ONE MORE HAT: COMMUNICATION & MARKETING FOR ARCHIVISTS

THE PROBLEM
Archivists in small shops are often asked to wear many hats. What if you’re asked to take on strategic communication on top of your full workload as an archivist?

At my organization, it became apparent that the public (and even our parent organization) lacked a basic understanding of what we do. We know our stories and successes, but we weren’t communicating effectively.

Additionally, we are gearing up for a major fundraising campaign. How can we ask people to give to an organization they don’t fully understand?

CURSE OF KNOWLEDGE
We realized we fell victim to what the Heath brothers in the book Made to Stick call “the curse of knowledge.” Essentially, once you know something (for example, your organization’s mission), you find it hard to imagine not knowing it. You have difficulty sharing your message with others because you can’t put yourself in their shoes. Your knowledge has “cursed” you.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY
How we communicate matters just as much as what we communicate.

A communications strategy is a roadmap to help you communicate effectively and meet your organization’s goals.

Strategic communication is:
- Mission-driven
- Audience-focused
- Action oriented

Strive for concise and compelling messages. To combat the curse of knowledge, use concrete language and stories in your communication.

GOALS
Start by setting some goals.

For example, our communication strategy goals:
- Establish brand and overall messaging
- Raise awareness of our collections and mission
- Engage audiences (old and new)
- Sustain and increase financial support.

THE PLAN
Then, make a plan! People need to hear something 20 times before it sticks. Have your audiences heard what you do 20 times?

Suggested Tools:
- Updated “Nonprofit Resource Communication Plan Template”
- Knowhow Nonprofit “Developing a Communications Strategy”

Finally, put your plan into action!

WHAT WE DID:
Swenson Center

LOGO

WEB

PRINT

& MORE

ASSESSMENT
We are still in the early stages of our new communication strategy. However, comparing Google Analytics from February 2017 & 2018 shows a vast improvement in website interaction.

Visitors flow through a logical progression of pages, rather than visiting one page and leaving, or navigating an arbitrary route. This indicates that our web content is now more useful and engaging.

NEXT STEPS
- Keep track of our friends and donors using centralized software. We can share address updates, notes on conversations, and more across our full organization.
- Roll out a new, improved, email newsletter. Email is cheap, easy, and keeps our community up-to-date. Our current emails are sparse and infrequent. We can do better.
- Launch an annual fund drive. But that’s a story for another poster.

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