



## **Public Relations Office**

### **Home Page Redesign and Employee Newsletter Production Wrap-Up Report**

**Lynne Browne**

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#### **Project Overview**

**Project #1** – Create a new SUNYIT home page including a Macromedia Flash banner.  
[http://www.sunyit.edu/~brownel/sunyit\\_home](http://www.sunyit.edu/~brownel/sunyit_home)

I researched New York State and other university websites to find out what each site had on its home page. I compiled the data and used it to develop SUNYIT's new home page. I used Macromedia Flash to develop a banner on the home page. I also created a jump menu to create links to areas for target audiences. I consulted with other graphic designers in the office to develop the look of the home page. Office staff was used to conduct informal usability testing for feedback on links and actual working mechanisms of the site (jump menu, links, etc.) Additional usability tests will be conducted after the project is completed for COM 406.

- Objectives – 97% of the objectives were met for this project. Time constraints limited usability testing.
- Software used in this project included Macromedia Dreamweaver and Flash, Adobe PhotoShop, Microsoft Word, Internet Explorer, and Netscape Navigator.
- Hardware used to create this project included Macintosh G4 computers. Macintosh and PCs were used to view pages in both Netscape and Internet Explorer to pinpoint design issues.
- Products produced:
  - Flash banner with links to four different sections of the SUNYIT Web site
  - Home page
  - Jump menu pages (prospective students, current students, alumni, parents, friends/donors, visitors, faculty, staff, academics, directories, library, offices, SUNYIT News, MySUNYIT)
- SUNYIT staff contributors – public relations staff, publications staff
- Duration of the project – February 18 – April 22, 2004
- Staff size used to complete project
  - Web coordinator (project manager)
  - Director of public relations (client)
  - Director of publications (consultation about overall design, logo usage)
  - Graphic designer (consultation about overall design)
  - Multimedia design consultant (student consultant to assist with minor problems on Flash segment)

**Project #2** – Design and lay out three SUNYIT employee newsletters, including February, March and April issues.

The Director of Public Relations provided content for each newsletter. Files of each newsletter were provided to the Publications Department on zip disk for electronic processing. Newsletters were printed and delivered to employees via interoffice mail (see samples).

- Objectives were 100% met for this project
- Software used for this project included Adobe PageMaker, PhotoShop and Microsoft Word
- Hardware used for this project was a Macintosh G4
  - Products produced:
    - February employee newsletter
    - March employee newsletter
    - April employee newsletter
- SUNYIT staff contributors – public relations staff, publications staff
- Duration of the project
  - February newsletter – February 18-23, 2004
  - March newsletter – March 16-22, 2004
  - April newsletter – April 5-14, 2004
- Staff size used to complete project
  - Designer (project manager)
  - Director of public relations (client)
  - Graphic designer (check final version of newsletter, send newsletter electronically to print shop)

## **Projected, Actual and Billed Totals**

### **Newsletters**

The following table indicates the estimated and actual hours for each newsletter. I estimated 2 hours per page for each newsletter (8 hours per 4-page newsletter.) The discrepancies are minimal for each newsletter (+/-) so I did not adjust the cost to the client.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Estimated</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Billing</b>	<b>Discrepancies</b>
February Newsletter	8 hrs.	7.5 hrs.	\$320	-.6%
March Newsletter	8 hrs.	9 hrs.	\$320	+1.25%
April Newsletter	8 hrs.	7 hrs.	\$320	-1.25%
Total Number of Hours	24 hrs.	23.5 hrs.	\$960	.2%

## Home Page Site Design

The following table indicates the estimated and actual hours for the new SUNYIT home page. I spent less time on research and usability than estimated, but more time on design, presentation and final revisions. I quoted this project as a flat fee because I would be using a program (Macromedia Flash) that I am not proficient in and felt the client should not absorb the entire cost of my non-expertise.

Item	Estimated	Actual	Billing	Discrepancies
Research	30 hrs.	23 hrs.	\$1,150	-23%
Design	50 hrs.	58 hrs.	\$2,900	+16%
Consultant	0 hrs.	1 hrs.	\$50	+1%
Usability	20 hrs.	5 hrs.	\$250	-75%
Presentation	0 hrs.	6 hrs.	\$300	+6%
Final Revisions	10 hrs.	11 hrs.	\$550	+1%
<b>Total</b>	110 hrs.	104 hrs.	\$5,200	-5%

## Other

The following table indicates the Information Plan not included in the initial contract. If I had known I would be creating an Information Plan when I was writing the contract, I would have included about 15 additional hours.

Item	Estimated	Actual	Billing	Discrepancies
Information Plan	0 hrs.	10 hrs.	\$500	+9%

## Project Time by Task Summary

### Newsletters

The following table indicates the project time by task for February newsletter.

Item	Estimated Hours	Actual Hours	Estimated Percentage	Actual Percentage
February Newsletter				
• Meetings	1 hr.	1 hr.	12.5%	12.5%
• Layout	5 hrs.	5 hrs.	62.5%	62.5%
• Photography/manipulation	2 hrs.	1.5 hrs.	25%	19%
<b>Total</b>	8 hrs.	7.5 hrs.	100%	94%

The following table indicates the project time by task for March newsletter.

Item	Estimated Hours	Actual Hours	Estimated Percentage	Actual Percentage
February Newsletter				
• Meetings	1 hr.	1 hr.	12.5%	12.5%
• Layout	5 hrs.	6 hrs.	62.5%	75%
• Photography/manipulation	2 hrs.	2 hrs.	25%	25%
<b>Total</b>	8 hrs.	9 hrs.	100%	112.5%

The following table indicates the project time by task for April newsletter.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Estimated Hours</b>	<b>Actual Hours</b>	<b>Estimated Percentage</b>	<b>Actual Percentage</b>
February Newsletter				
• Meetings	1 hr.	1 hr.	12.5%	12.5%
• Layout	5 hrs.	4.5 hrs.	62.5%	56%
• Photography/manipulation	2 hrs.	1.5 hrs.	25%	19%
<b>Total</b>	8 hrs.	7 hrs.	100%	87.5%

The following table indicates the project time by task for SUNYIT Home Page design.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Estimated Hours</b>	<b>Actual Hours</b>	<b>Estimated Percentage</b>	<b>Actual Percentage</b>
Research	30 hrs.	23 hrs.	27.5%	21%
Design	50 hrs.	58 hrs.	45.5%	53%
Consultant	0 hrs.	1 hr.	0%	.5%
Usability	20 hrs.	5 hrs.	18%	4.5%
Presentation	0 hrs.	6 hrs.	0%	5%
Final Revisions	10 hrs.	11 hrs.	9%	10%
<b>Total</b>	110 hrs.	104 hrs.	100%	94%

## **Dependency Rating Summary**

### **Newsletter Projects**

The biggest concern I had for these projects was meeting deadline. One newsletter did not meet deadline, but that was because the client was out sick. Overall, the newsletter projects went smoothly.

### **Dependency Rating for SUNYIT Newsletter Projects**

Scale - 1 = not likely dependent 5 = most likely dependent

<b>Dependency</b>	<b>Initial Rating</b>	<b>Final Rating</b>
Staff	5	5
Software	5	5
Hardware	5	5
Digital Camera	5	5
Time/Deadlines	5	4
Client Availability	4	4
Publications Department Availability	2	4

## Home Page Project

The dependency I was concerned about for this project was my ability using Flash. I was able to do about 99% of the project by myself. I did use an external source (student) to help me with an action script that I couldn't create by myself.

### Dependency Rating for SUNYIT Home Page Project

Scale - 1 = not likely dependent 5 = most likely dependent

Dependency	Initial Rating	Final Rating
Staff	4	4
Software	3	5
Hardware	3	5
Research Information Availability	5	5
Skill Level – Flash	2	3
Skill Level - Dreamweaver	4	4
Client Availability	4	4
Consultant Use	N/A	5

## Evaluating the Project Dependencies

### Newsletter Project

Five of the newsletter dependencies remained the same from the initial rating to the final rating (staff, software, hardware, digital camera, and client availability.) The two dependencies that changed are time/deadlines (decreased 1 point), and the Publications Department's initial dependency rating increased from 2 to 4. The reason for the decrease in time/deadlines was because a couple of deadlines were missed. The Publication Department's increase was because the graphic designer surprised me and sent the newsletters down to the print shop a lot quicker than I expected.

### Home Page Project

All the dependencies for this project either remained the same or increased. The reason for the increase in most cases was because everything performed at a higher level than I planned. I had to add an external dependency (consultant use) because I needed to get a button working in Flash. Instead of spending hours on a simple task, I consulted with an expert who solved my problem with two, 1/2 hour consultations.

## Project Activities and Related Issues

### Newsletter Project

**Writing** – I was not responsible for writing copy for the newsletters – the client provided the copy. If I had to write copy for each newsletter, the price of the newsletters would have been higher.

**Editing** – I did edit articles in each newsletter. I made corrections and kept all drafts.

**Graphics** – I took and placed photos in all newsletters. The photos were general photos of campus activities and did not require much manipulation. Photo manipulation included changes to size, resolution, conversion to black and white, and format conversion.

**Production** – I was responsible for the production of all newsletters. The final step of each newsletter is supplying all necessary files to the Publications Department for them to send electronically to the print shop.

**Project Management** – I was the project manager of all the newsletter projects. Project Management went smoothly. Project management was inclusive of the quoted cost per newsletter.

### **SUNYIT Home Page Project**

**Writing** – I worked with the client to create copy for the home page banner.

**Editing** – I edited the project as it progressed. Client reviewed material and made edits throughout the process.

**Graphics** – I was responsible for all graphics, photos, photo manipulation and placement of all graphics.

**Production** – I was responsible for the production of the new home page. In the future I would consider using either a consultant or student with exceptional Flash skills to produce the flash segment based on my design concept.

**Project Management** – I was the project manager of this project. Once I had the basic template created for the site, the rest of the project progressed rapidly. If I were overseeing others, I would have been concerned about not seeing actual “finished product” earlier in the process.

### **Project Milestones and Related Issues**

Overall I met deadlines and exceeded expectations. I believe that it’s important to plan for problems and like to get the majority of work done in the beginning of the process if possible. I like to look at the “drop dead” deadline then back up the project by a week if possible. I make deadlines for myself to allow for a steady pace to complete projects.

The main problem with time estimation for the entire project was that I did not know before I wrote the contract that an Information Plan was to be created. Minimally, I lost 10 hours of time (\$500) because of this situation. I would have had a serious issue if I were working on this project and getting paid for it. I know this type of problem won’t occur in future because I am now prepared to include estimated hours for an Information Plan.

The hours were off a little on the research and usability estimates for the project. (When I wrote the contract I overestimated the research hours in case the design area exceeded estimated hours by too many hours.) The usability numbers are off because of the change in presentation schedule. One additional week (as I had planned in my contract) would have allowed me to conduct more usability tests. However, I know this project will be changed many times and will conduct usability testing in the future.

### **Problems Encountered**

I encountered one problem with the one newsletter – the deadline was not met because the client was ill. Since the newsletter did not contain any dated material, the missed deadline was not an issue.

The problem I encountered on the home page was mainly my skill level using Flash. My skill level is at the intermediate level, so my project took a little longer than I would have liked. One hour spent with an “expert” help me accomplish the tasks I needed to get done. Working in Flash is a great skill to have, so I didn’t mind the frustration I encountered, but would be concerned if “real money” were being spent.

The other problem was not knowing to estimate time for the Information Plan. Again, not a big deal when working on a project, but it would have been if I was getting paid for the project.

## **Recommendations for Process Improvements**

The instructor should let students know they need to estimate for an Information Plan either before or while they are writing the contract. The only improvement I can recommend for my process is getting an expert Flash person to create the Flash segment and/or I need to increase my skill level so I can be the expert.

## **Translation Considerations**

I would hire international students at SUNYIT to help translate the newsletters and home page/Web site. I would contact Douglas Eich, Learning Center director, to give his recommendations in the hiring process. I would also purchase specific language software to help aid in translation.

## **Conclusion**

Overall the projects I created were a valuable learning experience. I spent a lot of time in the beginning of the home page project researching many university sites. I believe this research helped me design a new page that uses the front page “real estate” in a much more efficient way. I would have liked more time for usability testing and should have tried to get the template created earlier in order to get more feedback. Forcing myself to use and become better at Flash is definitely a “value add” for my computer skills set.