Cooperation between rhetoric and web page design: ethos, presence and identification on corporate web pages

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Cooperation between Rhetoric and Web Page Design: Ethos, presence, and identification on corporate web pages

by

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This is to certify that the master's thesis of

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Web page communication is fast becoming a discourse mode for the future. Every conceivable type of information can be found on some web page on the World Wide Web. Electronic technologies are helping distribute massive amounts of information and are causing the information age to live up to its name. There is so much information available today through multiple modes that information has become a challenge for humans to handle as Richard Lanham explains, “we are drowning in information, not suffering from a dearth of it” (227). Because of the amount of information encountered daily, users find themselves selecting only certain pieces on which to focus attention and possibly act. Lanham refers to this selection process as acting on information glut, action in which users pick information pieces vital to them and then try to do something with the information (Lanham 243). An understanding of web page communication, particularly how web pages may persuade users, would help explain how people’s attention is directed to focus on and then to react to or act on the information displays.

Web pages and websites commonly employ web design practices to accomplish the mission of displaying information for users. Thinking that design practices function this way may be an extension of the idea that page aesthetics are a primary way in which web page communication becomes persuasive. In actuality, design practices play multiple roles in communicative discourse as Gunther Kress and Theo Leeuwen reveal: “Design...adds two things to the discourse: (1) it contextualizes, makes it work within the context of a communicative interaction...and (2) it selects which modes will be used to realize which aspects of that communicative interaction...” (119). While it is true that design provides the context for information displayed, such as a non-profit organization’s newsletter or an
emergency evacuation procedure brochure, and contributes to the decisions about which modes best serve to adequately deliver a message, including visual images and page layout, design now has come to provide more. Designs not only make discourse a reality in a given communication situation, but designs also change the socially constructed knowledge within discourse into social interaction (Kress and Leeuwen 5).

This notion of design influencing a communication situation such that it can change knowledge into social interaction, as Kress and Leeuwen discuss, is one reason rhetoricians are exploring critical literacy to examine the multiple modes and literacies that influence communication. The modes and literacies encompass various elements including but not limited to visuals, text and textual designs, sound, materials such as the paper on which documents are printed, and computer systems/equipment, all of which have an effect on communication. The shift in the system of media and modes of representation and communication from traditional printed pages to multimedia, multimodal representations of information (Kress 58) make delving into critical literacy an apt avenue of research to help understand communication in general and digital communication specifically. As Kress advises, multimodal communication now needs a theory which “deals adequately with the integration/composition of the various modes in these texts: both in production/making, and in consumption/reading” (73). In examining multimodal communication, there arises a need to understand how web pages communicate with their audiences.

One approach to addressing this need to understand web page communication is to investigate the convergence of the discourse, production/distribution, and design modes within communicative practices. Functional literacy delves into our view of computer equipment as a production mode, and “has attempted to make some sense—in social,
political, historical, professional, pedagogical, and functional terms—of computers not as computational machines but as literacy environments, environments that leave very few activities, individuals, or structures entirely unaffected" (Selber 471). The realization is that computers serve in both the production and distribution modes, complicating their influence on communicative practices. Design also plays a complicated role in communicative practices because “it requires the orchestration and remaking of these resources in the service of frameworks and models that express the maker’s intentions in shaping the social and cultural environment” (Kress 77). The ensemble of modes and representational resources that becomes the information display on web pages may be a product of a web design team’s collective goals and ideas on how best to communicate, but the communicative practices don’t eliminate the user. Kress and Leeuwen report that communicative practices almost always involve representation and interpretation (114) allowing for audience agency—an active not a passive agency. In multimodal discourse, communicative practices are layered and operate in sync with each other: “communicative practices are seen as multi-layered and include, at the very least, discursive practices, production practices and interpretative practices, while they may also include design practices and/or distribution practices” (Kress and Leeuwen 111). Each of the layers individually influences meaning for users and collectively influences meaning as well, once more complicating just how communication happens through multiple modes and multiple literacies. Communication in the digital age, particularly with web pages and websites, is complex and complicated in structure and function.

Research is just beginning to examine this phenomenon of electronic communication, but much still needs to be done. Coming from the field of rhetoric, my curiosity directed me
to the art of persuasion to try to understand how web pages may function. I wondered if rhetorical devices from long ago would or even could still operate in this post-modern age within electronic communication. So, I selected three rhetorical tenets to explore—ethos, presence, identification—and then identified three design practices—page layout including color, visual images, navigation tools—commonly employed on websites to examine in order to see if age-old ideas still hold truth today and how the ideas from rhetoric may be manifested in or cooperate with web design in web page communication. Since my study is delving into the persuasiveness of electronic communication, specifically web pages, I selected ethos, presence and identification because they are three of the fundamental strategies used in persuasion.

Scholars, over the years, have analyzed the classical tenet of ethos and the modern rhetorical tenets of presence and identification to better determine their function and effectiveness in primarily oral and print discourse. To begin to understand how these tenets work directing audiences to consider and potentially act on information requires examining them not only as individual influences but also cooperative partners in a process beginning with ethos, leading to presence through identification and back to a potentially adjusted ethos.

Ethos results from audiences’ perception of received information: how believable, real, or true information may be at any given moment. Presence is used to help build ethos by causing pieces of information to appear more visible or noticeable than others within an information display or delivery. As presence is used, according to Gross and Dearin, patterns are formed whose effect is synergistic (137). Once presence of information is established, the process of identification can occur whereby audiences align themselves, or side, with
perceived information. Rhetors use various strategies when constructing information displays or delivery that influence ethos through the process of identification, giving prominence to information so audiences will side with them in a particular way.

With the advent of the digital information age, web page discourse presents a new form of delivery, display, and potential persuasion. Greater amounts of information are being made available electronically to audiences today because web pages are relatively easy, inexpensive, and fast to access even for the novice user. Because availability is widespread, audiences have become savvy users of electronic communication and bring to it various degrees of design and textual experience. Users are transformed into a type of expert in digital communication because they not only search for information to satisfy a need or desire they may have, but they also advance into the realm of creating their own web pages. Audiences, then, become both the receiver and the producer of electronic information. As digital communication and user experience with it evolves, it becomes necessary to understand how the web page functions rhetorically as a communication mode. We need to know how rhetorical tenets and design practices work within the web page form in order to learn how to create web pages that most effectively communicate with users.

There is a gap that exists between web designers, information architects, and scholars in understanding how design practices on the web affect user behavior, how the design of web pages effectively communicates with users. While accessing a web page, users are persuaded not only to receive and accept information displayed as valid, but also to explore a site further by going deeper into its architecture to retrieve information or to purchase a product or service. In this way, web pages function rhetorically, as persuasive discourse.
Constructing digital communication involves multiple disciplines that consider the web page from different perspectives. In the design field, web page documents depend upon the visual appearance of elements such that detection and discrimination readily occur for users (Williams 383). Farkas and Farkas list three goals of graphic design on web sites: adding aesthetic appeal, helping to express the theme of the web site, and helping to show the logical relationships among all elements on the page (241). In the information architecture arena, web pages depend on logistical network functionality to be effective at conveying information. Morrogh defines information architecture as “the design of structures—information environments—that provide users seeking information with the necessary resources to translate successfully their information needs into actions that ultimately lead to the accomplishment of their goals” (108). In addition designers and information architects consult the specialty of usability to judge page and site effectiveness. Usability, in terms of web sites, is ensuring that an average person can successfully use a site for its intended purpose (Krug 5). Usability includes the ease with which users can access and navigate a site, and the limited amount of time it takes a user to find the information they seek, particularly since it is Nielsen’s contention that users scan pages quickly, seeking information, rather than carefully read them (¶1). Another perspective involves web pages exhibiting conventions commonly used in the print mode. Research suggests that web page documents seem to adopt conventions of print documents that have been reshaped through technology, a force that Kostelnick and Hassett suggest replicates and disseminates conventions, increasing their currency within the digital discourse community (106). Each of these perspectives contributes to the production of web pages, yet there is no comfortable joining of the
knowledge and expertise between these disciplines, nor do any of them deal adequately with the persuasive potential of web pages.

Rhetoricians look to rhetorical theory and research to explain the persuasiveness of discourse. The web page could be examined as a genre by rhetoricians since it meets Miller’s argument that genre should be defined by the action it is intended to accomplish: “A classifying principle based in rhetorical action seems most clearly to reflect rhetorical practice since...action encompasses both substance and form...and if genre represents action, it must involve situation and motive” (24). Applying this definition of genre to web pages would isolate the substance and form of web pages, the particular situation a web page pertains to, and the motive behind creating it, allowing for examination of the persuasive potential of the web page document. Adding the rhetorical perspective to the digital disciplines that deal with web pages would help bridge the gap between the disciplines by providing a clearer understanding of how web pages communicate.

Only recently have scholars begun to examine web pages, and few have done so using the lens of classical or modern rhetorical theory regarding information displays. Barbara Warnick, for example, looks at the beliefs and values embedded in proto-technology discourse and how these values become culturally dominant (6). Kevin Hunt re-examines principles of hypermedia design to assist critical thinking about how visual design cues and hypertext establishes ethos on web pages (364). While scholars have begun closing the gap, other studies of web pages need to be done to better understand the network of rhetorical tenets and design practices functioning in this digital communication mode. In this thesis, I propose one alternative method of examining web pages to explore the function of three rhetorical tenets cooperating with design practices in this network.
The method proposed grew from my inquiry into the following issues and questions about web sites, in particular home pages:

1. How do corporations project ethos on web pages?

2. How does the design of corporate web sites cooperate with presence and identification to direct user attention toward a favorable ethos and entice users to explore a site?

3. How do visual elements cooperate with presence and identification to contribute to the ethos of a site? Are visuals capable of changing user perception toward an enhanced or debased ethos?

These questions helped me determine a method to use in examining corporate web sites to see what role ethos and persuasion play with them.

My method then employs the synergy of ethos, Chaim Perelman’s notion of presence, and Kenneth Burke’s idea of identification with the digital discourse of corporate web sites, in particular their home or main pages. My method connects these three rhetorical tenets to the design practices of page layout and color, visual images, and navigational tools, and explores the process of persuasion facilitated by ethos, information presence, and identification. I contend that since these tenets play a role in directing users to see and then to act/react in certain ways to information, understanding how the aforementioned web design practices act rhetorically will produce more effective web pages in the future.

In Chapter 2, I first situate ethos within the rhetorical tradition, from the classical to the postmodern and digital eras. I then define Perelman’s notion of presence as it cooperates with Burke’s process of identification and show how these tenets are apparent in digital communication, specifically in web page elements such as page layout, visual images, and navigation tools. In Chapter 3, I illustrate how the proposed method of analysis works by completing a rhetorical analysis of how these tenets and design practices operate on Fortune
100 corporate web sites. Finally in Chapter 4, I discuss conclusions and possible implications of this method of analysis, and evaluate its ability to help bridge the gap between the design and rhetoric of web page discourse.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethos is a tenet of classical rhetoric, and presence and identification are tenets in modern rhetorical theory. Scholars frequently analyze how these notions are employed in oral and print mediums to achieve maximum persuasive effect with a message. However, little scholarship exists as to how these tenets are used as rhetorical concepts in the construction of web sites. To understand how ethos, presence, and identification function on web sites, these concepts must first be situated within the rhetorical tradition, from the classical to the digital age.

The Function of Rhetoric

An understanding of the function of rhetoric is necessary to begin situating the tenets of ethos, presence, and identification. Rhetoric in the classical tradition has been labeled by Aristotle as a "faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever" (120). In this sense, Aristotle implies that rhetoric can be constructed using any subject and that multiple strategies are available to contribute to the persuasiveness of a text. In order for audiences to be persuaded, proof must be offered. Aristotle categorizes proofs into three types, those acting "upon the moral character of the speaker, [those] putting the hearer in a certain frame of mind, and [those acting] upon the speech itself" (120). Thus, rhetoric, in this view, is likely to be successful if the character of the rhetor is believable, if the strategies employed put audiences into a preferred mindset regarding the subject, and if the discourse itself possesses an ethos acceptable to audiences. The perception of ethos as
credibility can then be ascribed to all three categories—the rhetor, the delivery and the message.

Building on Aristotle’s definition, Burke suggests that the substance of rhetoric is shared social knowledge that can be manipulated in ways that motivate people to believe and act one way as opposed to another. Burke’s view of rhetoric focuses on humans as social beings capable of creating “vast and complicated societies and erect and live ideologies” (Heath 198). This implies that audiences have the capacity to independently choose perceptions of a message based in part on the shared social knowledge of their culture and in part on the manipulation of the facets of a message. This thinking agrees with Aristotle’s notion that rhetoric can be constructed to persuade audiences through careful control of the aspects of communication—rhetor, delivery mode, and message.

Burke adds the defining of things and situations, including providing a working vocabulary, as other functions of rhetoric. Burke’s function of rhetoric, as outlined in Counter-Statement, sizes up a situation by naming its structure and presenting its outstanding ingredients to audiences (154-56). The process highlights the important qualities of a message/situation that are important for the rhetor to display in such a way as to suggest to audiences the action to take in a given situation. The function of rhetoric, then, directs audience attention in such a way as to persuade them to perceive a message in a specific way. In addition, rhetoric provides a vocabulary of thoughts, emotions, actions, and attitudes for codifying and interpreting a given situation (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 177). A working vocabulary allows both rhetor and audience to understand and interpret a message as delivered and as received. In essence Burke’s defining function provides rhetors and
audiences with tools to deliver and receive any discourse. Three of the tools dealt with in this study are ethos, Perelman's notion of presence, and Burke's idea of identification.

**Ethos**

Ethos is the third traditional mode of rhetorical appeal indicating the importance of a rhetor's mastery of cultural heritage: "[the speaker] became a kind of living embodiment of that heritage, a voice of such apparent authority that the word spoken by this man was the word of communal wisdom, a word to be trusted for the weight of the man who spoke it and the tradition he spoke for" (Halloran 332). In this regard, Aristotle and other classical rhetoricians saw ethos as anchored in orality, and as such, involved the character and skill of the rhetor at creating credibility of the message for a particular audience culture. However, as Nan Johnson points out, "the status of ethos in the hierarchy of rhetorical principles has fluctuated as rhetoricians in different eras have tended to define rhetoric in terms of either idealistic aims or pragmatic skills" (105). Ethos then has evolved in meaning and function depending upon the means required to persuade audiences at a given time, in a given culture, and for a given purpose. This situational context makes ethos difficult to understand.

Kristie Fleckstein suggests there are three ways ethos slips in and out of focus. First, scholarly commentary affects the meaning of ethos by introducing new ways of applying the notion to discourse. The malleability of ethos, then, appears as scholars translate and comment on what Aristotle says in the *Rhetoric*. Second, the advancement of history, accompanied by changing cultures, tends to alter the concept of ethos. The changing culture of the information age as compared to the print document age is characterized by a change in access and retrieval of information. The credibility of information now is, in part, dependent
upon how quickly and accurately users can access it online. Third, the malleability of ethos is shown by its elusive discursive position. The placement of ethos, i.e. the locus of good character, in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and in historical epochs, shifts its point of origin from rhetor to audience, from in the speech to by/through the speech (191). Therefore, ethos becomes a dynamic concept; one that Fleckstein says is adaptable to textual, historical, and situational gaps (191). Message and rhetor credibility, as part of the dynamism of ethos, are subject to adaptation as well. It is no longer the character of a rhetor, as the autonomous subject, that establishes ethos, but the text is also seen as the vehicle of constant authority, reflecting a cultural basis for ethos (Aristotle 120, Warnick 14-15). In this regard, audiences bring *a priori* knowledge and value systems to a message, allowing them to play a more constructive role in judging information, as Burke says in his comments about shared social knowledge. The cultural context of a discourse situation often determines how ethos operates within that discourse, according to Halloran, “To have ethos is to manifest the virtues most valued by the culture to and for which one speaks” (60). For audiences, then, the ethos of a message manifests itself through the content presented, through the cultural context in which the message appears, as well as through the perceived character of the speaker or organization behind the text.

Ethos is mediated through cultural beliefs and values of a given audience such that relationships stem from the interaction between the audience, the message content, and the context of its delivery. As Gill notes, advertisements are powerful examples of this relationship-building with ethos appearing as a product of planned interaction between audience and text, an interaction purposely developed by agency creatives (205). Through the use of strategically placed signs, ad designers in effect reposition ethos from text to the
reader's mind. Corder believes that authors purposely leave signs as trails for the audience to follow (311), leading audience perception toward belief in the content and context of the message. These signs or trails then are specifically meant to cajole, to entertain, to outrage, and to promise something to audiences. Via this strategic planning, authors are able to bring audiences into continuous interaction with the message (Conners 287). Since readers then “rely upon the ghostly signals put first by the text,” the origin of ethos shifts from the text to the reader through audience construction of or projection upon the text (Corder 310) and its influence on their consumer behavior.

The rhetor then is able to employ content devices and delivery techniques that strategically construct ethos in text, as Cicero discusses in De Oratore, making ethos a stylistic move “by means of particular types of thought and diction, and the employment besides of a delivery that is unruffled and eloquent” (cited in Johnson 104). Style becomes a way to produce a desired effect on audiences rather then serve just an ornamental function in text. Rhetors can control ethos by drawing on existing cultural virtues and values that an audience accepts as credible in a given situation. Ethos, then, can be conveyed by manipulating style and by focusing “on the ‘rhetorical situation’ or the ‘process of composing’ or both” (Johnson 113) of a message in a discourse situation.

In her book Critical Literacy in a Digital Era, Warnick extends the idea of ethos by examining the discourse of an emerging online culture: Wired magazine’s online edition. The ethos built into the online version of Wired is comfortable to readers who continually visit the site and access its information (27). This reader interaction with the online magazine reflects a value system established through careful construction of text. Wired then becomes a habitual gathering place, a space constructed by the authors and designers of the magazine,
reflecting the values and beliefs of *Wired* readers as well as the online culture. This gathering space, as Halloran points out, is in keeping with an early Greek meaning of the word ethos (60). Warnick suggests that a template used for *Wired* magazine layouts includes stylistic patterns that function to persuade: “Along with the formulaic template that organizes elements in its essays, certain stylistic patterns occur frequently. These patterns are not only stylistic; they also perform an argumentative function” (39). Information is conventionally displayed in select positions within the layout template. Readers then form relationships between the information pieces they view and are able to arrange or rearrange the pieces in meaningful ways for themselves. Decisions concerning information placement are style patterns that *Wired* readers expect and accept thereby encouraging their continual use of the magazine.

Because of the sheer size of the magazine genre, it is necessary for *Wired* magazine to create its space as comfortable for readers. A group of authors work together to make sure the individual message pieces connect and interconnect within the magazine framework [template]. Their efforts are rewarded when readers continually access the magazine and are directed to believe or think a certain way about the information displayed. “In these environments,” says Warnick, “authorship is a function of groups who conjointly produce texts based on shared ideology, values, and interests. By virtue of certain features, these texts are interconnected to produce unique discursive domains” (14). *Wired* readers then join together in a comfortable discursive domain constructed by authors capable of manipulating ethos as style in the text of the magazine. The perception of ethos then is produced not only as a credible message by a credible author(s) but also as a credible space for communication in which audiences are comfortable existing.
Presence

One way to help direct the perception of ethos is to establish information presence, a rhetorical notion discussed by Chaim Perelman. Presence aids audience engagement with message, making “us perceive, conceive, discriminate and remember the objects or ideas or lines of argument set forth by the rhetor” (Karon 163). Through presence, rhetors ensure that the audience selects a particular interpretation of a message by causing pieces of the information to appear more prominently than others, by “setting it in the foreground of consciousness...[and pushing]...the others into the shadow” (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 133).

Establishing presence of information by placing information elements in the foreground of human perception directs audiences to make psychological choices about a discourse’s validity and usefulness. Dearin (1989) suggests that presence functions psychologically making discourse possess a sense of immediacy and importance such that the information presented deserves the audiences’ attention (6). In this sense, audiences are persuaded to engage with and act on those pieces of a message perceived to be most crucial to them at a given time. Karon writes that Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* identifies five effects information presence has on audiences that make it a practice of choice for rhetors:

1. It is a felt quality in the audience’s consciousness placed there by the rhetor’s skillful manipulation or verbal magic of discourse.

2. Audience attention is fixed on a particular point while at the same time changing audience perceptions such that emphasized information is regarded more closely and de-emphasized pieces are disregarded.

3. Its strongest agent is imagination, allowing rhetors to paint information upon the audience mind at will.
4. The audience is directed toward considering decisions or initiating action about the information as a result of presence.

5. Presence is created by techniques discussed under the guise of style, delivery and disposition. (164)

Gross and Dearin surmise that presence is not an isolated effect of the elements of arrangement, style and invention, but it is a cumulative effect of interactions among these (135). Rhetors carefully plan the interaction between the arrangement of information elements in a message, the style in which it is delivered, and the techniques that provide emphasis to important qualities of the information. All three work together to call attention multiple times and in multiple ways to the spoken message ensuring audience can select that which is most important and that which is not. The same process is employed with print and electronic messages, arrangement, style and invention intertwine to direct audience to meaning. Techniques that establish presence, then, while discussed by Perelman in reference to speaking, may also be those used in print and electronic communication to direct audience attention as well.

Rhetors take into consideration the audience receiving their message when they craft information arrangement and delivery. It is the rhetor’s job to gain and retain audience attention by resorting to techniques available within a genre or medium of information delivery to create presence (Karon 173). The rhetor’s efforts will be rewarded if the techniques used influence the hierarchy of values in a text such that audience attention is directed toward specific information, a desired interpretation and as a result to engage with or to act on it. As Karon explains, “…the impulsiveness of an idea is proportional to our interest in it; and interest directs attention” (173). Rhetors manipulate the message to cause
audiences to respond to information by maneuvering it into a position of prominence with design techniques. Audiences respond selectively to presence as a strategy of emphasis, a strategy that places information into positions of prominence contrived for the respondent’s perception (Arnold 47). The placement of some information pieces into the foreground that influences the hierarchy of information displayed assigns an impulse or feeling to it noticeable to the audience (Karon 174). Audience choice then is simplified by techniques rhetors use to give more value to certain information pieces while not to others.

However simple rhetors may make the audience’s job of codifying a message, the multiplicity of audience characteristics may complicate the process of presence. Perelman understands that audience diversity is a consideration and suggests categorizing audiences into two types—universal and particular. The universal audience is composed of all reasonable and competent people; a particular audience is any group of people, whether or not they are reasonable or competent (Foss et al. 124-125). Rhetors likewise intuitively create mental profiles of audience members, classifying audience such that they can judge how to best use presence techniques to achieve a desired effect. Perelman’s presence then is a process that produces a usable product for both the universal and the particular audience.

**Identification**

Presence sets information elements of a message into the foreground of audience attention. These highlighted pieces of information then trigger the audience’s recognition of and identification with the message. Burke discusses the process of identification as allowing audience to align themselves (associate) with or separate themselves (dissociate) from ideas and concepts that meet their perceived needs at a given time. Humans associate with one
notion while dissociating from another notion by examining information through the lens of their existing belief/value system, resulting in a transformation of self (Wolin 178). For example, users may believe the current e-mail program they engage in is effective until they learn and are introduced to another that is quicker and has more tools available. Users examine both programs with the belief/value systems they have created over time and choose the best e-mail program with which to associate. They then divide the notion of the less desirable program away from their belief/value systems becoming transformed into a “new” user. Identification, then, causes humans to make choices that reshuffle the experiences, beliefs and values they hold as true. The reshuffling also causes audience to re-exam the multiple personal profiles they possess, profiles that go beyond the self. The end result is a different, changed self.

Association and division create, or structure, connections and/or relationships between audience and what Burke calls “multiple manifestations beyond the self” (Burke “Attitudes” 263). This view of identification makes it an adaptive process, adaptive to different social, economic, or aesthetic conditions. When an audience experiences a rhetorical situation, properties within the individual belief/value system help them to examine, evaluate, and classify the new situation. Identification, then, is the act of recognizing things based on naming and classifying according to properties (Oravek 179). Participation in this structuring, a structuring of meaning, results in audiences reliving experiences, experiences that rhetors and audiences may have in common. The ultimate goal of identification, for Burke, is the cohesion of a social body, a “sense of ‘community’” (Wolin 179). Building community through identification is a crucial element of persuasion.
To facilitate identification that leads to persuasion, Burke draws on Aristotle’s ideas of topical invention, tropes, and figures of speech to guide audiences to align with information. Aristotle’s method, as pointed out by Burke, leads to persuasion “got by the manipulation of tactical procedures, by following certain rules of thumb for inventing, developing or transforming an expression” (Wolin 188). Thus Burke’s identification suggests that strategies are used to structure information such that audiences can easily select associations and divisions, often in the way rhetors intend.

The goal of rhetors is to control audience choice of association and division when confronted with information. To do this, they use strategies to capitalize on what Burke says is the function and form of a rhetorical work. The function of a rhetorical work is to deliver a situation in terms of its structures and outstanding ingredients, to tell the important qualities of the situation, and to suggest action to best handle the situation. Some of the elements may include a vocabulary of thoughts, actions, emotions, and attitudes for codifying and interpretation of the situation (Foss et al. 177). It is through these elements that Burke’s idea of form is accomplished.

Audience is interested, expectant and then satisfied when engaging with Burke’s concept of form. “A work has form,” he suggests, “in so far as one part of it leads a reader to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence” (“Counter-Statement” 31). Burke’s idea of form is the structure or layout in which information appears so that audiences recognize a given form, feel anticipation for the outcome of the given form, and experience satisfaction when the outcome matches their expectations. Burke also includes tropes, figures of speech and other special devices as a part of form. Specialized devices work in conjunction with information structure to pique audience expectations and desires, causing
the audience to examine information in a quest to satisfy perceived desires. The audience then identifies with a rhetorical work through a series of tensions or expectations resulting from the purposeful planning and positioning of information. Impact is produced because an idea has been developed in such a way as to excite and satisfy audience expectations (Foss et al. 178). Thus identification happens as a product of audience interaction with form and content.

Burke may not have known that his concept of identification could be active in the electronic information age, but he does believe his ideas could be applied to other types of communication. He expanded his definition of rhetoric so that identification is not just situated in orality or print: “he sees rhetoric as including nonverbal elements or non-symbolic conditions” (Foss et al. 176). In this sense, Burke infers that there are many “rhetorical ingredients” functioning in communication where we would not expect them (Wolin 172). This notion of Burke’s, then, proposes that other communication genres, such as web pages, should be examined to see if there are new notions of rhetoric appearing in communication, if the existing notions are instantiated when applied to new modes of communication, or if there are other “ingredients” at work that cooperate with rhetoric in new communication modes.

**Rhetoric on the World Wide Web**

Although ethos, presence, and identification operate rhetorically in electronic forms of communication as they do in oral and print venues, the focus of the discussion will now turn to situating these notions in the realm of digital communication as opposed to print-based or oral texts.
Well-designed web pages exemplify the rhetorical characteristics of ethos, presence, and identification as they work together to simultaneously produce and reproduce ethos, to direct attention and signal recognition, and to cause audiences to identify or align with the pages. For instance, users align themselves with particular web sites, then, when they recognize the web page form. The recognition elicits expectations of the information or experiences found on the web page. Navigation links, visual images, and text are arranged and displayed in patterns on web pages to provide a sense of familiarity and to allow easy information access for the user. Kostelnick and Hassett explain that conventions [patterns] that complement each other perceptually and rhetorically in document design enable readers to build meaning coherently and with optimum trust (71). Web page designers purposely structure information on web pages to help users recognize signals or signs that match templates existing in user value/belief systems and to make the information meaningful. Web pages function as rhetorical appeal because “the visual cues and hypertextual structure used to construct a Web site can be used to create a site that conveys a specific ethos, or character, for the organization” (Hunt 378). Users’ previous exposure to and experience with a company name and/or product fosters an association between user and company. This association leads to user identification with the product or service of the company, creating a trust known as branding. On the World Wide Web, branding becomes a planned presentation of information that reinforces the credibility or ethos of the company and thereby the web page. gobé [sic] says “corporate-identity programs are the expression of a corporation’s culture, personality and the products or services it has to offer—the very symbol and signature of the values that should inspire trust with consumers, employees, clients, suppliers and the financial community” (121). Designers position certain pieces of information on the
Web page so that users pay primary attention to some information while paying only cursory attention to others. The techniques used to situate information in this way are akin to Perelman's notion of establishing presence that in turn (re)creates ethos.

Design techniques in the online magazine genre also are in keeping with Perelman's notion of presence. Warnick noticed that purposeful design techniques helped the *Wired* site authors control their readers' points of view. They did this not through direct appeal or explicit argument, but by strategically using embedded links, multimedia clips, intertextual allusions, careful site designs, and contrived interactive features...By using an expanded concept of 'text' as content that includes overall design, graphics, and strategic use of links, one can see how these authors kept readers on their sites and encouraged return visits. (108, 112)

Web sites constructed with design techniques that leave signals or trails for users to follow help create "'comfortable' Web sites, whose content, appearance, and structure are logical, coherent and consistent" (Hunt 379).

Users find the signals because pieces of online information are made to stand out, giving them a presence that demands notice over other pieces of information. Choices of visual images, navigation tools and text display are made to direct users not only to notice but also to identify with the information, prompting them to click on a link and delve further into a respective web site. Users engage with the designer's page ethos by clicking into it to interact or participate in the page. Participation in the page transforms the perceived ethos of the page to match information for which they are searching, information in which they and other users are interested. In this sense, designers construct a discourse community, a
network of online users of similar interests. Users only have to “rely on networks of reciprocal links, intertextual allusions, and appeals to beliefs and attitudes presumably shared by site users. One has thus to appeal to a community of interest constructed through and by means of the text itself” (Warnick 112). Users gather on pages of web sites to exchange ideas and experiences by viewing information and then reacting to it based on its display, by taking advantage of the network of interest. Thus, web pages can be thought of as habitual gathering places, an early Greek meaning of ethos (Halloran 60). Accessing web page information becomes a dynamic interchange between the user and the context as displayed by page designers.

Because the display of information on web sites is purposefully planned by web designers, there is also an interchange and relationship created between the designer and the user. The relationships are vital to page ethos when users are directed to recreate the page by clicking into it to better meet their perceived needs. If the users needs and web page experience are satisfied, then, page, web designer, and host ethos are enhanced. Designers provide this ability for users through techniques used in displaying online information. Ethos, then, becomes a component of a cybernetic system, transforming itself into what Fleckstein labels CyberEthos: “From this cybernetic perspective, ethos is composed of and by permeable boundaries, subject to the limits of time and space, resisting allocation to anything but its constituent context and the constancy of its own relationships” (191).

Fleckstein’s notion suggests that ethos is constructed in electronic communication to allow and even encourage users to reconstruct it to meet their needs. Though unstable, ethos can remain stable for a given time, within a given space [web page real estate], embedded in context as long as the elemental relationships remain intact. The elemental relationships
between rhetor, audience, space, language and subject matter that exist in a shared space, control and influence the flow of information: “Through the flow of information, elements adjust their ‘constitution’ to the shifts within their shared sphere, joined in an effort to uphold the equivalencies that constitute the ethos or the good character of the entire context” (194).

Though electronic information in CyberEthos may be controlled by multiple elements, two of these maintain a contractual type of relationship – a social contract between rhetor and audience. Kostelnick and Hassett discuss this social contract between information designer and readers regarding visual conventions (180), but this contract can also have an impact on the flow of information Fleckstein mentions (194). The subjects, users, and situations of information flow dictate the terms of the contract, either simple or complex. The unspoken/unwritten contract suggests to users that designers have structured information to be recognizable and accessible in ways matching user expectation and experience. Without the contract, “readers could not reliably use their prior experiences as compasses for interpreting…” (Kostelnick and Hassett 180). This contractual understanding regarding information works similarly to CyberEthos: it provides rapid access, regulates the flow and speed [of information], and provides flexibility for users (Kostelnick and Hassett 181). The social contract establishes a broad base upon which Fleckstein’s elements—rhetor, audience, space, language, subject matter—comfortably interact to construct and redirect the perception of information ethos.
CHAPTER 3. ANALYSIS

Methodology

This study examines how ethos, presence, and identification are created on corporate web sites through the use of web page design, visual imagery, and navigation tools. The trust, or ethos, established with an audience on the web is determined by design practices that establish digital presence and trigger the audience’s identification with the site sponsor. Web designers can establish presence by using specific design practices to highlight some pieces of information while downplaying others, just as Perelman suggests presence is established in persuasion. This presence of information in turn helps create a relationship between the audience, the site sponsor, and its products or services. This process of identification is controlled by site designers who use the practices of information design, visual display, and information architecture to provide users with choices of association and division when confronted with a collection of digitally linked information nodes. The form and function of web pages, then, operate in ways quite similar to Burke’s (1953) original concept of identification: information appears to the audience in recognized forms that invite engagement with the information and create a desire for a specific, satisfying outcome. This study, then, examines how corporate web sites operate as rhetorical spaces for creating sponsor ethos and audience identification through information presence and select design practices.

Data samples

Twenty Fortune 100 Company web sites were randomly chosen and were examined on the World Wide Web. Fortune 100 companies were chosen for three reasons: 1) users
frequently access the sites, 2) information displayed is current and continually updated, and
3) sites are more likely to be designed by professional web designers. Screen shots were
taken of the respective homepages and second level pages, labeled "About Us," or something
similar, and then printed out as data samples (See pages 57-77 in this manuscript).

Examination process

The corporate web pages were first categorized into four groups according to
business type. The grouping facilitated a more manageable examination of the twenty sites
and allowed similarities between companies to emerge within each group. Three companies
made up a Financial group, two banking institutions and one investment specialist. Five
companies deliver goods, and services directly to the public, including phone service,
computer technology, and fun, forming a Direct Goods/Services group. Six companies,
placed into the Energy group, deal in electricity, natural gas, and/or petroleum for residential
customers or as energy brokers. The remaining six companies deliver goods and services
such as paper items, paint, and electronics, indirectly to consumers through other companies,
comprising the Indirect Goods/Services group (See Fig. 1).

The target audience of each corporate main page within each subgroup was
determined next in an initial preview. The Financial group targeted consumers and investors
in the public and corporate sectors who already engage in these institutions' services or may
be interested in doing so. Half of the Energy group displayed information that targeted
current and future investors while the other half targeted consumers already enrolled in or
considering enrolling in energy programs and services. The Direct Goods/Services group
presented information targeting consumers regarding their respective products and services.
The *Indirect Goods/Services* group showed information primarily targeting current and future investors, or targeting other corporations looking to do business with each member of this group.

The initial preview also identified the ethos each company created for its intended audiences. Ethos across all sites in general was created to persuade users that the information was current, truthful, and important in relation to the corporation’s purpose and to users needs. Easy access to site information supported by live links added to the page ethos, causing users to feel comfortable with accessing the site. The assumption can be made that the ethos of these companies, and their products and services, as previously created through advertising and/or user prior experience, has placed the company name, and/or reputation into audiences’ value systems. This idea of ethos, or product branding, has been built over long periods of time such that users accessing the sites already identify with the companies to some degree. However, ethos was more difficult to determine in the *Energy* group because the companies are unique to a specific geographic area of the United States causing limited
audience exposure to them. Users may not be as comfortable with these companies because the information provided pertains to investors or other energy brokers and to consumers in one geographic area. Thus users have limited reason to be accessing these sites. Due to this fact not all users are familiar with the services of the Energy group.

Successive looks at the web page data used Burke's idea of form and function to understand how design practices make web documents a persuasive space. The second viewing of the sites in each group focused on how the structure of the situation, in terms of company identity and purpose, was presented to the user. The third viewing inspected how the important qualities of each corporate situation were exposed, directing the user eye to important information the site host wanted to emphasize for users to see. A final viewing scrutinized how information was revealed to users suggesting a means to a desired outcome, or suggesting action to best handle the corporate page situation.

Three design practices were examined on each page situation:

- page layout, color as used to show unity and contrast
- visual images, i.e. photo, iconic, and textual images
- navigation tools, only as indicative of deeper level access to site information architecture

At the same time, each viewing considered how page ethos was affected as the design practices listed above mimicked Perelman's establishment of presence and the initiation of Burke's process of identification for users.

Finally, notes were collected and compiled from the viewings, judgments were made, and a rhetorical analysis written of the findings.
Findings

Evidence was immediately noticeable on all 20 corporate sites of design practices contributing to ethos during the initial preview. Successive viewings of the data groups—Financial Group, Direct Goods and Services Group, Energy Group, Indirect Goods and Services—showed more clearly that arrangement and color use on web pages, visual images, and navigation tools work together to establish a presence for information that launches the user’s identification process and simultaneously affect the page and site ethos. These rhetorical tenets, functioning through design practices, work in sync with users to define the structure of the web page form. The tenets also effectively highlight the important qualities of a respective page, and suggest to users how best to respond to each corporate web site.

Initial Scan

Logos, slogans, and corporate names appearing on the sites triggered recognition of ethos. These visual images sparked a connection between users and the companies because users have been previously exposed to them. The Phillips 66 shield and the Dupont oval, or slogans such as Dell’s “Easy as Dell,” or Lowe’s “Improving Home Improvement,” are highly visible to society through other delivery modes.

A primary purpose of the corporate sites in this study was to provide users, regardless whether the target audience was the independent consumer or corporate client, more information about their goods and services. A secondary purpose of the sites is to encourage users to enroll and purchase company goods and services. Each site’s main page serves as an index, similar to the lobby of a large corporate building, with a marquee list of departments
found within the multiple floors or levels, of the site. Users consult the marquee to locate information within the site that in turn identifies each company's purpose.

Color use—in the logo, in the menu and banner bars, in lines and select text—on the sites suggests a unified message on a unified page, immediately enhancing ethos. This unity was accomplished through either a single dominant color like the red used on ConAgra’s site (App. D-3) or a dominant color with a secondary color such as the black and dark blue used on Morgan Stanley’s site (App. A-3).

Limited use of visual images contrived a comfortable aesthetic appeal that added to ethos for users as well. The images, generally photo and occasionally iconic illustrations, were limited to fewer than five per page. Nine of the sites sported four to five images on their main pages while three displayed none. Photo image content was simple, usually of happy people or pleasing landscapes. Iconic images were illustrations that served as colorful symbols of specific information. Georgia-Pacific, for instance, uses an illustration of a boy reading a book above text stating “Education Station,” and a hammer above the “Project Center” portion of their main page (App. D-5). The visual images did not overpower the message on any website, instead, images served to complement and enhance user experience with the site information.

For novice web users, prevalent navigation tools strengthened ethos in terms of ease of access to the sites. Menu bars, text links, drop-down menus, and search functions were clearly evident. Honeywell incorporates a horizontal menu bar, two drop-downs for “Honeywell Businesses” and “Buy Honeywell Products,” a search function at the top of the page space, and text links for latest news items (App. D-2). Most text links were listed vertically, but a few site pages employed embedded text links as part of summary or preview
information. Navigation buttons often sported an arrow, arrowhead or triangle signaling its purpose as a link. Novice users could identify visual images functioning as navigation tools either by their display position, or by their appearance, or by executing a mouse-over movement.

Subsequent Scans

The important qualities of each corporate page/situation were made to stand out using the aforementioned design practices. The presence of these qualities was established to direct audience attention, and to influence perception of page ethos, and thereby of site host. In addition, the design practices enhanced the presence of text and visual images such that suggested action was evident for users: click through navigation options to deeper levels of the site, to read more, to do more. The design practices operating as rhetorical tenets then, were clearly evident to varying degrees on web pages within each data group. An analysis of each data group follows.

Financial Group

Morgan Stanley, Bank One, and Bank of America, within the Financial group, are companies that market investment and banking services for customers.

Conventional practices of page layout are employed on both banking sites, i.e. important information pieces located top left and occupying primary functional space, to direct users to the important qualities of online banking. Bank One customers find account services at the top left where vertical navigation menus sometimes appear. This location establishes presence of customer account information focusing user attention to this service.
Identification is triggered for users that their former way of traveling to the bank physically may be an outmoded method of accessing their accounts. Rather identification suggests to users that Bank One has created a personal navigation system on their site to meet users’ individual banking needs separate from general user options. Users, then, are led to associate with Bank One. With Bank One they have personalized online service that is easy and effective.

Visuals, particularly photo images, frame the site at the top and the bottom showing happy people next to imperative phrases suggesting users switch to Bank One services or choose one of their credit cards. The photos become present in user attention, blurring other features on the site, while triggering user identification with the people inhabiting the photos. The photos, then, enhance host and site ethos so that users are led to think that if these people [in the photos] are happy with Bank One then they [users] too can be happy with Bank One (See Fig. 2). Setting off the “Your Business” heading with a contrasting color, in this case a bright green, catches the eye of users and signals to them that Bank One’s services are for everyone, individual as well as business. The presence afforded to “Your Business” may make audiences feel like a part of a financial network. Suggesting that users are part of such a network enhances the ethos of Bank One’s page and vicariously Bank One, the company.

Navigation options are plentiful in the form of access portals, drop-down menus and lists of text links. Drop-down menus are most prevalent on the two banking services sites, Bank of America and Bank One. The drop-downs here offer options to users pertaining to specific account services such as check ordering, locating ATM machines or commercial account services (See also App. A-2). Navigation buttons next to specific actions or institution services are labeled “GO” and are highlighted with an orange contrasting color.
Fig. 2. Bank One provides banking services primarily to the individual customer, but also offers financial services to business clients as well (www.bankone.com).

Establishing the presence of the “GO” navigation buttons provides users with directions on how to use the site and trigger identification such that users are enticed to click through the home page to information at deeper levels of the site.

Morgan Stanley, in contrast to Bank One and Bank of America, uses a simpler, seemingly more professional corporate page design for users interested in investing (App. A-3). Bold, thick, signature colored bars frame the site, directing users eyes to the information on the page, while the logo and slogan seemingly anchor the page in the upper left corner. A subtle hint of host ethos may be perceived as financially stable based on the framing and anchoring of the page design. The site employs larger visual images, photos and sections of
their logo image with limited text, as navigation icons to direct users where they want or need to go. Photo images establish a presence to the depiction of real people as clients. Placement of the image of the father with the child first in the primary space may trigger identification that even though Morgan Stanley deals in corporate finance, they put the individual customer first. These images may also trigger identification of a successful business that emphasized personal attention as well. Although navigation options are limited on this website, users who are investors or job hunters would be able to locate the “About Morgan Stanley” secondary level page by scanning more closely for the text menu link.

At one point on the web page, Morgan Stanley deviates from their professional corporate page feel and uses contrasting red and green colors to set apart, or give presence to, important information qualities for users’ attention. The boxes encase text links about Morgan Stanley’s handling of mutual funds. These information trigger user identification with news reports of mismanagement of client funds by other firms and cause them to associate with Morgan Stanley’s proactive approach to the uncertain climate of mutual fund investing. The identification for users may go as far as piquing their interest in what Morgan Stanley will do to dismantle investor skepticism and to protect investor funds. Thus, users potentially will further access Morgan Stanley’s website.

**Direct Goods and Services Group**

The *Direct Goods and Services* group includes corporate sites that promote consumer products and services: communication services by Bell South and MCI, computer technology by Dell, Lowe’s home improvement supplies, Phillips 66’s petroleum products, and Disney’s entertainment.
Page layout conventions are generally adhered to in this group indicating to users that scanning will produce desired results. Information on MCI, Bell South, and Dell is arranged horizontally, facilitating user left-to-right reading (App. B-4, B-1, B-2). Information on Lowe’s and Phillips 66’s websites is arranged vertically facilitating user top-to-bottom scanning (App. B-5, B-3), thereby projecting an ethos of recognizable page format and function for users. Users can identify navigation tools easily either by bullets as on the Phillips 66 site (App. B-3), the 3-D appearance of buttons suggesting they can be pressed as on the Bell South site (App. B-1), or by a form of arrow or triangle as pointer as seen on Dell’s site (App. B-2). The presence of the links is firmly established for users through the appearance of these navigation devices. Users focus on the links, recognize their function and then identify with the capacity of the links to take them further into the website. Summary, explanatory text accompanies these links to help clarify for users what will be found through a respective link, as Dell does with their “Small Business” link—“Technology solutions for businesses from 1-200 employees.” Users then are able to choose whether the “Small Business” link will meet their needs and click through it to that particular information.

Visual images, limited on these sites, function as attraction devices that lead user eyes to accompanying text on all the sites. The visuals closely associate with the text allowing users to connect visual to text as one meaning. Phillips 66 uses the image of a gas pump next to text talking about locating a nearby station, for example (App. B-3). Visual image, then, coincide with text through layout and navigation tools providing directions for users not only to the purpose of the sites, but also to what’s most important and how best to use or act on the site.
MCI’s site is one example of the design practices working together rhetorically in this way. MCI uses a larger-than-usual banner across the top of the page space to establish its worldwide connection. This implies to users that they are a part of this global communication network, at the same time enhancing company ethos. Service information is categorized according to customer type and located in distinct separate boxes on the web page. Color is used with labels to highlight each customer area and make information selection easier. Visual images such as the man in a suit with a cell phone and the silhouette of the girl jumping rope complement the “Enterprise” and “Consumer—the Neighborhood” labels providing a clearer presence for users that triggers identification with one of the service situations. Through this use of design practices in the menu, users can easily associate with the service situation that meets their needs and dissociate with the other situations.

Navigation options within each customer block seemingly jump to the forefront of attention, established as presence, ahead of all other information displayed because of the triangle pointer image in the colored circle and the 3-D appearance of the navigation button that begs to be pressed. The visual appearance of these navigation tools inspires identification with the portals that will open for users, as recognized navigation tools are known to do. Button labels displaying imperative text phrases, like “Tell Me More” with the pronoun “me”, highlighted in bold, navy blue color, advance identification further and invite users to click through the link to find “more” (See Fig. 3). Other link options are subdued in comparison on the indicating sections or aisles of a Lowe’s store (App. B-5). The presence of the store “aisles” on the website is established by link arrangement in bulleted lists under headings mimicking the aisle signs hanging from the ceiling of a store. Identification with this information display places the users inside a virtual store, complete with this week’s special buys and offers, and
Fig. 3. MCI is one example of design practices working rhetorically for users (www.mci.com).

for this shopping experience home improvement tips distinguished by contrasting colors to direct the eye to them. Other signs, or headings, are also alphabetized into a vertical “Go Shopping” navigational menu to make it even easier for users to locate the department, product, or information section they seek.

Visuals are almost non-existent on Lowe’s homepage, except to advertise a special price on a product like the power saw, but are more evident on second level pages such as the “About Lowe’s” page. On this page visual images operate as navigation tools relating to adjacent text links and explanatory text. The presence afforded the images triggers identification that reduces user uncertainty about where a link leads. For example, the image
of Jimmie Johnson in racing garb next to the text link “Team Lowe’s Racing” indicates information on Lowe’s race team while an illustration of dog tags next to “Veteran’s History Project” signals military service and leads to a special program sponsored by Lowe’s (See Fig. 4). If users seek information about the race team and they recognize, have identified with, driver Jimmie Johnson, they will be comfortable clicking on the link to reach the appropriate information. The visual images used by Lowe’s coupled with explanatory text provide clear location and direction for users ensuring they won’t be lost in the site. Users’ attention is directed toward information presence, identification occurs with portions of information of value to them, and host and page ethos is enhanced.

The Disney Online site deserves a word or two apart from the others in this data group because it defies the conventions the other corporate sites adopt. The entire primary functional page space of this main page is a colorful, cartoon map of a theme park complete with paths to different sections of the park (App. B-6). The visual images depicting various places in the park, and pages of the site, surround what seems to be a movie screen on which different images appear as the user mouse’s-over each section. The horizontal navigation menu is in the form of the train that runs around Disney World and Disney Land with drop downs available at the bottom of the page space. Even the second level pages are cartoon-like images making this site’s target audience seemingly to be children, albeit of any age. The ethos of this site seems to teeter on the border between fact and fantasy. The multiplicity of cartoon illustrations establishes information presence all over the web page making it difficult for user attention to focus on one of two areas, even with scanning the entire page. Limited text beneath each label on the main page helps with clarifying where the link will go, but the element of wonder, surprise, and uncertainty of “Where do I start?” or “Where do I
Fig. 4. Lowe’s “About Us” second level page utilizes visual images as navigational tools (www.lowes.com/lkn?action=topicSelect&topic=AboutLowes).

go?” permeates the website affecting the overall ethos of this corporate site. Disney’s overall site appearance definitely triggers identification with fun, but it may take users more time to access than the other corporate sites in this group due to the multiplicity of presence.

Energy Group

The Energy group is comprised of five companies—TXU and Aquila that provide electricity to consumers, and El Paso, PG and E, and Mirant all of which operate as energy brokers for portions of the United States.

Design practices on the TXU and Aquila sites display information primarily for their target audiences—the individual consumer (App. C-2, C-1). Information is chunked on both
sites embedding text links inside boxes. These boxes, located center stage in the primary functional space, are clearly labeled and highlighted by contrasting color to direct user attention to them. The presence of the “Customer Center” for Aquila is established via a bright, yellow contrasting color highlighting a vertical list of link options for multiple customer types. Prominence, particular presence, is given to TXU’s customer information by a contrasting color in shades of orange coupled with bold black text labels and links. The TXU links are further brought to the forefront of all other information by navigational arrows in orange circles, their head direction pointing to a specific information department of the site. Visually, textually, and navigationally, users are able to identify with how to use the web page as a consumer. If identification goes beyond usability, then even though both companies deal with investors and provide general information about the company, users can judge that TXU and Aquila primarily serve the individual energy customer.

Photo and iconic visual images are scarce on the Energy group websites. The website design emphasizes usability so that users can, through mainly textual information, quickly and easily locate and access desired services. However, landscape photo images that do appear on the El Paso and Mirant sites focus user attention and suggest, through identification, an ethos of environmental friendliness in a business that has come to be known as potentially toxic. User attention is directed to the forefront of the photo causing identification with the image of blue water, greenery and clear blue sky as a healthy environment. The images of the company buildings in the distance are pushed into the background out of user focus, and removed from the identification process. Limited text on these energy broker sites consists of link labels and company mission statements with a few news headlines pertaining to the business (See Fig. 5).
Fig. 5. Mirant, an energy broker, appeals to environmentally conscious users and informs them of their financial restructuring on the site (www.mirant.com).

Subtle but definite prominence is given to financial status on the PG and E site (App.C-3), and on the Mirant site since both are emerging from financial company difficulties. Users are made aware, by way of the presence of the text link in bold white font style on the Mirant site and by the yellow-orange outlined box containing Chapter 11 information on PG and E, that the companies have had trouble in this area. However, by placing this information into user attention first, users may identify with the idea that by making this information visible, both companies are solvent regardless of the money trouble. The ethos of PG and E, and the web page is then adjusted from negative and untrustworthy to positive and trustworthy.

Indirect Goods and Services Group
The *Indirect Goods and Services* group presents product information as well as company status for wholesale buyers and investors. ConAgra and Pepsico make several food brands, DuPont and Honeywell deal with chemicals, electronics, and technology research, Philip Morris manufactures tobacco products, and Georgia-Pacific produces paper and related products.

Companies in this group use more color, visual images, and navigation tools to present their respective purposes to users while keeping text at a minimum. Honeywell positions an oval-shaped photo image of three computer monitors under the text “Solutions for...” in the primary functional space (*App. D-2*). User attention notices the computers and identifies with the company as one that deals with technology and possibly science. They also use a separate box depicting the Statue of Liberty’s torch with the red colored text “Honeywell Homeland Security” to establish information presence of their role in America’s security effort. Identification for users results in connections with the Statue of Liberty as a symbol for America and with the term Homeland Security in light of the 9-11 tragedy. Honeywell’s ethos improves as a company with the country’s best interests at heart. DuPont periodically changes its images within a large oval, similar to their logo shape, on their main page showing, as in this instance, a shadow of healthy crops, a bottle of some chemical, field irrigation apparatus, and Pioneer’s company logo (*App. D-1*). The image movement as well as the image content directs user attention to this information. Users can then identify with any one of the multiple images that appear in a wide range of ways—with crop production, with environmental issues, with the food supply, with science, with innovation i.e. Pioneer, the term. Navigation tools are readily available all over these two sites providing users access to more detailed information about Honeywell and DuPont’s respective research. Design
practices, on both websites, present the companies as professional, scientific, and timely with their research and products in an effort to enhance their ethos for users. In these two cases, the perception of ethos as design directs it should be favorable, but if user experience brought to bear upon the site is negative in relation to anything on the site, then, ethos more than likely will be unfavorable.

Visual images and a dominant red color frame ConAgra’s main page directing users’ attention to the center focus of the food brands they manufacture and market. This use of color to begin the indication of presence leads to visual images that cement information presence for users. The focal image of a happy, young boy holding a bucket full of bags of peanuts, and the grocery sack showing other ConAgra brand name products go hand-in-hand with the text “We Have the Brands People Trust” (App. D-3). These visuals trigger identification for users by causing a memory recall of seeing the food products on store shelves and by connecting users to the idea that ConAgra foods must be good for growing, active children like young baseball players. Additional images of prepared food complement the company’s recipe section “From the kitchens of ConAgra Foods” (also set off by red colored background), and draws extra attention to a special “Meals on Wheels” program with an appealing TV dinner meal. Enough text explanation is included to entice users to click through this homepage to deeper levels of the website to learn more about ConAgra’s products and thereby ConAgra. By viewing this site, users are led to believe, then, that ConAgra produces healthy, tasty foods for all ages from youth through senior citizen, prepared in their own kitchens. Thus, design practices contribute to the enhancement of ConAgra’s webpage and company ethos.
Philip Morris USA is a company possessing questionable credibility due to lawsuits regarding their tobacco products. Their main page displays company information in the primary functional space in shades of their unifying blue color. The information is in pseudo horizontal listing format set apart with bullets under specific section headings. Immediately, users recognize, or identify with the modified conventional page layout. They understand how to navigate around Philip Morris’s homepage. The information that seems most present, and suggests action, is the prevention/help programs located in specific individual shapes in the secondary functional space. Color emphasizes the shapes drawing user attention to them, and highlights the text, as does the enlarged text font size, with gray, pale green and a lighter blue, within each shape. Visual images are scarce with the exception of two arrows and one “>” to further suggest that user’s should click first on the prevention/help program areas (See Fig. 6). The layout, visual images and navigation options on this page space, as embedded in the web page design, subdue the other company and product specific information (the information that has earned Philip Morris questionable credibility). Even though users may be familiar with the lawsuits in Philip Morris’s past regarding their tobacco products and may be skeptical of the company’s worth, the design practices used to display and promote their prevention programs on the web site may cause users to rethink their identification with Philip Morris. Users may be tempted to enhance the company ethos, if only in a small degree, to one of a company trying to make good for society. At the same time, users may be curious about how a balance of good and evil can exist in such a company and choose to click further into the website to learn more.

Georgia-Pacific and Pepsico are two websites that are a bit out of the mainstream
Fig. 6. Philip Morris' use of design practices to enhance ethos is necessary for them in light of lawsuits connected to their products (www.philipmorrisusa.com).

concerning web page design in comparison to the other companies in this group. Georgia-Pacific is text heavy with information about special offers, certain products and current news items pertaining to them (App. D-5). Information is chunked and illustrations comprise the visual images accompanied by explanatory text pieces, on the homepage. The layout doesn't inspire favorable ethos since in comparison it seems and feels similar to a newsletter rather than a website. Links lead to deeper levels of the site, but only if users are interested in a particular contest or program such as “Win a Personal Chef for a Year!” or “Education Station.” Presence is established to some degree with the chunking and the illustrations, but it doesn't seem to function as strong, or maybe not at all if users aren't interested in winning a chef or in education station. Identification in this case may be triggered that this webpage is
boring and vicariously so it the rest of the website, or if the user is particularly interested in one piece that catches their eye, say the chef contest, then identification may go with the idea of how nice it might be to have someone else cook for a whole year. It may be that GP is so large, as indicated by the drop down menu “GP’s family of sites,” that the more exciting sibling company pages exist elsewhere and warrant exploring at their respective URL’s, but from GP’s homepage that possible jump doesn’t seem like a likely choice users would make. Pepsico is similar in this sense, as the horizontal menu bar across the top, signaled by inverted triangles, offers more specific information departments within this site (App. D-6). Again, only if a user if particularly interested in locating specific information that can be found through the menu, it seems unlikely users would identify with the homepage or the website as one to stay on for very long. Mostly Pepsico’s homepage is a list of the first lines of news articles about themselves and their products, given presence through bold font style to the leads of the articles. Stock information and investor updates are also listed on Pepsico’s homepage, noticed by the contrasting color of the text blocks in which the information is located, making it uninteresting, in my opinion, to most users. Ethos in both of these cases is minimally affected by information display, and design practices as used produce a neutral rather then an enhanced or a reduced host and page ethos not evident on the other sites.
CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION

Web design practices—page layout, visual images, and navigational tools—are in effect functioning as rhetorical devices on web pages. These three practices work in sync to contribute to a company ethos for users by causing some information to be brought to the forefront of human consciousness while de-emphasizing or pushing other pieces into the background, thereby establishing information presence. These practices then trigger identification to occur for users that most often enhances page, site, and company ethos. The cooperation between web design and rhetoric was more pronounced on certain corporate pages than others, particularly the Philip Morris site, the PG and E site, and the Bank One site in the study sample. Enhancement of ethos was more evident for these companies because of the contributions web design practices made to their web pages and vicariously their respective situation.

The web design practices used on Philip Morris’ site, for example, brought the mission of being a responsible production company and their call to prevent youth smoking into the forefront of user consciousness (App. D-4). While presence was given to these elements, the practices hid important information such as tobacco lawsuit cases and surgeon general reports, de-emphasizing these topics. Information that is negative regarding tobacco products is not the first seen, when a user looks at the page, since attention is directed to Philip Morris’ mission and the “Talk They’ll Listen” areas. Directing user focus away from negative elements to positive ones triggers an identification, and a potentially enhanced website ethos, to try to persuade viewers that Philip Morris isn’t such an evil company after all.
The design practices used on PG and E’s page produce a similar result (*App. C-3*). Visual images of facets of company operations flash before users’ eyes. However, the first information piece users are drawn to is the plan to deal with Chapter 11, located in the center of the page space and bordered in yellow-orange, labeled as “Information on Pacific Gas and Electric Company’s Proposed Chapter 11 Settlement Agreement.” The presence of the Chapter 11 information positions users to identify with bankruptcy in corporate America where companies are combining to survive financially. Other informational items such as company overview and employment are hidden, de-emphasized, by placement in the top navigation bar using a gray color and a reduced font size. Details of the Chapter 11 status appear as links under the heading “In the news” on the main page. In this situation, the design practices direct user attention to the financial situation of PG and E, and what they are doing to correct it, in an effort to enhance the company ethos to that of fiscal stability.

The design practices used on the Bank One website inspire users to engage in the site by appealing to the individual through easy access to account services. The “You” and the “Your Business” headers on the page with drop-down menus of banking options underneath are most prominent, drawing user attention first (*App. A-1*). These highlighted sections surrounded by action verbs such as go, switch, choose, and enroll in text, and visual images of smiling, happy people inspire, through identification, confidence in Bank One. The people in the images are happy, therefore users could/should be happy, too. Orange shaded “GO” navigation buttons adjacent to the account links of “Checking and Savings,” “Credit Cards,” Investment Services,” and “Home Equity & Loans” in the center of the primary space, and the slogan phrase “For financial solutions, we’re the smart choice” suggest users click into the site to find solutions. Identification is triggered so that users can easily find options to
meet their financial needs in a fiscally difficult time. Ethos is enhanced: Bank One can help. Likewise, the design practices used on the Dell site stir confidence not only in Dell products and services but also in the idea that Dell is for the average customer—in the home and in other areas of society (*App. B*-2). The products sections, partitioned off by lines but all located under one blue bar, list links naming locations Dell products might be used and provide a brief summary of what customers will find if they click through the homepage for more information. Presence is given to the “Home and Home Office” section, causing users to notice it first. Above this, the image of happy, seemingly average people enjoying use of a Dell computer captures user attention and triggers identification that Dell products are easy and enjoyable to use. Links listed adjacent to the “Home and Home Office” section give the impression that Dell products are used everywhere—in business, in education, in the home—further inspiring users to trust and become a Dell user. Interestingly, Dell uses the heading “New Dell Solutions,” also at the top of the page, to introduce a list of the newest products. In this way, too, Dell triggers identification for users that inspires confidence that their products are timely solutions to technology needs. Ethos for Dell is enhanced because the perception is that Dell has technology answers for the average person.

**Trends**

Three trends appeared as commonplace on all twenty corporate websites: limited text use, visual images, and considerable use of navigation tools. These design practices play major roles in establishing presence, triggering identification, and in turn, influencing host and web page ethos.

It was evident, in this study, that reduced text use on corporate websites was the
norm. The design practice of limited text use facilitated the speed of digital communication in terms of user behavior—scan first, read carefully later. Text on the homepages of all the websites served primarily as a labeling function. Labels either identified areas of the page space for users or signaled a link leading to specific information within the site. Companies that offered users services online, such as Bank One (App. A-1), Bell South (App. B-1), and Dell (App. B-2), sported more page area labels due to the variety of services available. Likewise, their link labels appealed to the human through imperative phrase structure, inclusion of the pronoun “you,” and active words like “exciting” and “special.” These design efforts triggered identification for users of personal attention given to consumers by the respective companies. On the other hand, companies that dealt indirectly with consumers, like El Paso (App. C-4), Honeywell (App. D-2), and Pepsico (App. D-6), displayed less area labels because their companies provide goods to larger entities and indirectly to consumers. The link labels on these sites were less personal, leaving out “you” and action verbs such as “Go.”

Additional text on the websites served to support links by providing brief explanations of link paths, or provided directions, in the form of imperative phrases, for users to follow. On Georgia-Pacific’s site (App. D-5), a link labeled “Take me there” is accompanied by explanatory text stating why users should click on this link—“Expand your vocabulary, get answers to your questions and learn how Georgia-Pacific’s products are made.” Users identify with such elements as company efforts to help them find the information they seek. Philip Morris (App. D-4) uses text in a similar way, under their “Smoking and Pregnancy” link, to direct users to “Learn more about the Surgeon General’s 2001 Report ‘Women and Smoking,’ which includes information on smoking and
pregnancy.” In effect, then, Georgia-Pacific and Philip Morris, by employing text this way, provide instructions to users regarding where to click into their websites. Companies like DuPont (App. D-1) and Mirant (App. C-5) don’t include additional text that provides information about where links will lead on their main pages. Limited text use does sustain a professional feel to corporate web sites, triggering identification that these companies admit users into the fast-paced world of high-tech business without all of the technical jargon of corporate documents. In this small way, company ethos is enhanced.

Companies in this study capitalized on the contributions that visual images made to their web pages. Photo images appearing on some websites lend a more personal appeal to the ethos and direct user attention to specific elements on the pages. ConAgra deals with food products that people consume. They display a photo image of a boy, thereby providing a connection between users and the food (App. D-3). Users identify with the image by putting themselves into the shoes of the boy as they view and access the site. PG and E employs photo images of workers on the job leading users to judge that capable people handle the company (App. C-3). Such images are intended to make users feel safe and secure with the idea that PG and E is operating properly. Disney, likewise, uses cartoon images to signal enjoyment while causing users to identify with entertainment options on their website (App. B-6). Users may experience a warm, fuzzy feeling and might elicit a smile while visiting Disney online—it is just plain fun. On the impersonal side, sites such as Honeywell and DuPont use images that attract attention, while giving information presence, but don’t provide a personal connection, or strong identification, for users. Honeywell displays images of computer monitors, a thermostat, and an airplane—less personal in nature—requiring a stretch for a connection to be made with users (App. D-2). DuPont shows muted images of
products in an active image superimposed over each other potentially triggering identification for users that signals a distance between the general user and their company, yet the images do draw user attention to the website (App. D-1).

Ample use of navigational tools, in the form of text, icon, and image links, provide efficient and effective information access for users on these sites. Each corporate website’s homepage can be identified as similar to an elevator button panel with multitudes of destinations from which to select for more information on some aspect of the company. Bank of America, for instance, can send a user to buy a house by accessing their “Loans and Home Buying” link, or allow a user to pay a bill online through their “Account Services” link (App. A-2). Phillips 66 takes users to a gas station nearby with their “Station Locator” and “Find a Phillips 66 Station” links. Or “Gasoline Questions and Answers” can be found by clicking this link on the Phillips 66 site (App. B-3). Users can pick up “Energy Saving Tips/Rebates” by accessing this link at Aquila, or they can find their home utility information by logging in as a customer (App. C-1). Users can obtain recipes with ConAgra food products by clicking on the “great recipes” link, or see what jobs are open on the “Career” link in the menu bar (App. D-3). The application of multiple navigation options in the design of these corporate sites satisfies a major function of digital communication on the World Wide Web—providing access to more information at deeper levels of each site.

Implications

While the method of analysis proposed here provides some valuable insights into how the rhetorical tenets of ethos, presence, and identification function under the guise of web design practices on web sites, it is only a small step in bridging the gap between web
designers, information architects, and rhetoric. Multiple implications surfaced from this study in the areas of work place application, questions for further study, and in classroom application that would be beneficial to examine.

Bridging the gap between the disciplines would provide a common vocabulary for professionals. Currently much web design, particularly in the corporate sector, is a collaborative team effort including specialists in graphic design, software development, usability, marketing, cartography, vocabulary, programming, and others (Rosenfeld and Morville 315-322). Web designers in particular would benefit from understanding the role ethos and presence play in directing user attention to information displayed on web pages. Understanding also that ethos and presence, as indicated by design practices, leads to users identifying with information elements, that in turn can determine user behavior with the page, would ensure that web design practices are most effectively used. A common vocabulary for web design teams would make the planning, construction, testing and implementation of web sites more efficient.

Including a specialist in rhetoric to this mix would add insight into website communication in terms of literacy and discourse management. Since discourse is socially constructed, rhetoric scholars would provide insight into the roles that culture, environment, situation, and audience play in it. Also, rhetoric is a resource for not only understanding the function of multiple discourses and multiple modes, but also for providing advice and potential guidelines that would enhance [web page] discourse. Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen write that discourses serve as a template that can be used to create a coherent message, “discourses represent organizations of knowledge, values, and taste and each therefore provides a kind of template into which that which is to be designed can be fitted.
The ensemble of all these discourses together has to be designed so that at the very least a semblance of coherence exists in the material (textual) object which is its realization" (61). With the multiplicity of digital communication and the multiple literacies that function there, a critical eye is needed to see that coherence of the ensemble that becomes a web page functions as an effective discourse.

Additionally, rhetoric can provide information and guidance into user behavior on web pages. It is common knowledge that a primary function of web pages is to provide access to information, “Information readily classified, and ease of access to information, is here the taken-for-granted starting point of website communication” (Kress 138). However, as the information age progresses and electronic communication advances, website design communication will be responsible for more in production and reception of information. Not only do the behaviors of web page creators need to be examined, but user behaviors such as perception have to be considered as well when planning and designing a website. “In perception…a meaningful whole is created and characterized by the relationship of the parts to each other. When all of the elements come together, their mutual influence creates a different entity held in balance by internal forces, which include the past experience and current needs of the person creating it” (Barry 81). The different entity of which Barry speaks could take on characteristics of assorted modes and employ various literacies to be understood. Users as participants in web page discourse need to be able to understand the message content exhibited through the design process as well as web designers themselves, “the design process in the multimodal world involves selection of discourses and selection of modes through which content-in-discourse will be realized” (Kress and Van Leeuwen 64). The design process for web pages must, then, be done carefully, considering user
characteristics such as how they read, “‘reading’ is now a distinctly different activity to what it was in the era of the traditional page. Reading is the imposing of the reader’s order on this entity, an order which, while of course responding to what is here, derives from criteria of the reader’s interest, disposition and desire” (Kress 138). The entity of the web page, and the creation of it, would benefit from input provided by a specialist in rhetoric leading to more efficient web page design processes and more effective web page communication.

As a result of a common vocabulary and of bridging the gap, a stronger partnership would be forged between the professions involved in web design. The contribution each specialist brings to the web design project would be more clearly understood, more respected and ultimately deemed critical to web page communication. This enhanced cooperation between professions would produce more effective web page designs because the balance of expertise would assist strategy and design initiatives and provide continuity for a project (Rosenfeld and Morville 21). The shared knowledge and practice, then, would be beneficial for the producers and for users receiving web page communication. At the same time the collaboration would open up conversation leading to opportunities for experimentation with design practices on web page communication.

Shared knowledge and practice between disciplines would pay big benefits in the classroom. With the shift in education toward visual communication, activities and lessons could be created that include manageable doses of rhetorical theory linked to design theory and application. One activity I used in a Technical and Business Writing class, for instance, asked students to view a web page online and determine where their eyes were drawn first. The ensuing discussion provided a segue into the use of design practices for establishing presence while at the same time allowing me an opportunity to expose my students to
Perelman's notion of presence. This type of classroom innovation would produce students capable of making informed choices regarding the most effective way to display information for users.

The effectiveness of information display for users raises other questions linked directly to this project. For example, what impact on rhetorical analysis would active web pages have as compared to screen shots of the information displays that freeze the information in time? Most of the sites used in this study maintained their respective page design for an extended period of time with minor changes to appearance and content. Often these changes were information updates to ensure recency or were in response to events within their company. ConAgra, for example, replaced visual and text information from the primary space of their homepage with a condolence message expressing their concern for their employees in light of a recent shooting in their Kansas City plant (See Fig. 7). A few of the sites exhibited total redesigns while the rest did not change at all. Considering the factor of active page versus screen shot page would change the results of the analysis.

An additional factor of web page information displays that would affect this study would be the multiplicity of types of web pages online. Types of pages hosted by local, state, and federal government, by non-profit agencies, personal homepages, by small businesses and other categories would elicit different findings in this analysis. Another consideration that would change the results of this study would be the balance between rhetorical theory and design theory used. This study is primarily from a rhetorical perspective with design theory used for definition of design practices. If more design theory was incorporated and a clearer understanding of design from that perspective was presented, how would the findings
Our Thoughts Are With Our Employees in Kansas City

On Friday, July 2 shortly after 5 p.m. (CDT), several employees in our Refrigerated Foods plant in Kansas City, Kansas were killed, and several others were injured, by gunfire from another employee.

"Our hearts go out to the victims, their families and the employees at the plant, and we’re going to do everything we can to help them get through the situation," said Bruce Rohde, chairman and CEO, ConAgra Foods.

Counselors and employee assistance personnel have been made available to employees and their families. The company is working closely with police to provide them with the information they need to conduct their investigation. Ensuring the ongoing safety and security of our employees remains a company priority.

Kansas City Refrigerated Foods Plant to Reopen Tuesday, July 6

KC Plant Establishes Memorial Fund for Families

Ensuring the ongoing safety and security of our employees remains a company priority.

Fig. 7. ConAgra Foods changed their homepage design in reaction to events at one of their manufacturing plants (www.conagra.com).

Aspects of web pages that fall into the realm of usability and user experience would alter the findings of this study as well. Even though Krug writes that usability “really just means making sure that something works well: that a person of average (or even below average) ability and experience can use the thing...for its intended purpose without getting hopefully frustrated,” (5), usability encompasses more specific issues of web design that deal
with user behavior on the web. Behaviors like user scanning of pages and muddling through pages versus users completely understanding how to access a page would affect the web design process. The prior experiences users bring to a web page also would affect how designers display information. With the classroom activity mentioned earlier, older students' eyes were first drawn to the company logo whereas younger students' eyes were drawn first to differences in the overall page design. My guess is that the older students' prior experience with the company overruled their notice of design differences intended to direct the eye to other information on the page. The specialty of usability would involve the web design team focusing on web page design from the user perspective that would indeed affect the findings of this study.

There is evidence, then, that the rhetorical tenets of ethos, Perelman's notion of presence, and Burke's notion of identification are indeed functioning in cooperation with web design practices on web pages to influence user attention to and perception of online information. The phenomenon of the rhetorical tradition and digital communication cooperating with web page construction to produce communication needs to be further explored. This exploration would facilitate the bridging of the gap between digital communication specialists, i.e. web designers, information architects, and rhetoricians. Not only would the additional effects of this joining become apparent, but also the exploration would help establish to what degree web designers and information architects would benefit from knowing about the rhetorical tenets of ethos, presence, and identification as well as to what degree rhetoricians would benefit from knowing about design practices and principles. Rhetoric, truly, is alive and well in the digital information age.
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Appendix A. Data samples of Financial Group Fortune 100 web sites

A-1. Bank One (www.bankone.com)
A-2. Bank of America (www.bankofamerica.com)

Online Banking

my user: Learn more | sign in

Small Business

Online Clocking with Bill Pay & Other Services

My Account: Services

Sign Nl" Ms

Shortcuts

Account Services

Transfer Check

Taxes & Calculators

ATM & Banking Centers

© ATMS Banking Centers

Online

Online Banking Center

© Bank of America

Search

Online Banking

Products & Services

Account Services

Online Banking with Bill Pay | Other Services

Checking & Savings

Overview | Checking Accounts | Savings Accounts | CD's

Cards

Credit Cards | Check Cards | Gift Cards | Teen Visa

Leads & Home Buying

Overview | Mortgages | InMort | Home Equity | Auto Loans | Education & Other Loans

Investments & Wealth Management

Investment Services | Premier Banking & Investments | The Private Bank | IRAs | Nations Funds | Trust Services | Future Scholar 529 | Charitable Giving Program

Specialized Banking & Additional Services

Retail Bank | Student Banking | Accessible Banking | Foreign Currency | Travelers Cheques | Safe and Secure Money

In Spanish

Página Principal | Cuentas de Cheques y de Ahorros | Tarjeta Cheque Card | Tarjetas de Crédito | Préstamos y

Comprar de una Casa

In the Community

Community Development Banking | Foundation | Environment | Sponsorships | Team Bank of America | Bank of America Securities Sponsorships

Careers at Bank of America

Career Opportunities | Youth Job Program | Bank of America Securities Careers

Bank of America News

Newsroom | Featured Research

Shareholders

Investor Relations | Annual Report | Facts About the Corporation | Bank of America Stock

Privacy & Security

Overview | Privacy Policy | Information Security

Accessible Banking

Overview | Talking ATMs Banking from Home or Office | Accessible Accounts and Services

Suppliers

Supplier Relations | Multicultural Supplier Development

International

Bank of America Asia, Ltd.

Leadership

*The reason Bank of America is in business is to help make people's financial lives a little simpler and to help people achieve their dreams. We fulfill this purpose by reading everything we do for our customers, our shareholders, our associates and our communities, up to the extent of the very best of our company name.

Kenneth D. Lewis

Chairman and CEO

Higher Standards

We are committed to our communities. We are committed to our associates. We are committed to our shareholders. And we are committed to our customers, to the extent of the very best of our company name.

Protect Against Online Fraud

Learn how to protect yourself against online fraud and identity theft. More information.

Capital Market Outlook

For the week of March 13, 2004

H.1. Economic Projections

For the week of March 13, 2004

Weekly Updates

Capital Market Center

Get the latest

Career Opportunities

Be a part of an inclusive organization that's winning in a diverse, global marketplace.

Search job
Appendix B. Data samples of Direct Goods and Services Group Fortune 100 web sites

B-1. Bell South (www.bellsouth.com)
B-2. Dell (www.dell.com)

New Dell Inspiron 9100
With So Much Power and Performance, It May be the Only Multimedia System You Need!

Start Browsing for Products & Services
- Home & Home Office
- Small Business
- Government: Education
- Customer Service
- Dell Ventures
- Dell Patents

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About Dell
- Rollins Named Dell’s Next Chief Executive Officer, Michael Dell to Remain Active Chairman of the Board
- Dell Posts Record Operating Results in Fiscal Fourth Quarter
- More Details

RollenlS Named Dell's Next Chief Executive Officer, Michael Dell to Remain Active Chairman of the Board
Twenty years after founding Dell, Michael Dell will transfer the title of chief executive officer to Kevin Rollins
More Details

Dell Posts Record Operating Results in Fiscal Fourth Quarter
Dell’s fiscal fourth-quarter 2004 was its best operating period ever. The company achieved record product shipments, revenue, operating earnings, income, and earnings per share.
More Details

Working With Dell
- Dell Logo Usage Policies
- Dell Ventures
- Diversity Programs
- Supplier Diversity
- Dell Technology Updates
- Dell Patents

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| Station Locator | On August 30, 2002, the merger transaction between Phillips Petroleum Company and Conoco Inc. was completed to create ConocoPhillips. For more information, visit www.conocophillips.com. |
| Credit Cards | |
| Fuels Technology | • Buy A Driver Access Cash Card |
| Lubricants | Give a Driver Access cash card to your friends, relatives or co-workers for Christmas gifts, anniversaries and birthdays, graduations, or any special occasion. |
| Aviation | • Find a Phillips 66 Station |
| Aviation Oil | Let our Station Locator help you find the best spot to fill up your automobile, boat or plane. Phillips 66 branded gasolines are sold in 26 states throughout the nation. |
| Propane | • Gasoline Questions & Answers |
| Pipeline | Phillips understands that price fluctuations at the pump can be frustrating. Find out what's behind the ups and downs. |
| Sponsorships | |
| Merchandise | |
| Become an Owner or Operator | |

**ConocoPhillips**

ConocoPhillips is an international, integrated energy company. It is the third largest integrated energy company in the United States, based on market capitalization, oil and gas proved reserves, production, and the largest refiner in the United States. Worldwide, of non-government controlled companies, ConocoPhillips has the eighth largest total of proved reserves and is the fourth largest company worldwide.

ConocoPhillips is known worldwide for its technological expertise in deepwater exploration and production, reservoir management and exploitation, 3-D seismic technology, high-grade petroleum upgrading and sulfur removal.

Headquartered in Houston, Texas, ConocoPhillips operates in more than 40 countries. The company has approximately 39,000 employees worldwide and assets of $62.5 billion. ConocoPhillips is listed on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol "COP."

The company has four core activities worldwide:

- Petroleum exploration and production
- Petroleum refining, marketing, supply and transportation
- Natural gas gathering, processing and marketing, including a 30.3 percent interest in Duke Energy Field Services, LLC.
- Chemicals and plastics production and distribution through a 50 percent interest in Chevron Phillips Chemical Company LLC

In addition, the company is investing in several emerging businesses — fuels technology, bio-to-liquids, power generation and emerging technologies — that provide current and potential future opportunities.
B-4. MCI-WorldCom (www.mci.com)

Discover Our Worldwide Connection.

Join The Neighborhood™ and get unlimited local, long distance and high speed Internet service together for one low monthly price, or choose the long distance calling plan that's right for you.

MCI Completes Digex Acquisition
November 19, 2003
Following the completion of its tender offer for all of the outstanding shares of Class A Common Stock of Digex, Digex Acquisition, Inc., an indirect wholly owned subsidiary of MCI, was merged into Digex. [more]

Our Company
With more than 20 million customers around the world, MCI is a leader in business and residential communications services.

Our Network
MCI's extensive global network is a key advantage for customers of all sizes. MCI owns and operates network facilities throughout North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region.

Investor Relations
Submit an inquiry online.

Career Center
Appendix C. Data samples of Energy Group Fortune 100 websites

C-1. Aquila (www.aquila.com)

Aquila, Inc. (NYSE:ILA) operates electricity and natural gas distribution networks in the U.S. and in Canada, as well as non-regulated power generation assets. Aquila is based in Kansas City, Missouri.

Aquila employees are guided by the company’s Code of Business Conduct and other corporate governance documents. Details about these documents are available under Investors.

Aquila Networks serves 439,000 electric distribution customers in three states: Missouri, Kansas and Colorado; and 991,000 natural gas distribution customers in seven states: Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa, Michigan and Minnesota. Diagrams of Aquila’s natural gas system are available on the company’s website.

The Energy Resources group of Aquila Networks is responsible for U.S. regulated power activities, including fuel, purchase of wholesale electric power, capacity services and regional transmission and distribution of electricity.

Aquila, Inc. operates electricity and natural gas distribution networks in the U.S. and in Canada, as well as non-regulated power generation assets. Aquila is based in Kansas City, Missouri.

Aquila’s asset portfolio includes generation, natural gas transportation, and a coal fired power plant. We currently serve utility and industrial clients in several parts of the United States. Aquila announced in 2023 that it has signed an agreement to sell its interest in 12 of the independent power plants.

Efforts by Everest connections, majority owned by Aquila, Inc., are concentrated in the Kansas City, Missouri, metropolitan area. The company offers a range of broadband services to residential and business customers, including local and long-distance cable television and high-speed Internet/data services.

About Aquila

Company Overview

Based in Kansas City, Missouri, Aquila, Inc. (NYSE:ILA) operates electricity and natural gas distribution networks across the United States and in Canada, as well as non-regulated power generation assets. Aquila is based in Kansas City, Missouri.

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TXU Energy

The TXU family of companies has provided Texans with reliable energy service and energy saving options for 100 years.

Residential Services
- Residential Services Home
- Customer Service
- E-Bill Login
- Payment Options
- Sign Up For Service

Small and Medium Business
- Small and Medium Business Home
- Customer Service
- E-Bill Login
- Payment Options
- Request a Quote

Large Business
- Tailored commodity and non-commodity products for customers whose annual peak demand exceeds 1MW**.
- Large Business Home
- Contract with Us
- Products and Services
- Gateway to My Account
- Energy Pricing

Wholesale
- We offer municipalities, cooperatives, generators and retailers innovative financial solutions backed by 19GW of generation.

About Us
TXU Energy provides electricity and energy-related services to residential customers, small or medium business, or large business customers.

A Solid Heritage
TXU Energy is part of TXU, a company that has proudly served Texans for over 100 years.
- With over 2.7 million customers, we're the largest competitive electricity provider in Texas and across the U.S. (REP Certificate Number 10004). Whether you're a residential customer, small or medium business, or a large business customer, TXU Energy can help you control energy costs while receiving high quality, dependable electric service.

A Solid Community Partner
TXU has established a rich legacy as a good corporate citizen with more than 100 years of active community involvement. Some examples include:
- Named as Volunteer Center of Dallas County 2003 volunteer of the year in recognition of our efforts to develop an urban tree

*Annual peak demand from single meter or an aggregation of meters exceeding 1MW.
C-3. PG and E Corporation (www.pgecorp.com)

Our Businesses

PG&E Corporation is an energy-based holding company headquartered in San Francisco. It is the parent company of Pacific Gas and Electric Company and National Energy & Gas Transmission, Inc.

Contact Information

For more information about PG&E Corporation, please contact one of the following departments.

- For general information about PG&E Corporation and directory assistance, please call 415-267-7000.
- For individual shareholders with general questions about PG&E Corporation or Pacific Gas and Electric Company, contact the Office of the Corporate Secretary at 415-267-7070.
- For securities analysts, portfolio managers and other representatives of the investment community, contact the Investor Relations Department at 415-267-7500 or invr@pge.com.
- For members of the media, contact the Corporate Communications Department at 800-PGE-NEWS (800-743-6397).

Annual Report to Shareholders
Environmental Report
El Paso Corporation (www.elpaso.com)

in the news

December 18, 2003
El Paso Eastern Pipeline Group Announces Open Seasons For Bahamas-To-Florida Pipeline Project

December 15, 2003
Enterprise and GulfTerra To Merge Forming $13 Billion Midstream Energy Partnership

December 16, 2003
El Paso Corporation Announces Long-Range Plan

December 8, 2003
El Paso Corporation Announces Long-Range Plan Webcast

our values

Corporate profile

El Paso Corporation’s purpose is to provide natural gas and related energy products in a safe, efficient, dependable manner. We own North America’s largest natural gas pipeline system and are one of North America’s largest independent natural gas producers.

Links:

Our Goals
Our Financial Outlook
Fit for Purpose Organization
Our Values

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Mirant is a competitive energy company that produces and sells electricity in North America, the Caribbean, and the Philippines. Mirant owns or controls more than 22,000 megawatts of electric generating capacity globally. We operate an integrated asset management and energy marketing organization from our headquarters in Atlanta.

Mirant is defining the future of energy. Our integrated business model combines the physical ownership and control of power generation and natural gas assets with energy risk management and marketing. This integrated model enables the company to effectively manage the risks inherent to the energy business—including fuel prices, energy demand, and weather—and to optimize the value of our diverse portfolio of generating plants and gas assets. We believe it's the right business model for the industry.
Appendix D. Data samples of Indirect Goods and Services Group Fortune 100 web sites

D-1. DuPont (www.dupont.com)

DuPont Global

The miracles of science

United With Our Spanish Colleagues and Friends

DuPont Worldwide

D1C X 350

DuPont Overview

A company snapshot of DuPont today. Includes vital stats, quick facts and details on the DuPont vision and values.

DuPont Heritage

Take a journey through more than 200 years of scientific discovery. Innovation and progress at the DuPont Heritage Web site—the ultimate one-stop destination for learning about our company and its rich history.

Meet the Executives

Biographies of senior leaders, group heads, and selected functional heads. High-resolution (TIF format) images suitable for publication can be downloaded from individual bio pages.

Subsidiaries

Listings for subsidiary companies.

Contact info for our offices in more than 70 countries in the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa.

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Honeywell and NASA Launch Innovative Educational ‘Rock Tour’

PHOENIX, March 8, 2004 — Honeywell (NYSE: HON) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Launch Innovative Educational ‘Rock Tour’

Honeywell’s five-city, six-week tour, the “Rock Tour,” is designed to reach 125,000 students in more than 130 middle schools in 100 communities to inspire the next generation to pursue science, math, engineering and technology careers.

The interactive campaign, which will feature educational exhibits, demonstrations and ‘live’ educational performances at each stop, will visit Phoenix, Austin, Chicago, Seattle and Denver. The tour kicks off today with an event at Phoenix’s Ahwatukee Community School.

The tour will feature real-life demonstrations of exciting and educational phenomena. The Chevrolet Corvette C5-R, and the NASA Space Shuttle will be showcased. Attendees will also have a chance to win a trip to Seattle to see NASA’s new Space Shuttle VAB preassembly facility.

Honeywell is a diversified technology and manufacturing leader of aerospace products and services; control technologies for buildings, homes and industry; automotive products; power generation systems; specialty chemicals; fibers; plastics and advanced materials.

The company is committed to providing quality products, integrated system solutions and services to customers around the world. Honeywell products touch the lives of most people every day, whether you’re flying on a plane, driving a car, heating or cooling a home, furnishing an apartment, taking medication for an illness or playing a sport.

Based in Morris Township, N.J., Honeywell employs approximately 100,000 people in 95 countries. Its shares are traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol HON, as well as on the London, Chicago and Pacific Stock Exchanges. It is one of the 30 stocks that make up the Dow Jones Industrial Average and is also a component of the Standard & Poor’s 500 Index.

Privacy Statement
**Leadership Initiatives**

*Packaged Foods*  - ConAgra Food's Package Foods segment includes the company's shelf-stable, refrigerated, and frozen products, which are sold to retailers and food service customers.

*Food Ingredients*  - ConAgra Food's Food Ingredients segment includes Specialty Ingredients, such as dehydrated vegetables and processed grains, and Basic Ingredients, such as flour and eggs, and Pastes. The company sources the best ingredients for all products.

*Agricultural Products*  - ConAgra Food's Agricultural Products segment reflects the distribution business of United Agri Products, which supplies crop inputs to growers and retailers in nearly every major region across North America as well as several worldwide markets.

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**INSIDE CONAGRA FOODS**

13 million

**IMPACTING HUNGER**

Feeding Children
Better is working to make a difference in the lives of America's 13 million "food insecure" children by opening KidCafes, donating delivery trucks, supplying logistics and computer expertise, and building awareness of the issue through public service announcements developed in conjunction with the Ad Council.

*ConAgra Foods*  - A premier senior meal solution in association with Meals on Wheels Association of America.

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**Packaged Foods**

*Food Ingredients*  - ConAgra Food's Food Ingredients segment includes Specialty Ingredients, such as dehydrated vegetables and processed grains, and Basic Ingredients, such as flour and eggs, and Pastes. The company sources the best ingredients for all products.

*Agricultural Products*  - ConAgra Food's Agricultural Products segment reflects the distribution business of United Agri Products, which supplies crop inputs to growers and retailers in nearly every major region across North America as well as several worldwide markets.

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**INSIDE CONAGRA FOODS**

13 million

**IMPACTING HUNGER**

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D-4. Philip Morris USA (www.philipmorrisusa.com)

Address: http://www.philipmorrisusa.com/about_us/default.asp

**About Us**

2002 marked the 100-year anniversary for our Company, Philip Morris & Co., incorporated as a small tobacco company in New York City in 1902. In 1940, Philip Morris remained the smallest among the six major tobacco companies in the U.S. Our focus on hiring the best people, producing the highest quality tobacco products, and serving our communities, has enabled our company to grow and execute with excellence, combined with a history of corporate philanthropy, and giving back to the communities where our employees live and work.

In 1998, Philip Morris USA became one of the largest cigarette companies in the world, and in 1999, Philip Morris had been the largest cigarette company in the country, and it remains the industry leader today because it continues to build on and improve upon those attributes that got us here.

Philip Morris USA Inc. home offices and facilities include headquarters in New York; manufacturing, processing and support facilities in the Richmond, Virginia area; a manufacturing facility in Cabarrus County, North Carolina; a sales office overlooking the U.S.; and an office in The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Our success comes from the diverse array of talented people at Philip Morris USA. Our employees range from world-class engineers and researchers to highly trained manufacturing professionals, or experts in sales, marketing, finance and corporate affairs. The company has enjoyed a low turnover of employees, including our unionized plant specialists, many of whom have spent their entire careers working for PM USA and whose diverse abilities have helped PM USA remain competitive and successful.


PM USA's retail share for the fourth quarter of 2003 led the industry at 49.1%, according to data from the IRI/Capstone Total Retail Panel.

The following chart summarizes retail share performance for PM USA's key brands in the fourth quarter of 2003, based on data from the IRI/Capstone Total Retail Panel:

- **Marlboro**: 38.5%
- **Parliament**: 1.7%
- **Virginia Slims**: 2.4%
- **Merit**: 4.2%
- **Kool**: 2.3%
- **Other**: 4.3%

**Community Involvement**

Visit these sections of philipmorrisusa.com for more information:

- Youth Smoking Prevention
- Smoking and Pregnancy
- Responsible Marketing
- Tobacco Settlement Agreement
- Marketing Practices
- Policies, Practices & Positions
- Customer Service
- Contact Us
- Join Mailing List
- Legislative Action Center
- Frequently Asked Questions

**Contact Us**

- Press Room
- Customer Service
- Media Relations
- Community Involvement
- Responsible Marketing
- Tobacco Settlement Agreement
- Marketing Practices
- Policies, Practices & Positions
- Youth Smoking Prevention
- Community Involvement
- lettuce
- Environment
- Legislation & Regulation
- Public Place Smoking
- Suppliers

**Instant Access**

- Youth Smoking Prevention
- Quitting Smoking
- Secondhand Smoke
- Tobacco Settlement Agreement
- TV Advertisements
Georgia-Pacific's building products distribution business will be sold to a new company owned by a private, New York-based investment firm and members of the distribution business's management team, in a transaction valued at approximately $812.5 million. Proceeds from the sale will be used to reduce debt.

2003 Earnings Improve; Debt and Expenses Reduced

Georgia-Pacific benefited from record housing starts and low interest rates last year, which led to increased demand for the company's structural panels and lumber. GP also made significant progress in reducing costs, repaying debt and reorganizing assets.

GP Reports Progress in Social Responsibility

Over the years, Georgia-Pacific has publicly reported our results in three primary areas of citizenship: social, economic and environmental. We've now updated and brought this information together in one place, our Social Responsibility Report.

Georgia-Pacific Project Center

Make a dog house, window box, and many other useful items.

Georgia-Pacific began in 1927 at an Augusta, Ga., hardwood lumber yard. Today, as one of the world's leading manufacturers and distributors of tissue, paper, packaging, building products, pulp and related chemicals, we employ more than 61,000 facilities in the United States, Canada and 11 other countries.

Careers

An overview of job and career opportunities available at Georgia-Pacific. Search open positions, send us your resume and learn about the benefits of working for GP, read about our diversity commitment, and connect with our college recruiters.

Community Involvement

Read about GP's investments in the communities where we operate and where our employees live. Find out how to apply for a Georgia-Pacific Foundation grant.

Environment

Review Georgia-Pacific's environmental briefs, current Environmental and Safety Report, and our environmental partners.

Facilities

Learn about some of Georgia-Pacific's U.S. mills and facilities, including those in Palatka, Fla., Cedar Springs, Ga., Modesto, Calif., Toledo, Ore., Big Island, Va., Camas, Wash., and Green Bay, Wis.

Forestry

Information about the geographic areas in which Georgia-Pacific buys timber, our commitment to sustainable forestry and our Forest Management Assistance Program for landowners.

History

Georgia-Pacific celebrated its 75th year in 2002. See our history unfold, decade by decade.

Investor Information

Georgia-Pacific's annual report, quarterly performance details, SEC filings, management presentations, and frequently asked questions.
D-6. PepsiCo (www.pepsico.com)

Overview

PepsiCo is a world leader in convenient foods and beverages, with revenues of about $25 billion and over 142,000 employees. The company consists of the business of Frito-Lay North America and the beverage and food businesses of PepsiCo Beverages and Foods, which includes PepsiCo Beverages North America, PepsiCo Beverages (Tropicana North America and Quaker Foods North America), PepsiCo International and方便面 business and beverage businesses of PepsiCo Beverages International. PepsiCo brands are available in nearly 200 countries and territories.

Many of PepsiCo's brand names are over 100-years-old, but the corporation is relatively young. PepsiCo was founded in 1965 through the merger of Pepsi-Cola and Frito-Lay. Tropicana was acquired in 1998 and PepsiCo merged with The Quaker Oats Company, including Gatorade, in 2001.

PepsiCo's success is the result of superior products, high standards of performance, distinctive competitive strategies and the high integrity of our people.

Our mission is to be the world's premier consumer products company focused on convenient foods and beverages. We seek to produce healthy food and beverage products with low-sodium, lower in fat, lower in sugar, lower in calories and lower in carbohydrates and calories than regular colas.

SHAREHOLDERS

PepsiCo (symbol: PEP) shares are traded principally on the New York Stock Exchange in the United States. The company is also listed on the Swiss and Tokyo stock exchanges. PepsiCo has consistently paid cash dividends since the corporation was founded.

CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP