a school-based initiative, Volunteers in Service in Our Neighborhood (V.I.S.I.O.N.). Similar to the CORE program, V.I.S.I.O.N. is a site/school-based program that mentors children in Memphis City Schools during school time or in an after-school program. BBS of Memphis is a United Way Agency.

Girls Incorporated of Memphis

Girls Incorporated is a national non-profit youth organization dedicated to inspiring all girls to be strong, smart and bold. Girls, Inc. provides researched, outcome-based and age-progressive programs to million of girls, particularly those in high-risk areas. Girls Inc. of Memphis opened in 1947. The organization serves more than 6,200 girls in Memphis and Shelby County, Tennessee. Girls, Inc. Programs are offered to girls in six (6) core areas: careers and life-planning, health and sexuality, leadership and community action, sports and adventure, self-reliance and life skills and culture and heritage. Girls, Inc. receives more than half of its budget from government grants. Fifteen percent comes from the United Way of the Mid-South.

Boys and Girls Club of Greater Memphis

The Boys and Girls Club is a national organization with a mission to inspire and enable all young people, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens. The Boys and Girls Club of Memphis opened in 1962 to service youth ages 7-18 years old to make good life decisions through leader and character development, education and career development, health and life skills, the arts and sports, fitness and recreation programs. An agency of the United Way, the Chronicle of Philanthropy named the Boys and Girls Club number one youth service agency in steward of donor funds because of the continued efficiency use of financial resources.

Girl Scouts Council of the Mid-South

Girl Scouts, Incorporated is an international organization that cultivates values, social conscience and self-esteem in young girls, while teaching them critical life skills to later succeed as adults. Girl Scout Council of the Mid-South's membership is nearly 9,000 girls between the ages of 5-17 and 2,000 adult volunteers within the council's three-state, 10-county service area. Nearly 90 years old, Girl Scouts of the Mid-South maintain the following sites**:** the Girl Scout Service Center, Council Shop, Girl Scout Program/Training Center and four camp sites. Girls Scouts Council of the Mid-South operates a special program, Studio 2B. Studio 2B targets pre-teen and teenaged Girls Scouts to encourage empowerment, education and life-skills development. In 2004, their budget was over 3 million. Girls Scouts Council of the Mid-South is a United Way agency.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The data collected during the seven in-depth interviews shows that nonprofits are slowly, but surely using their Web sites to reach their organizational goals. Web site content and features vary in each organization.

Participants

Interviews were conducted with communication/public relations managers and executive directors/CEOs of three nonprofit organizations: Boys and Girls Club of Greater Memphis, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Memphis and Girls Scouts Council of the Mid-South. The interviewees are coded according to their positions, but the names of interviewees remain disclosed.

Only the executive director of Girls Incorporated of Memphis was interviewed, where there is currently a vacant public relations manager position. The executive director of Girls Incorporated of Memphis is a female, with a Masters degree in communications from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. She has been the director for three years. Her duties include overall operations management, program development and major fundraising.

The executive director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Memphis, Inc. is female, who has been in her position for three years. Her duties include fundraising, running organization operations and to launch new initiatives set forth by the national organization. She has some experience in Web site design and maintenance. The program director is a female with a Bachelor of Science in business. She has been in the position for eight years. Her duties include managing and promoting programs. She does not have experience in Web site design or maintenance.

The president/CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Memphis is a male with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Manchester College. In the position for 12 years, his duties include the running the operations of the organization, ensuring maximum effectiveness of the organization and serving as the chief spokesperson and primary fundraiser. He was interviewed via email, due to conflicting schedules with the researcher. Responses were followed up by a phone call.

The director of marketing is a female with an educational background in business and marketing. In the position for one and one half years, her duties include executing communication materials internally and externally and the company's Web site to successfully promote the organization and its mission throughout the community. In addition, she manages branding and awareness opportunities. She has Web design experience, including banner design and type formatting.

The executive director of the Girl Scout Council of the Mid-South is a female with bachelor's degree in economics. As director for seven years, her duties include the overall management of the organization. She does not have any experience in Web site design or maintenance. The communications director is a female with a Masters of Mass Communication. In the position for five years, her duties include media relations, Web site maintenance and communications trainings. She has minimal experience in Web site design and maintenance, but she does oversee site development.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Memphis, Inc.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Memphis, Inc. is a United Way agency, whose policies are mandated by the national Big Brothers Big Sisters organization, according to the program director. Its mission is to provide role models for children and to match them with Bigs, or mentors, to help them develop emotionally and fulfill their full potential, according to the executive director.

For resources and funding support, the program director said the organization "really focuses on any and everyone who desires to help children. Many of our children don't get matched with a mentor, because of lack of volunteers to choose from." She also stated that they rely on small and major businesses in the community for volunteer support, as well as funding. The executive director suggested that the organization depends solely on volunteers to help the run even the basic operations:

> Our needs are multiple. We need volunteers because we're a volunteer organization. Without our volunteers, we could not provide services to our youth. There are also financial needs because we have to provide support to staff members who do evaluations (for mentor matches).

Regarding public relations efforts, both respondents said the national organization supplies them with resources, including "promotional materials videos, training materials and tracking systems."

Web Site Objectives

The Big Brothers Big Sisters of Memphis Web site has been up and running for one year. The program director stated that the primary objective of the Web site is to publicize the organization's mission and build a strong identity by differentiating itself from other local nonprofits that provide similar services.

> We need to get our mission out to the public. I think a lot of people, even though they've heard of us, don't know about us. We're confused with other nonprofits. We want to educate the public and educate Memphis about what we do and what programs we have. They all provide a much-needed service, but we provide a special service.

The executive director said the objective is to attract future volunteers and donors by "telling the community what are basic needs are. A lot of people want to know 'do you need people, do you need money or do you need time?' We need all of those."

The Web site specifically targets volunteers, according to the program director because "they make our business and help us do things that we can't pay people to do." The site also targets professionals, businesses and students or generally "people who have access to the Web site." The organization solicits volunteers and mentors through the Web site. Though the site currently does not have a downloadable application or online application process, there is an email address for volunteer inquiries. The program director said there are plans to include an application on the Web site in the near future. The executive director, who is the anonymous contact for the inquiries, said there has been an increase in volunteers since they included the email address. She noted, "The inquiry email is where we get the biggest bank. Each morning I have the duty of checking the emails and getting them to the proper person."

Web Site Features

The Big Brothers Big Sisters of Memphis Web site was launched a year ago. The old Web site was donated and maintained on an in-kind basis. The Website had not been updated in two years after the organization lost contact with the Web master. "If we didn't change it, we would lose contact with the people who were looking for a way to help," the program director said. The current Web site's design is outsourced to a private Web site designer. One interviewee says the Web site was not updated frequently enough due to lack of staff specialized in Web site maintenance. However, recently, a staff member was hired to maintain the Web site to "interface and communicate with the Web master almost daily."

Currently, the Web site includes some features such as a special events page and frequently asked questions (FAQs). The program director says there are plans to add a special events calendar specifically for mentors and children to use "rather than picking up the phone (to call). That will save us a lot of manpower and things won't fall between the cracks." The Web site also includes a page with a board of directors list and each member's place of employment. The executive director said this is a vital part of the Web site.

> It's an added value because board members are key volunteers and ambassadors for the agency. They get little back for the time they invest. By putting them out there, they get the exposure and it also gives the agency that feeling of connectedness and shows the depth of the agency.

In addition, the Web site features frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the organization and its programs. The site also includes downloadable information, such as volunteer and special event information sheets. However, both interviewees expressed concerns about including downloadable documents on the Web site. In the past, there had been issues in tampering with and "manipulating information in the document for [mentor] trainings." The program director considered continuing to include downloadable documents as "still in the air."

In addition to those documents, the Web site includes the quarterly newsletter, *Big Shots*. Both interviewees stated that the organization will only distribute the newsletter electronically, through the Web site or email, with the purpose of lowering production costs and distribution of timely news.

The program director says the information on each mentor program and providing staff email addresses are effectively fulfilling organizational goals. Each program caters to specific children and populations. Web site visitors are able to proactively support the organization by sending emails to inquire about volunteering or giving resources, money or time. The executive director cites the flash opening with music as the most effective feature. "The opening is compelling. It helps to set the framework for the information and makes you want to go in and view it [the Website]." Because the staff was not aware that they could access Web site reports to track activity, there are no figures to indicate which feature or page is used the most by visitors.

The executive director said there are plans to include more features in the Web site, such as client testimonials, online pressrooms and links to sponsors and other supporting organizations. Regarding online pressrooms, the program director said their team has been "visiting different Web sites to see what's out there. It would be nice if they (Web site visitors) could click on those links and see those news stories on our organization."

Client testimonials would encourage more participation in the organization, according to both interviewees. But each had a different view of the need. The executive director said the following:

> Testimonials are very important, especially in the Memphis community. The successes we've had have been by word of mouth. When they hear it (our story) from an actual person, it gives you great creditability.

The program director suggests that testimonials will prove and reinforce the organization's success since the organization does not have a facility to house the mentoring program where others can see progress:

> Testimonials would encourage and help a person who's searching to give their time. We don't have a center and we can't bring everyone [mentors and children] together. Someone may see a match out [in public] and not know it. Testimonials would help.

The executive director said they have plans to link to partner organizations' Websites, specifically during the promotion of their annual fundraiser. Linking to sponsoring companies' Web sites is a featured incentive for sponsorship. The staff currently sends surveys by mail to mentors and children to get feedback on programs, trainings and events, and the executive director hopes to include them on the Web site, saying, "I'd love to do that. I don't know if we would do it on the Web site, but an extranet (to find out) 'what kind of job are we doing? How responsive are we?'" She also said visitors would log on to the extranet, or "another Web page that provides accessibility to outsiders to exchange additional information between the business and its partners," as defined by Webopedia.com (2006). The program director expressed concerns about online surveys because there are "many parents or individuals who don't have access to a computer." There is a safety issue with a similar feature, the online forum. One interviewee said, "We ruled it out. There's no way we could monitor the forum for the safety of the children."

Vitality of the Web Site

Though the site lacks some features common in other nonprofit Web sites, it is still an integral part of the organization. The program director said regarding its vitality to the organization:

> Our Web site is very important to our organization. We're a small staff and we do great things with the number of staff we have, but we can't be everywhere at all times. We're finally realizing that the Internet is a powerful tool and it allows us to be everywhere at al times. The agency can get better once we make our improvements to help get the message out.

To promote the Web site, the organization includes the Web site address on public relations pieces, such as the organization brochure and employee business cards.

Fundraising and Online Giving

The Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Memphis, Inc. Web allows prospective donors to download a donor form, complete with options for giving monetary donations: where to mail cash and/or checks, who to make donations payable to, etc. The organization is in the process of adding online giving for specific reasons. The program director suggests the following:

> I really think it (fundraising) would improve. We've never has a credit card machine. We're kind of stuck when someone wants to donate [on the spot] because we don't have the access. Being able to have online giving, you don't need a credit card machine. We can just direct them to the site.

The Web site does not allow visitors to view the annual report online, but access to the report is a good idea to inform future supporters, according to the program director:

> That's a great idea. That's [annual report] a piece we use whenever we go out to recruit. When you can't go into a center to see what we're doing or hear our story, the annual report is great. We can take it out and make that connection. Putting it on our Web site is wonderful and would help us reach more people.

The executive director suggests that the annual report be printed, rather than be available online only. Additionally, the Web site does not allow visitors to donate funds or items online.

Challenges in Web Site Management

The organization faces challenges in developing an innovative Web site to fulfill organizational goals. Both interviewees agreed that developing an online giving system is the organization's biggest challenge. The executive director said online giving is "just difficult," because of issues of credit card transactions. The program director cited additional challenges:

> The challenge we face is having a person go online and get this information, and then have to wait to give a donation. I'd love to have people go online, make a decision (to give) and do it. Then regarding our programs, you've got the information, but now what? What are they (our organization) doing? Not having the newsletter on the Web site is a challenge. It gives them [visitors] a chance to see the other side of the agency.

The executive director cites a corporate Internet campaign linking them to their supporters as a feature that would be successful if implemented on the Web site to strengthen their identity. She said the discussed features will be "added to the Web site definitely."

Boys and Girls Club of Greater Memphis

The Boys and Girls Club of Greater Memphis (BGCM) is part of a four-star national organization. The Memphis office, opened in 1962, is a United Way agency that serves disadvantaged children ages 7-17. The organization's mission is to inspire and enable children to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens. According to the president, the organizational goals are the following: to have a dedicated and qualified staff, a committed board of directors, identify and solicit new and diverse fund sources, enhance the public image and provide diverse and effective quality programs. BGCM supports and targets at-risk children and seeks support from individuals, corporations, other nonprofit agencies and community school systems.

The national office supplies the public relations manager with public relations resources on the Intranet, or internal Web site. The PR manager says the following:

> Our national organization is really great about providing communication information for us. Just about everything we need is at our fingertips. We get weekly headlines that include special events, key contacts, conferences, seminars and trainings to keep us abreast on new things. They also provide us with a lot of graphics, pre-designed

> brochures, posters and explanations on how they're actually marketing and how we can tag on locally. They also sell logo items, such as t-shirts, key rings and rulers.

Web Site Objectives

The objective of the WebWeb site is to "provide information to those who want to impact the lives of kids," as stated by the president. The Web site targets "everyone who believes in our mission and wants to make a difference in children's lives. Everyone is a target to us." Specifically, target groups include prospective volunteers, donors, businesses and foundations, according to the marketing manager. The organization uses the Web site to recruit volunteers. There is a How Can I Help page, which includes a volunteer interest form to download and information about volunteer areas, times and staff contacts. The marketing director said the Web site plays a major role in the recruitment of volunteers, attributing the look of the Web site to attracting volunteers. "Presentation is everything. If the Web site is presentable and I have the proper information, I'm going to make a phone call to do whatever I need to do [to help the organization]. The president disagrees slightly, saying he is not sure there has been a significant growth in volunteer participation, but there has been some growth.

Web Site Features

The Boys and Girls Club of Greater Memphis has been up and running for five years. The design and maintenance is outsourced to a private Web site company. The company provides the organization with 90 percent of the Web site for free. The marketing director updates the Web site weekly by typing need changes in a Microsoft Word document and emailing it to the Web master. The Web site was reconstructed within the last three to four years to attract more visitors. Due to lack of space on the Web site, the organization has to be careful of what is posted. The marketing director says the organization's programs, history and facts are permanently on the WebWeb site. Currently, the Web site includes special events and banners, which are posted during their "peak season, or times of the year when the events take place. In addition, quick facts, which include statistics on programs, funding, hours of operation and famous Boys and Girls Club "alumni" are also on the site.

There is also a Corporate Sponsors page with corporation logos and links to their Web sites. The marketing director calls linking to partners a "no-brainer" because it is "beneficial to [both parties] to be able to give those donors that recognition." The organization's board of directors officers are also recognized on the Web site. Rather than client testimonials, there are Did You Know? Facts on Boys and Girls Club members, such as this:

> April Sutherland placed 2nd in the Boys and Girls Clubs Youth of the Year Conference in Tennessee for the 2nd year in a row. She is Vice President of her senior class and maintains a 4.0 GPA. (April 2006)

The most effective feature(s) on the Web site, according to the marketing director are the homepage, which displays upcoming events and request links (i.e. How to Help, What We Do). The Who Are link is also effective because it "describes why we exist and the differences being made in kids' lives within our community." A June 2005 Web site report from Spotlight Productions, reported that the photo album is the most viewed page on the Web site, getting 620 views.

There are certain features that the Web site does not have, however. The marketing director said the organization would like to include videos of BGCM activities, but there is limited space on the Web site. In addition, there is discussion of an online pressroom that has direct links to online newspapers and news stations, but currently a pressroom is not on the Web site. The director added that online surveys would be beneficial to the staff for marketing purposes. “When we’re brainstorming, we’d have something online to refer to, then we’d know what the community wants.”

Vitality of the Web Site

Both interviewees said that the organization’s Web site is important, but each had different reasons. The president said the rise in technology is a factor, suggesting the need for a Web site is becoming very important. “Web sites to any business, including nonprofits is a way to market yourself to a public that is [mostly] computer literate. The future is through technology.”

The marketing director suggested that the Web site is a reflection of the organization:

> I think it has a huge impact on the organization. If a Web site is not a huge priority, it turns me away. Your Web represents your company. That’s their first impression, so you have to make it a good one. You need a great staff and you need a great Web site. That’s a part of what you are. It shows that you take pride in giving information to the community.

The organization promotes the Web site on all marketing materials and through online payment for special events.

Fundraising and Online Giving

Both interviewees said that the Web site is used for fundraising or development purposes. The president calls online fundraising “a way to capture the techies, which in my mind, will continue to grow.” In 2005, the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Memphis added online giving feature to their Web site. Visitors may make monetary donations or purchase tickets to special events by credit card or e-check on PayPal, an online payment system.

The marketing director said the feature was added to “draw individuals to the site and to make giving to our organization as convenient as possible.” She also indicated that online giving "has played a huge role in having people donate to the organization." Donations are tracked by the Web site report supplied by the company that designs and maintains the Web site. Though site gets 11,000 hits a month, a monthly Web site report indicated that the How Can I Help page received only 16 views. In addition to online giving, the Web site includes the annual report. The marketing director says the annual report affects foundations' and large corporations' giving. They review the annual report to "see where our dollars are going and what we were doing in the last year."

Challenges in Web Site Management

Both interviewees stated that the biggest challenge in maintaining an effective Web site to reach organizational goals is the constant updating. The marketing director stated that "not being able to do things in-house (is a challenge). We need things instantaneously." The director also said limited space on the Web site is a challenge when there's a need for more features. Each interviewee indicated features that should be added to the Web site to attract visitors. The marketing director would like to see personal testimonials of Club members and volunteers and videos, while the president would like to try an online auction to raise additional dollars.

Girls Inc. of Memphis

Girls Inc. of Memphis is part of the national organization, Girls Inc. of America. An agency of the United Way of the Mid-South, the organization's mission is to inspire girls to grow strong, smart and bold. The organization "advocates girls standing on their own, sharing their feelings on what they think about themselves," according to the executive director. The organization targets young girls and their parents. For funding, they target individuals, foundations, corporations and federal and state government.

The national headquarters supplies local offices with public relations resources, such as op editorials, letterhead and logos through their intranet.

Web Site Objectives

The Girls Inc of Memphis Web site's objective is to "educate, provide resources to parents, give information that is relative to the general organization and acquaint (people) with different programs," the executive director stated. She also said the Web site's purpose is to be a virtual learning center and allow girls to participate in programs. In addition to targeting girls, the organization recruits volunteers. The Volunteer page has an application that visitors can submit online.

Web Site Features

The Girls Inc. of Memphis Web site is designed and maintained by a private company. The site is currently updated by the executive director as needed. It has many features, such as frequently asked questions (FAQs), a special events page and message boards to attract and attain both members and non-members. Currently, the special events page is not updated. Message boards were just added to the Web site. Only visitors who have a login username and password approved by the Web site administrator may read and post messages. There are links to corporate sponsors, as well other girl advocacy groups to provide additional information for girls and their parents. The quarterly newsletter, *Her Voice*, is available online for download and print. The executive director says having the newsletter online is vital because "it tells the story. It allows the girls and everyone (who's interested) to get information about the organization." The Web site also has a page with a list of the board of directors. The Web site's most effective feature, according to the director, is the Programs page, in which each program is described in detail to encourage participation and volunteerism.

The Web site does not include any kind of training or informational video due to cost, but the director indicated that the Web site will eventually feature a one. She also spoke of client and constituent testimonials in the near future, saying “that is one of your best PR tools—to hear from people who have had the experience and learned from the organization.”

Vitality of the Web Site

The director believes the Web site is extremely vital to the organization, hence the recent reconstruction to include more features. The site is in the first of three reconstruction phases. Web site promotion tactics include using the Web site address on all printed materials and publications.

Fundraising and Online Giving

Girls Inc of Memphis uses its Web site to increase fundraising, through online giving, which was recently added. Prospective donors may submit funds by credit card through a private payment system to purchase tickets to events, donate to the annual giving campaign or the quarterly newsletter. The executive director said the process of erecting online giving on the Web site “wasn’t as simple as we thought it would be.”

The annual report is not included on the Web site because it not yet available. The executive director receives a Web site report to track visitor traffic, but an assessment of donations is not yet available because the online payment system is new.

Challenges in Web Site Management

The executive director cited the biggest challenge in attracting visitors to the Web site to fulfill organizational goals as the maintenance, saying getting all of the information compiled for posting on the site is difficult. To enhance the Web site, the director would like to see more features, but she says cost is a factor, "There are some things that we will add to the site, but cost is factor. You have a dream of putting everything on the site to reach all people, [but] there's a cost to it."

Girl Scouts Council of the Mid-South

The Girl Scouts Council of the Mid-South is a local branch of a national organization, Girl Scouts of the USA, which helps girls realize their full potential through leadership, outdoor activities, etc. The organization has a revised mission, which states the following: "Girl Scouts builds girls of courage, character and confidence who make the world a better place." The executive director stated that the organizational goals consist of image building, fundraising, serving clients and increasing volunteers. "The system's program is designed by the national organization and we are responsible for seeing that it get administered or delivered effectively, that we have the resources to do it and build the image of the organization so that all of that can happen."

The organization supports the adult membership, scout leaders and girls who want to become a part of the organization, as well as volunteers. For funding and other resources, GS relies on the United Way, corporations, foundations, individuals, or "whoever is interested in what we are." Local schools and churches also support the organization. Because it is a part of the national organization, the national office supplies the communications director with public relations resources, though they may not be used often. “I personally pull things from (sample materials) because you have to personalize it and put a local spin on it. It’s basically for guidance.”

Web Site Objectives

According to the communications director, the Web site is “very much a general information piece right now.” The Web site is a supplement for the tri-annual newsletter, *LeaderLine,* distributed to Girl Scouts and scout leaders. The information on the Web site is “strictly what’s in the newsletter,” or general information. Even though the Web site contains all information included in the newsletter, the director said the organization will not eliminate print in any way because of the large number of members who do not have computer access. The executive director noted that the organization is making progress in using the Web site as a major communication tool to keep the public and those associated with Girl Scouts informed.

> At the present time, we’re really focused on making communication more effective between ourselves and our volunteers. We’re using it a little bit more as a source of information for the public, for volunteers and the community at large. Kids can use it [the Web site] to look things up, what’s going on [events] and where.

The organization also uses the Web site to recruit volunteers. There is a Volunteer page that includes detailed information on volunteer opportunities, as well as a brochure to download. Interested persons may volunteer to work directly with Scouts, assist adult scout leaders, “conduct telephone reference checks on potential Girl Scout volunteers, ensuring that the best possible people are mentoring girls in your community,” be an ambassador or perform clerical duties in the main office. Information is also included on the volunteer recognition program. Volunteers may be nominated for awards at regional meetings, receive certificates, appreciation pins and thanks badges.

The communications manager said there has been an increase in volunteers, but the organization "cannot directly relate it to the Web site because of other [recruitment] initiatives." The executive director agreed saying that the organization uses the Web site as a tool to close the deal during recruitment:

> I don't think we have enough data to really substantiate anything because we don't data from before. I may do a face-to-face recruitment, but I don't have the tools with me. I might refer someone to the site. It's not just the Web site that makes that possible. It's that direct confrontation [meeting], but it makes the delivery easier. Instead of mailing and filling it [application] out, you can download it.

Web Site Features

The Girl Scouts of Mid-South Web site has been up for more than two years. Designed by a local Web site design company, WebTrends, the Web site content is updated as needed by the Girl Scouts of the Mid-South front desk clerk.] This sentence is unclear. The communications director said, "It could be that nothing [on the Web site] gets touched [updated] in a month." She attributes this to the lack of time and skilled staff. The Web site's features include constituent/client testimonials, an upcoming events calendar, frequently asked questions (FAQs), list of the board of directors and an online newsletter. Each page on the Web site features a testimonial from adult volunteers, scout leaders and Girl Scouts. The communications director said the testimonials are very vital in pulling in support, "If we didn't think it was important, we wouldn't have done it [including testimonials on Web site]. We have to do that in a lot our PR [efforts], not just on the Web site. It's something that we're not doing enough of." A testimonial reads as follows:

> Both of my daughters have a great time and they enjoy everything they do in their troops. Girl Scouts helps their self-esteem. The 'I can do it' attitude is great for girls to learn at an early age.
> Jennifer Moore, Collierville

The upcoming events calendar, which includes meetings, scout troop events and trainings is "really popular because of the cancellations," and allows members to get "up-to-the-minute" information, according to the communications director.

The frequently asked questions page focuses on the Girls Scouts Cookie Sale, the organization's most popular fundraising initiative, rather than the organization itself. In addition to the FAQs, there is a link to the extranet for the Girl Scout Cookie Sale (*www.littlebrowniebakers.com).* The extranet includes selling and safety tips and success stories for girls, families, volunteers and scout leaders. Also, there is a page dedicated to Studio 2B, a national program that targets teen Girl Scouts. There is discussion of providing an extranet page specifically for the program. For now, there is a link to the national Web site's extranet page. The tri-annual newsletter is available on the Web site, as well. Visitors may download and print the publication.

There are other features that the Web site does not include. There is no online pressroom with news stories or press releases, though "there's a place to house" one, according to the communications director. She emails most of the press releases to media contacts. She also noted that the Web site should be "more public friendly for non-Girl Scouts and that's one of the things [online pressroom] that needs to be on there." The executive director expressed other issues regarding online pressrooms, "We haven't gotten that far yet. The dilemma we face is, 'if you don't keep it [online pressroom] up, then what kind of message are we sending [to the public]? There's a dilemma if we can't manage or maintain it [online pressroom]."

Regarding videos, there are none on the Web site due to limited skilled staff members. The communication director said, "There's no immediate need for them [videos]. We don’t have the technology in house to edit them. At this point, that is at the bottom of the list.” The executive director prefers that high technology features of the sort be used on their national Web site, rather than on local branches’ sites.

> I currently think the way we’re structured; we’re responsible for developing the programs and resources and being experts on our targeted age groups. It’s best not to compete and reinvent what has always been done, but to direct the traffic to one source where it can really be top notch.

Online surveys and polls are also available on the national Web site, rather than on the local site.

There is a safety issue for the Girl Scouts regarding online forum and chat rooms. Though there has been discussion to include them, forums and chat rooms must be monitored and the organization does not have the manpower to do so. The organization is discussing providing links to sponsoring corporations and other partners, but the communication director expressed concerns about the identity and creditability of those organizations. “As we are partnering with more and more organizations and they’re wanting to partner with us, who do we give our name to? If they have us on their sites, it is a reflection of who are.”

Vitality of the Web Site

Both interviewees said that the Web site is one of the most vital parts of the organization. The communication director said the Web site is representative of the organization. “Sometimes companies have trouble understanding that the Web site is a publication…so if we’re saying something in our public relations efforts, we need to do it here [on Web site].” The executive director cited technology as a contributing factor in the need for a Web site, saying that it is the “most important system or mechanism that we have because it’s one place to find our information. It’s there, accessible, on demand.

That what makes it so critical.” The communication director agreed saying, “We cannot get to our members fast enough with spur of the moment things. This helps with the communication issue.”

The organization promotes the Web site by printing the Web site address on all publications, business cards and letterhead. In addition, it’s included on all press releases and sometimes in on-air interviews.

Fundraising and Online Giving

The organization uses the Web site for fundraising purposes, according to the interviewees. The Web site has a page that gives information on how to donate, but there is no online giving system in place. Instead, there is detailed information on planned giving, in-kind donations and the Girl Power Multi Year Giving program. The annual report is also available for download and print on the Web site. The executive director notes:

> The annual report is our annual effort to put it [information] together in a nice package, so it makes sense that it’s there. The financial pages, the donors, the board members—our story in a succinct package. It’s really a showcase, so it’s good that it’s available on the Web site.

The communication director cites inconsistency in the development plan implementation as a reason for no online giving on the Web site. The organization realizes the need for online giving, however, saying:

> We are very much aware that if donors are looking for information to fun you, they are going to your Web site. When we look for who we should ask for money, we go to their Web site. We are very conscious that it [online giving page] needs to be there.

The executive director said online giving will be included on the Web site in the future.

> I think there’s a realization that our volunteers and our donors and the public cross multiple generations. [There is] a recognition of our target orientation is changing in

> how they get information and do business and carry out their philanthropy, even. It has become the norm, so we have to be in the norm in the way we do business, too.

Web site visitors may view Girl Scout paraphernalia for sale in the Girl Scout Council Shop, located in the main office. There is also a link to the national Web site to purchase items. The page informs visitors of the merchandise catalog that will be available by mail, but there is currently no ability to order online.

Challenges in Web Site Management

According to the executive director, effective Web site organization is a challenge in providing an excellent Web site. She stated, “Organizing the site so people can find what they’re looking for when it’s such a diverse site is a challenge. It [the Web site] must be easy to navigate for the various users who are going to use it, so they don’t get bogged down and frustrated…how can we make sure we maximize the technology so it’s convenient to our various publics as we continue to grow?” The communication director said time is the major factor in Web site development and maintenance:

> Time is the biggest challenge. When I have to write the content [to be posted to the Web site] and get it ready, and I have five other things to do. If you look at large companies, they have one who does the Web site and that’s all they do. They don’t do all the other communications. Who’s got the time to do it? At times, it [updating and maintenance] gets put on the backburner.

The Web site’s most effective feature is the calendar, according to the Web site report provided by the Web site design company, WebTrends. On average, the page gets 5.86 percent of the Web site’s total views a month. There are still features that the organization would like the Web site to include, such as online giving for event ticket purchases, campsite rental and general donations. The communications director cites better communication with non-members as the top priority of the Web site:

> The most important thing we need to do is complete and add pages that talk to the general public and donors. We do a good job of putting out information that our

> members need, but not for people who don't know much about [the organization] and the Web site needs to support that.

In addition, she said, "There is no discussion of leaving this [the Web site] alone. It would really be great to have something for the people who want to know more about Girl Scouts." The executive director had different thoughts, however. She suggested that corporate body changes will affect Web site development:

> We're getting ready to have an organizational transfer. All of the messages will change and there will be a need to educate our internal public and our external public. There will be a fair amount of communication (on the Web site) that both publics need, but in our case, those publics will be the same.

Because the interviewees' responses indicated that their Web sites were very basic in their public relations efforts, this study has helped to present new ideas in Web site development to public relations practitioners and executives. It is the researcher's hope that each participating organization implements features discussed during interviews to enhance its Web site.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the interviewees' responses given, the following conclusions are drawn regarding the research questions:

How Do Nonprofit Organizations Use Web sites to Reach Organizational Goals?

Each organization stated that they wish to (1) provide quality services to children (target audience), (2) increase funding or (3) increase supporters. Every organization included in the study has a Web site with that includes some features included in the review of literature. The study's findings indicate that organizations provide pertinent information to visitors, such as its missions, programs, special events and contact information, through its Web sites, but it stops there. More in-depth information should be given, such as links to supporting organizations or online pressrooms for media contacts to allow visitors to see a benefit in supporting the organization. Each organization recruits volunteers through either providing a contact for volunteer opportunities or a downloadable application; however, none of them currently monitor their volunteer base to track an increase or decrease. Girl Scouts Council of the Mid-South gives information on incentives for volunteers, thus supporting Leddingham's (2003) idea that relationships must be mutually beneficial to be effective.

Respondents expressed their hopes to further develop their organization's Web sites by adding features that involve the visitor and improve usability, as indicated by a representative from the Girl Scouts Council of the Mid-South. Her response coincides with findings by Palmer and Griffiths (1998), as well as Kang and Norton (2004). These researchers cite usability as a key element in excellent Web sites. An interviewee stated, "Everyone has a dot com [Web site]." The findings suggest that nonprofits are beginning to realize the importance of the Internet and Web sites, as their publics range in age and understanding of the technology revolution. Today's society is driven by technology and they need to cater to those who rely heavily on it.

When using technology to fulfill organizational goals, these nonprofits should be mindful of the following questions, as indicated by Lordan (1999): Do they have access to the distribution systems you are considering? Do they have skills and knowledge to use these systems? Do they navigate the Web? Findings support Lordan (1999), as responses indicate that some organizations are neglecting some key target audiences by only providing information to members or those who currently benefit from services. There may be individuals or groups who are not members, but could be assets to the organization.

Do Web Sites Significantly Affect Fundraising/Development at Nonprofit Organizations?

Based on respondents' interviews, Web sites are not significantly affecting fundraising for two reasons: (1) There are few nonprofits that have an online giving system in operation on their Web sites and (2) Those nonprofits that do have online giving do not or are not successful in tracking how many dollars are being donated through the system. The interviewees' responses support findings by Rouner and Camden (1988) that suggest that nonprofit organizations are not as technology-inclined as they should be, particularly in practicing two-way communication. Only two organizations, Girls Inc. of Memphis and the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Memphis, have online giving in place on their Web sites, and those have been up for less than a year. While the remaining organizations do not have online giving on their Web sites, they are currently researching companies and systems to find one will suit the organization, as well as the Web site's capabilities.

What Web Site Maintenance Tactics or Web Site Features Do Respondents Perceive to Be the Most Effective in Achieving Organizational Goals?

Effective features in nonprofit Web sites varied, based on interviewees' responses. An interviewee from the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Memphis and an interviewee from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Memphis cited the pages that give information on the services and programs that the organization provides as most effective.

Contributing Factors in Under-Developed Web Sites

Though each interviewee had different responses to the research questions, specific factors that affect the development of their Web sites for public relations efforts were consistent. They are as follows:

Money

The majority of interviewees expressed the lack of money to design, run and maintain successful Web sites as major issues. Those features that foster relationship-building among organizations and their publics, such as interactive videos, links and forums are high in cost, therefore, making it a challenge for nonprofits to incorporate them into their Web sites. Some organizations receive their Web sites and hosting capabilities pro bono or at a discount, to save monies to run programs.

Limited Staff and Time

Another factor that may contribute to nonprofits lacking in Web site savvy is the small number of staff members, specifically those who specialize in Web site design and maintenance. Out of the four organizations included in the study, only one organization, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Memphis, employs a person whose only job duty is to manage the Web site. Those persons who manage the Web sites at the remaining organizations all have additional duties, such as directing and implementing programs, acting as a liaison to media or increasing new fund sources in the organization. These findings support Dyer and Harrison's (2002) study that indicate that nonprofit organizations have a "sole practitioner who assumes the responsibility of volunteer management, fundraising, event management (p.13)" and other duties. As a result, the practitioner's time is divided, rather than strictly dedicated to Web site management to increase excellence.

Consequently, Web sites may not be updated as often as the organization would like to provide timely information or go without major reconstruction for years at a time to reflect trend or technology changes. As one interviewee stated, Web site maintenance "may get put on the back burner." Another interviewee stated, not putting in the time needed to maintain a Web site will, in turn, create a negative image for that organization, which may overshadow that fact that they even have a Web site. These findings agree with Kang and Norton's (2004) findings that nonprofit organizations have difficulty in reaching potential publics because of limited financial means and smaller staffs.

Maintaining Personal Relationships

Some of the interviewees stated that their Web sites would never become the number one source for information or the primary mechanism to achieve organizational goals. They expressed the need for one-on-one contact and interaction to tell their organizations' stories. This, too, is a factor in using Web sites to their full potential to draw supporters. The Web site is used as a secondary communication tool, following personal contact with others, as specifically noted by an interviewee from the Girl Scouts Council of the Mid-South. These findings are in agreement with Jo and Kim (2003), which state that state of the art technology does not always increase supporters, rather the organization's visibility and involvement in the community.

Does the Study Support Theoretical Foundation?

Based on Grunig and Grunig's (1992) Excellence Theory, the interviewed nonprofits are not fully practicing excellence in its Web sites. The theory suggests that organizations' public relations tactics help develop relationships between them and its publics. Relationships can be cultivated and maintained in Web sites by including features, such as online pressrooms, videos of those benefit from services or client/constituent testimonials. Because the system theory, a subpart of the excellence theory, notes that all public relations tactics in nonprofit organizations are interrelated, organizations are missing opportunities to attract more supporters with its Web sites. In turn, they are missing opportunities in other public relations areas, such as attendance at special events, media coverage or valuable volunteers. Though findings indicate concrete factors in mediocre Web site development and management, there are resources available to organizations to enhance its Web sites.

Recommendations for Web Site Development and Management

The researcher has included recommendations to nonprofit organizations for Web site development, revamp and maintenance and management. In an interview with the vice-president of SPEAK! Creative, a Web site design company that specializes in nonprofit Web sites, suggested that the best solution to an under-developed WebWeb site is finding a qualified content management company. When organizations have individuals who donate a Web site or maintenance, the respondent said the partnership can produce negative results for the following reasons:

> The first [reason] is that you can't compel a volunteer to do anything. You are at his/her mercy and if they decide to take six months to design the Web site or the design isn't good, then there's not much you can do. The other problem is that nonprofits [staff members] aren't Web/server/computer experts, so managing a Web site via conventional means typically results in stale content and out of date pages.

He also said that the cost of a quality Web site is worth the return of better business, "Using the professional service may seem expensive at first, but when compared to the cost of a poor Web site, or the required manpower to host and manage a Web site in-house, it's worth the money.

The respondent also said the most effective feature for a nonprofit Web site is the eNewsletter. The newsletter is sent to supporters and others who are interested in the organization by email. Set up similar to a newspaper front page, it allows stakeholders to browse the headlines to gain an understanding of what's going on [in the organization], but also to read in depth about the topic that they find interesting by linking back to the Web site. The eNewsletter "drives traffic back to the site and reinforces the idea that the Web site is a place of valuable information," the respondent said.

Organizations can use other successful nonprofit Web sites as guides in Web site development. The researcher will use the Memphis Zoo (www.memphiszoo.org) as an example (see Appendix J). The Memphis Zoo Web site was redesigned one month prior to the completion of the study. New features on the Web site include online giving, quick links to most viewed pages, search capabilities, online pressroom and flash interactive on the homepage [see Appendix J]. Visitors may also sign up to send and receive eCards and eNewsletters. There are also multimedia features, such as animal Web cams.

SPEAK!Creative designed and hosts the Web site. The representative said regarding the WebWeb site:

> Their (Memphis Zoo) Web site offered several useful features, like online ticket sales and online membership services. Because of the design, the site looked unprofessional and their transactions features were not integrated well. They saw a very limited number of people using the online services. After the launch of the new site, online membership registrations and renewals are much higher and the site also played a significant part in their telethon. The quality of the design and well-integrated financial features gives an increased level of trust in the site.

For those organizations that are reluctant to spend funds on a Web site company's services, they may encourage their staff members to attend trainings or classes on Web site management held locally. Additionally, there are several online resources that nonprofit organizations can use to enhance its Web sites, such as The NonProfit Times (www.nptimes.com/graphics.html), which provides graphic and Web design and rich media services. An email inquiry is required to get service fees. Web site Design and Images (www.Websitedesignandimages.com) provides small businesses with general Web site design, analysis and site solutions. Summit Collaborative (www.summitcollaborative.com), a technology consulting company for nonprofits provides useful information for nonprofit organizations that are looking to revamp their Web sites, as well as those that are building Web sites for the first time. The Web site includes sample Web site planning worksheets (see Appendix K-M). Ground Spring (www.groundspring.org) gives information on Web site building, technology and Internet planning. The Web site also offers the Learning Center, which includes case studies of other Web sites, as well as resources for online marketing, surveys and fundraising.

Regarding online giving, nonprofits don't maximize the benefits of online giving on because of the following myths: (1) online giving will solve an organization's fundraising problems; (2) only large organizations need online giving; (3) you need an emergency to appeal to donors and (4) all a Web site needs is a ‘Donate Now’ button to pull in donors. If an online giving system is in place, the Web site should have fresh content, involve the prospective donor, have privacy options, quick data collection and transaction processing for donors (Summit Collaborative, 2003). Additionally, organizations may use Charity Channel (www.charitychannel.com) or Network for Good (www.networkforgood.org) as resources for selecting online giving systems. SPEAK! Creative’s representative has found that online giving features are beneficial, but mostly when used to promote a specific fundraising campaign, rather than using them as standard features.

Limitations of Study

Qualitative methodology only allowed personal interpretations of results, as opposed to accurate statistics and facts revealed in quantitative methodology (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The sample of organizations is also small, as Memphis has more than 100 non-profit organizations that target children and children’s interests in operation.

Delimitations of Study

The qualitative methodology limited the study to interviews of executive directors and public relations practitioners at four nonprofit organizations. Nonprofits obviously face more challenges than for-profit organizations. The researcher learned that due to the common characteristics of nonprofit organizations: small staffs and limited funds, they are behind in developing their Web sites to their full potential. Some organizations also need help in communicating with those outside of their target audiences, to receive additional support.

Through interviews, the directors and PR mangers often had completely different opinions on how to reach publics and fulfill goals through their Web sites. Future research should be done to explore the differences between and comparisons of how communications/public relations managers view and prefer to practice public relations versus how executive directors and upper level executive prefer to practice the discipline, specifically in Web sites. Do the public relations managers mimic what the upper-management staff members believe, or are there true differences in their approaches and why? This study would give new information on the discipline of public relations, as the Internet and Web sites are becoming more in-depth in capability by the day.

The researcher revealed new and interesting information on nonprofit organizations' opinions on the importance and development of Web sites to fulfill organizational goals. Nonprofit organizations seem to be behind in Web site development, but, according to interviewees' responses, there are major factors that affect the development. Though each organization approaches public relations differently, this study shows that they are several different options that nonprofits can take for Web site development to achieve goals and build mutually beneficial relationships with their audiences.

WORKS CITED

Ader, Christine. (1995) A Longitudinal Study of Agenda Setting for the Issue of Environmental Pollution. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 72*.

Ariely, Dan. (2000) Controlling the Information Flow: Effects on Consumers' Decision Making and Preferences. *Journal of Consumer Research, 27* (2).

Berthon, Pierr, Leyland Pitt and Richard T. Watson. (1996) Re-surfing W3: Research Perspectives on Marketing Communication and Buyer Behavior on the Worldwide Web. *International Journal of Advertising, 15* (9).

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Memphis. http://www.bbbsmem.org, accessed February 22, 2006.

Boys and Girls Club of Greater Memphis. http://www.bgcm.org, accessed June 27, 2005.

Campbell, Bruce. (1999) Your Newsletters: Are They Worth Their Weight in Gold. *Fund Raising Management*. *30*(2).

Carr, R. (2000) The Power of Nonprofits. *Management Communication Quarterly*.

Chaffey, D., Mayer, R., Johnston, K. and Ellis-Chadwick. (2000) Internet Marketing: Strategy, Implementation and Practice. *Pearson Education*, Harlow, UK.

Chen, Qimei and Wells, William. (1999) Attitude Toward the Site," *Journal of Advertising, 39* (2)

Clarke, Robert. (1998) Ubiquitous Public Relations Tool. *Public Relations Quarterly, 43* (1).

Clinton, Bill. "Supporting the Role on Nonprofit Organizations: Interagency Task Force on Nonprofits and Government," The White House Office of the Press Secretary.http//:clinton3.nara.gov/Initatives/Millenium/Philan/html/memo.html

Coombs, Timothy W. (1998) The Internet as a Potential Equalizer: New Leverage for Confronting Social Irresponsibility. *Public Relations Review, 24*.

Convio. (2006) Using the Internet to Raise Funds and Build Donor Relationships: Tools, Tips and Techniques for Boosting Donations.

Corby, K. and Sowards S. (2000) Authoring Specialized Web Sites: The Education Book Reviews Web Site. *References Services Review, 28*, 321-339.

Cutlip, Scott M., Center, Allen H. and Broom, Glen M. (1994) *Effective Public Relations.*

Dart, Raymond and Brenda Zimmerman. (2000) After Government Cuts: Insights from Two Ontario 'Enterprising Nonprofits.' Queen's University School of Policy Studies.

Dalal, Nikunj, Mishra, Sanjahy, Patil, Vivek and Singh, Surndra N. (2005) A Communications View Of Web Page Perception. *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, *27*(1).

Dozier, D. M. and Grunig, J.E. (1992) *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management.* Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Dozier, David M., Grunig, Larissa and Grunig, James. (1995) *Manager's Guide to Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Duffy, Margaret. (1994) Ten Prescriptions for Surviving and Thriving in the Virtual Organization. *Public Relations Quarterly, 39*.

Dyer, Sam, Buell, Teri, Harrison, Mashere and Weber, Sarah. (2002) Managing Public Relations in Nonprofit Organizations. *Public Relations Quarterly*.

Eadie, D.C. (2000) Changing by Design: A Practical Approach to Leading Innovation in Nonprofit Organizations. *Management Communication Quarterly*. *15*. 2000.

Eisner, E.W. (1991*) The Enlightening Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement Practice*. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Esrock, Stuart L. and Leichty, Greg B. (1999) Corporate World Wide Web Pages: Serving the News Media and Other Publics. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *76*.

Geissler, Gar, Zinkhan, George and Richard T. Watson, Richard T. (2001) Web Home Page Complexity and Communication Effectiveness. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, *2*.

Gilens, Martin. (1996) Race and Poverty in America. *Public Opinion Quarterly*.

Girl Scouts Council of the Mid-South. http://www.gsmid-south.org, accessed February 1, 2006.

Todd, Gitlin. (1980) *The Whole World is Watching*: *Mass Media in the Making & Unmaking of the New Left.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Girls Inc. of Memphis. http://www.girlsincmemphis.org, accessed June 27, 2005.

Golding, Peter and Middleton, Sue. (1982) *Images of Welfare: Press and Public Attitudes to Poverty*. Oxford: Martin Robertson.

Grabner, Doris. (1988) Processing the News: How People Tame the Information Tide. New York: Longman Press.

Grunig, L.A. and Ehling, W. P. (1992) Excellent Public Relations and Communication Management: Contributions to Effective Organizations. In *What is Effective Organization?* Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Grunig, J.E. and Grunig, L. A. (1991) Conceptual differences in Public Relations and Marketing. *Public Relations Review, 17*(3)

Grunig, J.E. and Grunig, L.A. (1998) The Relationship Between Public Relations and Marketing in Excellent Organizations: Evidence from the IABC Study. *Journal of Marketing Communications, 4*(3)

Hallahan, Kirk. (2001) Improving Public Relations Web Sites Through Usability Research. *Public Relations Review, 27.*

Hancock, Beverly. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, Trent Focus Group.

Harvey, B. (1997) *Interactive Electronic Technical Manuals*.

Hazelton, Vincent and Deatherage, Christina. (1998) Effects of Organizational World Views on the Practice of Public Relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 10*.

Hill, Laura N. and White, Candice. (1999) The World Wide Web as a Communication Tool: PR Practitioner Perspectives.

Hoepfl, Marie. (1997) Choosing Qualitative Research: A Primer for Technology Education Researchers. *Journal of Technology Education, 9.*

Hooper, Phillip and Stobart, Simon. (2003) Using Third-Party Services to Reduce the Development Cost and Improve the Effectiveness of Charity Websites," *International Journal of Voluntary Sector Marketing, 8* (4).

Independent Sector. http://www.independentsector.org, accessed March 9, 2006.

Internal Revenue Service. "Exemptions for Charitable Organizations," http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=96099,00.html, accessed July 1, 2005.

Internet World Stats. http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm, accessed February 1, 2006.

Jacksonville Community Council. "The Role of Nonprofit Organizations: A Study Report to the Citizens of Jacksonville. Summer 1998. http://www.jcci.org/nonprofit.htm.

Jo, Samsup and Yungwook, Kim. (2003) The Effect of Web Characteristics on Relationship Building. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 15*(3).

Johnson, Melissa A. (1997) Public Relations and Technology. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 9(3).

Johnston, Russell and Lawrence, Paul R. (1988) Beyond Vertical Integration—The Rise of the Value-Adding Partnership. *Harvard Business Review, 95*.

Kang, Seok and Norton, Hanna. (2004) "Nonprofit Organizations' Use of the World Wide Web: Are They Sufficiently Fulfilling Organizational Goals? *Public Relations Review, 30*(3).

Kensicki, Linda Jean. (2004) No Cure for What Ails Us: The Media-Constructed Disconnect Between Societal Problems and Possible Solutions. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 81*.

Kensicki, Linda Jean. (2001) Media Construction of an Elitist Environmental Movement: New Frontiers for Second Level Agenda Setting and Political Activism (Ph.D. Dissertation), University of Texas.

Kent, M.L. and White, W.J. & Taylor, Maureen (2001) How Activist Organizations are Using the Internet to Build Relationships," *Public Relations Review, 27*, 263-284.

Kent, M.L., Taylor, M. and White W.J. (2003) The Relationship Between Web Site Design and Organizational Responsiveness to Stakeholders. *Public Relations Review, 29*.

Klein, Lisa R. (2000) Evaluating the Potential of Interactive Media Through a New Lens: Search Versus Experience Goods. *Journal of Business Research*, *37*(4).

Ledingham, John A. (2003) Explicating Relationship Management as a General Theory of Public Relations," *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *15*.

Ledingham, John A. and Bruning, S. D. (1998) Relations Management and Public Relations: Dimensions of an Organization—Public Relationships. *Public Relations Review, 24*.

Lieberman, Debra A. (2001) Using Interactive media in communication campaigns for Children and Adolescents," *Public Communications Campaign*, 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Lippman, Walter. *(1921) Public Opinion*. New York: Macmllan.

Lofland, J. and Lofland, L.H. (1995) Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis, 3rd Ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Lordan, Edward J. (1999) Guidelines to Implementing New Technology in Public Relations. *Public Relations Quarterly, 44*(3)

Markus, M. Lynne. (1995) Electronic Mail as the Medium of Managerial Choice. *Organizational Science, 6.*

McMillan, Sally J. and Hwang, Jang-Sun. (2002) Measures of Perceived Interactivity: An Exploration of the Role of Direction of Communication, User Control and Time in Shaping Perceptions in Interactivity. *Journal of Advertising*, *31*(3).

McQuail, Denis and Windahl, Sven. (1993) *Communication Models: For the Study of Mass Communications*. Longman Publishing Group.

Memphis Zoo, http://www.memphiszoo.org, accessed April 28, 2006,

Middleberg, Don. (2001) *Winning PR in the Wired World*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Miles, Matthew B. and Huberman, Michael (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook.* Sage Publications.

National Science Foundation. Overview of Qualitative Methods and Analytic Techniques. www.ehr.nesf.gov, accessed March 3, 2006.

Nelson, Kathryn A. and Hogkinson, Virgina. (2001) Major Issues Facing America's Nonprofit Sector. *Nonprofit Review, 1*(2)

Newhagen, J.E. & Rafaeli, S. (1996) *The Internet as Mass Medium. Journal of Communication*, *46*.

Nielson, Jakob. (1993) *Usability Engineering*. New York: Academic Press.

Nonprofit Resource Center. http://www.not-for-profit.org, accessed on July 15, 2005.

O'Malley, M. and Irani, T. (1998) Public Relations and the Web: Measuring the Effect of Interactivity, Information and the Access to Information in Web Sites.

Palmer, J.W. and Griffith, D.A. (1998) An Emerging Model of Website Design for Marketing. *Communications of the ACM, 41*(3)

Patton, M. Q. (1990) *Qualitative Evaluation Research Methods,* 2nd Ed. Newbury, CA: Sage Publications.

Pfeffer, J. (1980) *Power in Organizations*. Florida: Ballinger Publishing.

Potter, James. (1993) Examining Cultivation from a Psychological Perspective, *Communication World, 18*.

Rice, R. E. (1992) Task Analyzability, Use of New Media and Effectiveness," *Organization Science*, 478.

Rosenstock, F. (1991) The Accidental Publicist: Three Factors That Can Improve Your Image. *Nonprofit World, 9*.

Rouner, Donna and Camden, Carl. (1988) Not-for-profits Appear to Lack PR Sophistication. *Public Relations Review, 14*.

Rowley, J. (2001) Remodeling Marketing Communications in an Internet Environment," *Internet Research, 1* (3).

Ryan, Michael. (2003) Public Relations and the Web: Organizational Problems, Gender and Institutional Type. *Public Relations Review, 29*.

Salamon, Lester and Anheier, Helmut. (1998) *The Third Route: Government-Nonprofit Collaboration in Germany and the United States. Private Action and the Public Good*. Yale University Press.

Saxton, J. and Game, S. Virtual Promise: Are Charities Making the Most of the Internet Revolution?" http://www.virtualpromise.net, accessed February 14, 2006.

Shaw, Thomasena and White, Candace. (2004) Public Relations and Journalism Educators' Perceptions of Media Relations," *Public Relations Review, 30*(4).

Sicilia, Maria, Ruiz, Salvador and Munuera, Jose L. (2005) Effects of Interactivity in a Web Site. *Journal of Advertising, 34*(3).

Singh, Surendra N., Dalal, Nikunj, Mishar, Sanjay and Patil, Vivek. (2005) Communication View of Web Page Perception. *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising, 27(*1).

Strauss, Anselm and Corbin, Juliette. (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory***.** Sage Publications**.**

Steuer, Jonathan. (1992) Defining Virtual Reality: Dimensions Determining Telepresence," *Journal of Communication, 4*(4).

Sundar, S. Shyam. (2004) Theorizing Interactivity's Effects. *The Information Society, 20.*

Webopedia. http://www.Webopedia.com, accessed April 23, 2006.

White, C. and Raman, N. (1999) The World Wide Web as a Public Relations Medium: The Use of Research, Planning and evaluation in Web Site Development," *Public Relations Review, 25*.

Yongl, Liu. (2004) Are Nonprofits Unfair Competitors for Businesses? An Analytical Approach. *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, 23*(1), p. 65.

(2002) Small is Different: Researchers Look at Public Relations Practices for Micro-organizations. *Communication World*.

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

Study Title:
Using Web Sites to Achieve Organizational Goals: Are Nonprofits Doing It Right?

Performance Sites:
Boys and Girls Club of Greater Memphis
Girl Scouts of the Mid-South
Girls Inc. of Memphis
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Memphis

Investigator's Contact Information
Alisha Tillery
LSU Mass Communications Graduate Student
Work Phone: (901) 405-0074
Cell: (225) 939-6308\
Email: Atillery@memphisfoodbank.org or Atille2@lsu.edu

Purpose of Study:
To explore how nonprofit organizations in Memphis are using their Web sites to achieve organizational goals.

Inclusion Criteria:
Subject must be a public relations or communications manager who maintains the company Web site internally or through an outside Web developer.

Maximum number of subjects: 7

Study Procedures:
The investigator will interview communication managers face-to-face using a voice recorder and transcribe feedback. The subject will be required to answer investigator's questions to the best of his/her ability. The interviews will then be analyzed qualitatively and included in study's results and discussion.

Benefits:
Through this study, more information, which will be helpful to other nonprofit organizations with or without Web sites, will be revealed.

Risks/Discomforts
There is no known risk/discomfort.

Right to Refuse:
Participation in the study is voluntary. A subject may change his/her mind and withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which he/she may otherwise be entitled.

Privacy:
This is a confidential study. The subjects will be linked to their data by job titles, rather than names.

Withdrawal:
There are no consequences for a subject's unilateral decision to withdraw from the research. If a subject does not want to participate in research, please, contact the investigator and state your withdrawal verbally, as well as in an email.

Removal:
The investigator knows of no circumstances which will cause removal of a subject from this research.

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225) and 5 78-8692. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researchers' obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me.

Subject Signature ____ Date ___________

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

IQ1. Please, tell me about your organization. What does your organization do? What is your mission statement?

IQ2. What groups do you focus on the most for support? What groups does your organization support?

IQ3. Is your organization independent or a national entity?

SIQ1. Does your national headquarters supply you with public relations documents, i.e. sample press releases and graphics?
Do you include links to your national site?

IQ4. How important is a Web site to your organization?

IQ5. What are the objectives of your Web site?

IQ6. What audience(s) do you target?

IQ7. How do you promote your Web site?

IQ8. Do you recruit volunteers through your Web site? How?

IQ9. How do you decide the content on your site?

IQ10. What features do you use on your Web site to target these audience(s)?

a. Videos?
b. Online pressroom?
c. Constituent/Client testimonials?

IQ11. What special features do you use to increase interest in your organization? If you don't have them, why not? Do you plan to include them in the future?

a. Special events calendars?
b. Special sections for board members?
c. Frequently asked questions?
d. Downloadable information?
e. Links to other sponsors/constituents/orgs?
f. Online surveys/polls?
g. Forums/chat rooms for public discussion of issues?

IQ12. Do you use your Web site for fundraising/development purposes? Why or why not?

IQ13. Does your Web site allow viewers to donate funds online? Why or why not?

IQ14. Do you include your annual report online?

IQ15. How do track donations on your Web site?

IQ16. Have you seen an increase or decrease in donors through online giving?

IQ17. What would improve donor relations online?

IQ18. How often do you update your Web site?

IQ19. Do you post when the site was last updated?

IQ20.When has your Web site undergone major changes? If so, why?

IQ21. What is your biggest challenge in reaching organizational goals through your Web site?

IQ22. Are there any features that your site does not have or any tactic that your organization has not tried that you think would be successful in achieving goals?

IQ23. What is your most effective feature on your Web site?

APPENDIX C

RESPONDENT PROFILE SHEET

Please, complete form and email to atillery@memphisfoodbank.org or fax to (901) 528-1172. Gender responses are optional.

Organization Name: ____

Name: ____

Gender: ____

Position Title: ____

Number of Years in Position: _____________________________________

Duties: ____
____
____

Do you have experience in Web site design/maintenance? If so, please, explain.

____
____
____

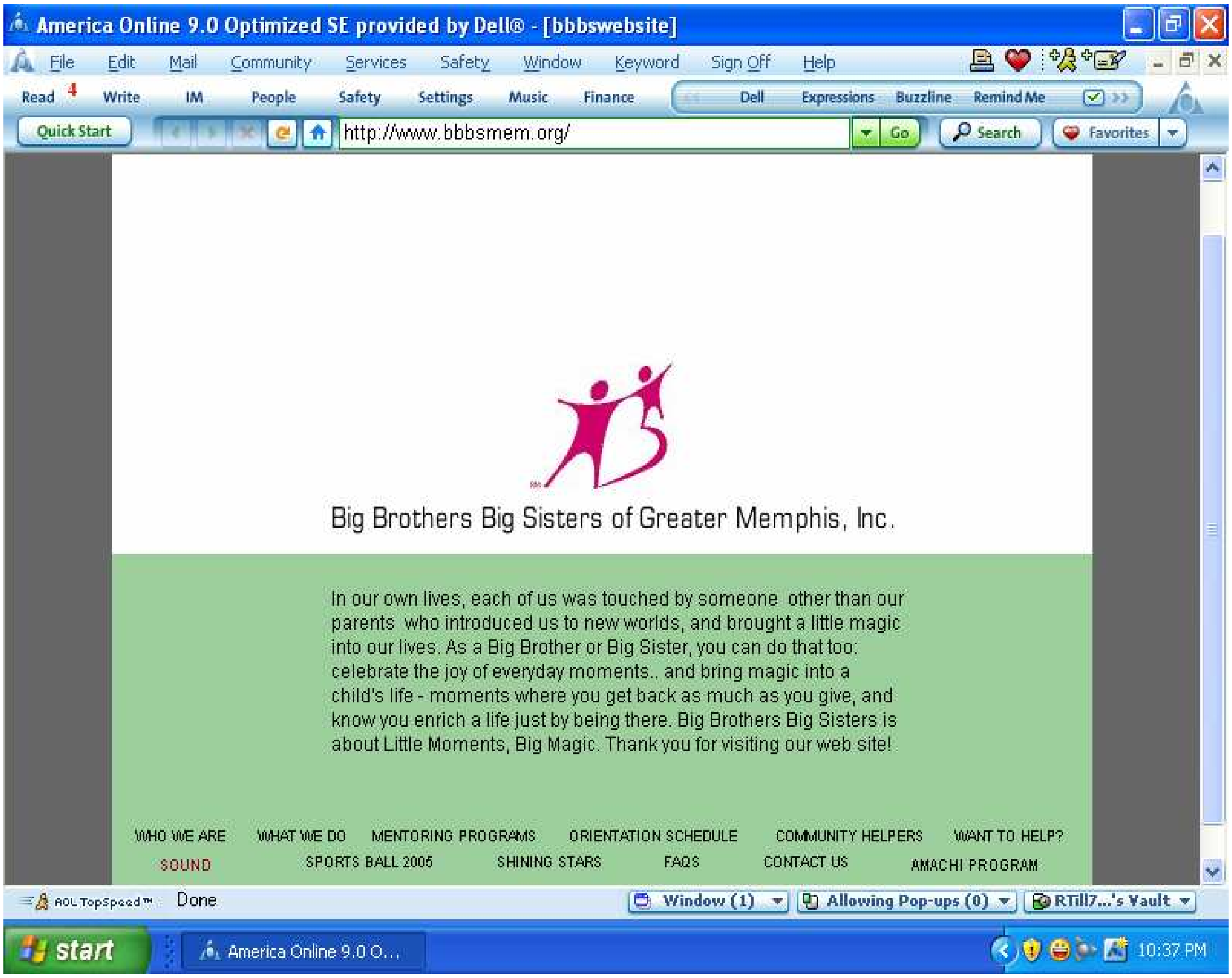
Educational Background: ____

I give my permission to have my organization's name used in this study. The respondents will not be identified.

_________ **Yes**
_________ **No**

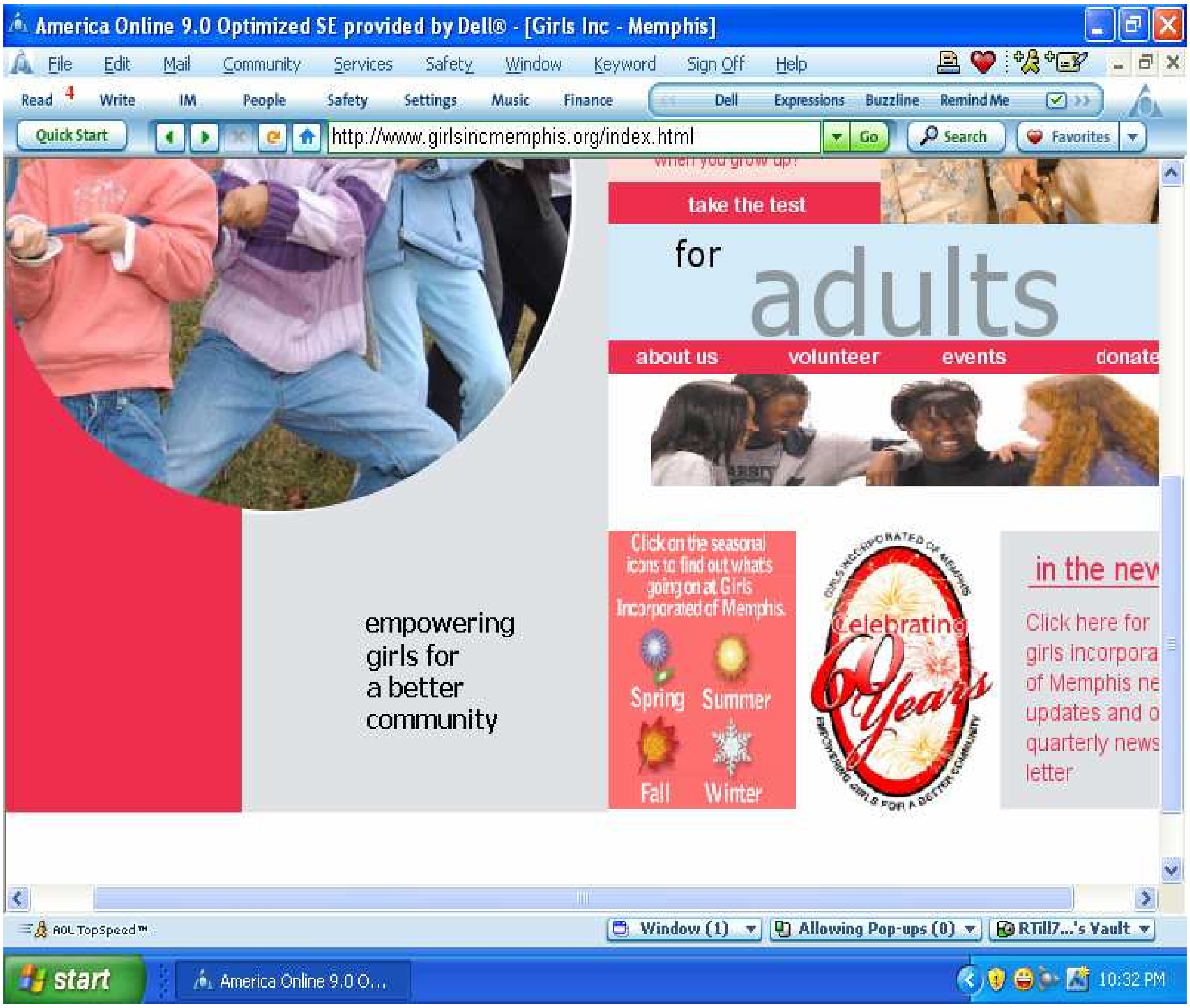
APPENDIX D

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF GREATER MEMPHIS, INC. HOMEPAGE



APPENDIX E

GIRLS INC. OF MEMPHIS HOMEPAGE



APPENDIX F

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF GREATER MEMPHIS HOMEPAGE

APPENDIX G

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF GREATER MEMPHIS ONLINE GIVING PAGE

APPENDIX H

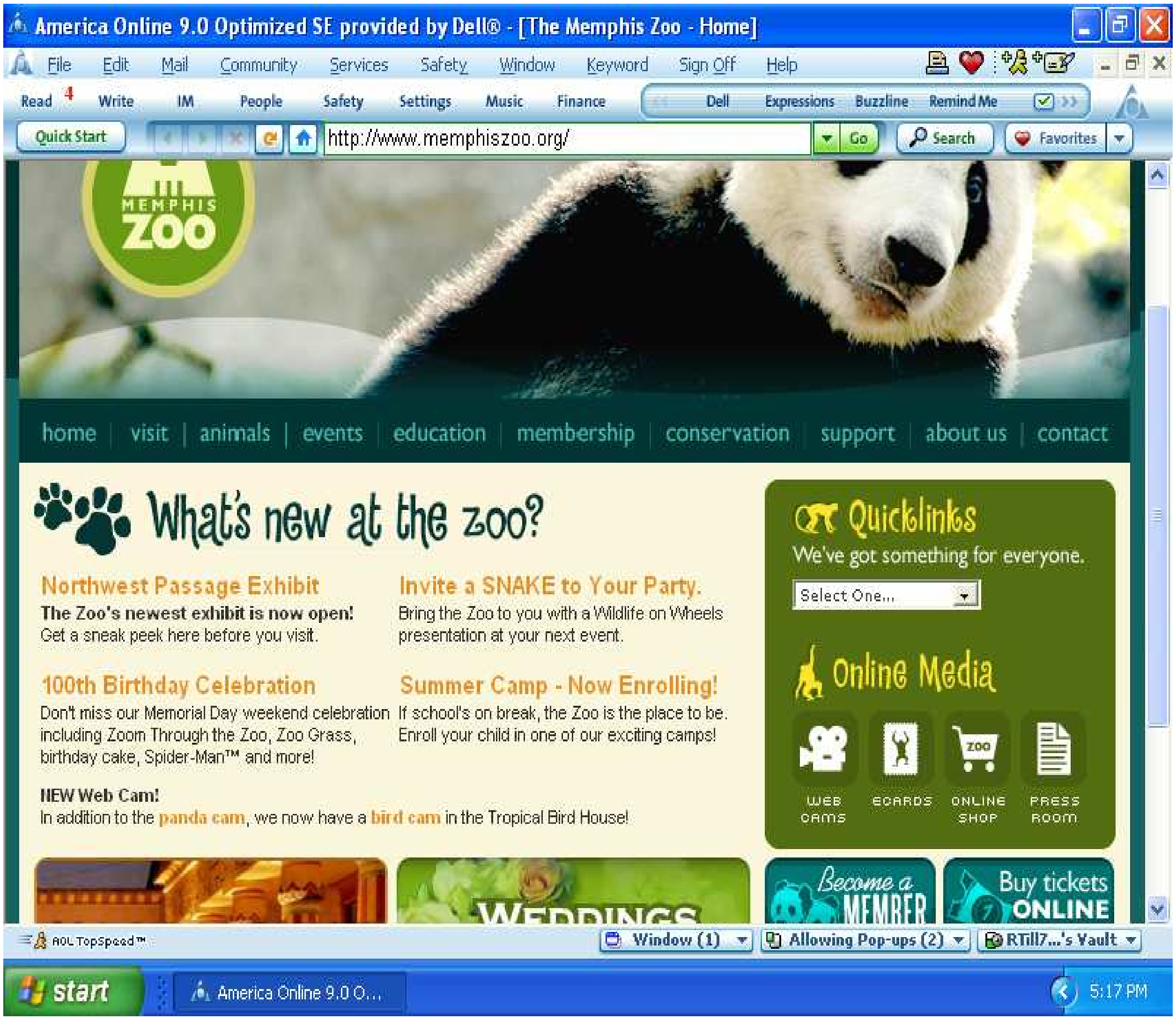
GIRL SCOUTS OF THE MID-SOUTH COUNCIL HOMEPAGE

APPENDIX I

GIRL SCOUTS COOKIE SALE EXTRANET HOMEPAGE

APPENDIX J

MEMPHIS ZOO HOMEPAGE



APPENDIX K
WEB SITE PLANNING WORKSHEET #1

Planning Worksheet # 1 – Getting Started

What are some basic reasons why you need to build, revamp, or revise your Web site?

Who are the main stakeholders that you already serve /want to serve with your site?

What information/product/services do they need/want?

Who should be part of the next stage of planning?

What information do they need for a meeting?

1

APPENDIX L

WEBSITE PLANNING WORKSHEET #2

Planning Worksheet # 2 – Total Value of Ownership

What Web site initiative(s) are you are planning or pursuing? ______________________________	
How will this effort be beneficial? What will be the outcomes? For whom? Be specific! These must be powerful statements that justify your direction.	
Learning and Knowledge Building	
Coordination, Cooperation and Collaboration	
Efficiency or Productivity Improvements	

How will this effort be beneficial? What will be the outcomes? For whom? Be specific! These must be powerful statements that justify your direction.	
Program Delivery Improvements or Innovations	
Marketing or Visibility Enhanced	
Fundraising	
Other	

VITA

Alisha Tillery is a 25-year-old native of Memphis, Tennessee. Tillery graduated in journalism from Southern University Agricultural and Mechanical College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 2003. She has written for publications, such as the *Commercial Appeal*, Memphis' daily newspaper and Ice Magazine Online. Her hobbies include reading and music. She currently works as communication manager for The Food Bank in Memphis.