Shawn M. Donnelley Center for Nonprofit Communications
2011-2012 annual report
The Donnelley Center dedicated the fall 2011 semester to reorganization and reorientation. Ten staff members were selected through a group interview process and took on the challenge of rebranding the Center. Through research, discussion and brainstorming, the staff worked to move the Center from one whose public perception was that of a graphic design studio, focused on logos and brochures, to that of a legitimate advertising and public relations agency. The emphasis was changed to one of service and communication solutions, rather than just tangibles.

Based on the skills of the staff, it was determined that graphics and publication design would be enhanced with public and media relations, event planning, strategic planning, education about communication needs and technology solutions, particularly social media.

Evaluations were sent to former clients to determine their satisfaction with the level of success of their work. Responses were slowed by lack of correct contact information and the transience of personnel in the nonprofits, particularly after Katrina.

Among the logistical tasks completed, the staff:
• cleaned up and organized old client files, updating information for a client database
• developed a new mission statement and began work on a strategic plan for the Center
• created a new online application process via Google docs for ease of application, consistency of client information and tracking at bit.ly/zF6HW7
• learned new skills, teaching each other important new software programs and methods of working with clients
• created a new process through which clients are reviewed and accepted or directed to other resources.

Among the promotional tasks tackled, the staff:
• set up and began regular use of social media sites on Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr
• contacted all previous clients via email to reintroduce the Center
• monitored other social media sites related to nonprofits and previous Center clients
• worked on designs for a new logo for the Donnelley Center

The semester was spent planning, training and reorganizing the physical layout of the Center. In determining the new direction of the Center, the staff focused on a smaller, more efficient operating system that would allow for one-on-one work with clients as well as team collaborations. It was decided that the “open lab” system that had been in place in the past was inefficient and did not serve the mission of the Center. The new layout used fewer workstations with more space for client meetings and display of work products. Plans were also put into place for a summer 2012 makeover with upgraded computers and new, more efficient workstations.

The spring 2012 semester saw the launch of the “new” Donnelley Center with an open house to welcome new community partners and to introduce the staff and the new services.

With an increased emphasis on education, the staff set up a series of workshops to inform nonprofits about particular skills useful to them and to showcase the services of the staff.

With the need for upgraded computers for the Center, it was decided that a complete renovation would enhance the other, organizational changes to the Center. A new layout that would provide better set-ups for workshops and visual presentations required a ceiling-mounted projector, and new client meeting processes necessitated a conference table. One Donnelley Center staffer was engaged for summer 2012 to assist with the removal of files, furniture and other materials to allow Physical Plant to come with for the refurbishing of the room.

For the year, Donnelley Center staffers put in approximately 1500 hours of work on behalf of the Center and nonprofits.
FALL 2011

While previous years had limited staff members to five, the number of positions would be determined by the number of suitable applicants who were eligible for federal work-study funds. The Center was encouraged to employ work-study students to increase the number of students working with nonprofits as part of the university’s commitment to community engagement.

Students were encouraged to apply through emails, announcements and informational signs on the SMC plasma screen. (See recruitment and application forms.)

Thirteen students applied in fall 2011 for staff positions at the Donnelley Center, including mass communication majors in all four sequences, a business major/mass comm minor and a third-year law student. Applicants were brought in for group interviews and were challenged to create a brief communication plan for a fictional nonprofit.

Emily Andras, Carolina Avila, Deidre Gallagher, Michelle Garcia and Monica Tolosa were hired as hourly staffers, working 10 hours per week. Ophelia Battle, Elizabeth Kunzig and Madie Robison were accepted as work-study students, also working 10 hours per week.

SPRING 2012

Because of the availability of additional students and an independent study student and the absence of one staffer on a study abroad program, the line-up for the spring changed slightly. Emily Andras, Carolina Avila, Deidre Gallagher, Michelle Garcia and Monica Tolosa remained as hourly staff. Ophelia Battle and Elizabeth Kunzig were joined by Danielle Latimer on work study, and Hedda Asmussen took on a one-hour independent study project.

FALL 2012

Most of the 2011-2012 staff asked to return as staff for the fall 2012 semester. Because of the effectiveness of the group interview/project selection process, the staff determined that this means of hiring should be continued. Applicants for the fall 2012 (upcoming) semester were invited to apply online and were asked to come in for individual interviews with the current staff. Following that, the 10 applicants were invited back in groups to tackle a brief campaign, which the current staff administered and evaluated. Five finalists were asked to submit writing samples based on a community partner's project; three submitted materials.

Emily Andras, Caro Avila and Monica Tolosa will be joined by Bridget Juelich as hourly staffers. Ophelia Battle, Danielle Latimer and Madie Robison will be joined by Jasmine Barnes as work-study students.

STAFF DUTIES

While staffers were not hired for specific job titles, several identified areas they wanted to specialize in and took the lead in those areas. Michelle Garcia had responsibility for technology, creating systems and processes that helped develop convenient and strategic flow of information. Monica Tolosa took charge of video production. Dee Gallagher was the public relations director, assisted by Danielle Latimer, who also worked with Caro Avila on social media efforts. Elizabeth Kunzig was the staff photographer. Emily Andras worked on events. Ophelia Battle and Madie Robison handled graphic design. Hedda Asmussen headed research.

In addition to skill sets, each staffer was a project leader for at least one nonprofit community partner’s projects and worked with other staffers as team members. Project leaders – and often, their team members – invite community partners in for interviews, information sessions and to evaluate and receive final versions of work.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

After re-opening in spring 2012, the Donnelley Center identified potential partners through an online application process (bit.ly/zF6HW7). Rather than respond to numerous emails and phone calls asking for a single project, the staff was able to get complete and appropriate information through the online application process and use that information to determine if the applicant met the 501(c)(3) requirements and had a project that fit the parameters of the Center. If it was decided during the weekly review process that the community partner was a good fit, a project leader was chosen to head up a team of 1-3 staffers working with that client. Interviews allowed the staff to get an even better idea of what the organization was seeking in terms of communication projects; deadlines were set during those client meetings.

After the February open house, applicants who called or emailed were directed to the online application. Over the course of the semester, 20 applicants contacted us and were reviewed. All of the applicants were accepted, but some projects were delayed until fall due to the scope of the project and time required for completion. One client – Second Harvest Food Bank – came to the Center as the partner for the Silver Scribe competition. Because there were no competitors in our division, the Center staff elected to do work for Second Harvest on their own.
Most of the partners continue to seek logos and design projects, but there is an increasing need for more strategic planning, particularly with events. Among the spring projects were several organizations seeking themes, sponsors and logistics assistance for their annual fundraisers. The ability to help with social and traditional media strategies has enhanced the staff’s assistance in fundraising efforts. Video and photography are also being requested with more frequency.

While no work is done during the summer due to lack of staff, most of the community partners that applied in the spring will continue as Donnelley clients in fall 2012.

SOCIAL MEDIA & PROMOTIONS

In fall 2012, the staff began work on materials for promotion, starting with the creation of a new logo for the Donnelley Center. The process took six months, but the staff developed cohesion, learned how to evolve and analyze work product and even included an aspect of primary research by having students and professionals look at some of their ideas. While the university has, as yet, not approved the use of the logo, it has been placed on internal materials and social media as a means of identifying the “new” Donnelley Center. Work will continue on the logo until it meets university standards and is available for use on external materials.

Brainstormed ideas for means to promoting the Center ranged from traditional to social media and promotional products. Because changes to the Loyno website were put on hold by the SACS accreditation needs, other avenues of communication and promotion were required. A loyno.edu email address was secured: donnelleycenter@loyno.edu. In addition, a gmail account was opened: donnelleycenter@gmail.com. Two Facebook pages were created: Donnelley Comm and Donnelley Center for Nonprofit Communications. A Twitter account was created: @DonnelleyCenter.

It was decided the Tumblr account would be an internal “yearbook” with photos and comments of interest to staff members, with no external access.

As of summer 2012, DonnelleyComm’s Facebook page had 289 friends. The Donnelley Center Facebook page had 50+ likes. The Twitter account had 250 followers and was following 423 other Twitter accounts. More than 600 Tweets had been posted. (See Facebook posts and Tweets.)

Plans with the IT department on campus call for the Donnelley Center website to be updated in September 2012.

Traditional media were included in promotional activities. Media releases were sent to announce staff selections, workshops and the open house. (See media releases.) A rack card was developed to provide a take-along for events and to hand out as needed. (See rack card.)

EVENTS

The Donnelley Center staff participated in and sponsored a number of events during the 2011-2012 year, using these opportunities to promote the Center, interact with nonprofits that might be potential community partners and share the services now being offered in the Center.

LIVING SOCIAL MEET & GREET

Emily King, from Living Social, talked with SMC students in November 2011. Following her presentation, the Donnelley Center sponsored a “meet and greet” to allow students to talk with her individually.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BAR FOUNDATIONS

The annual meeting of the National Conference of Bar Foundations was held in New Orleans this year, and the Donnelley Center was invited to make a presentation. Correspondence with Lorrie Albert, program committee chair, and Roseanne Lucianek, director of the division of bar services, indicated a need for assistance in developing “effective messages about their missions and how they are the philanthropic arm of the legal community.”

On Saturday, Feb. 4, three staffers – Michelle Garcia, Ophelia Battle and Danielle Latimer – and the director presented “Marketing for Non-Profits: Making Lasting Impressions” before approximately 40 attendees. (See correspondence and slide presentation.)

OPEN HOUSE

On Thursday, Feb. 2, the Center staff hosted an open house for potential community partners and to kick off the “new” Donnelley Center. Through emails from various databases — including previous clients, contacts from the SMC and LANO membership — more than 100 local nonprofit organizations were invited. Approximately 40 guests met staff members and were introduced to the new services provided by the Center, including presentation software and social media. Interested parties were invited to apply on-site to become community partners; the Center received eight applications that night. Attendees were asked to register, creating new database contacts for upcoming events and information. The open house also created an opportunity to invite nonprofits to the spring workshops. (See invitation, partial guest list and photos.)
WORKSHOPS: THE NONPROFIT'S TOOLKIT

In order to educate nonprofits on key issues relating to communication and to promote the Donnelley Center's services in those areas, the Center hosted a series of workshops during the spring 2012 semester. Called The Nonprofit's Toolkit, it included three free workshops. Invitations were sent via email to previous clients, contacts from the SMC and LANO membership. In addition, media releases were sent. The staff decided to keep attendance at 10-12 in order to better accommodate individual questions and training as requested. Attendances were given handouts and evaluation forms at each workshop. (See invitation, handouts, evaluation form and photos.)

Grants: Hammering Out the Details was held on Monday, February 27, 2012. There were five nonprofit representatives in attendance. Jenny Rodgers Bigelow, a local fundraising consultant, provided guidance on getting grant and RFP applications noticed and improving opportunities to receive funds and services. Donnelley Center staffer Michelle Garcia provided additional resources.

Presentation Software: The Nuts and Bolts was held on Monday, March 19, with five attendees, three of whom were students. Various types of presentation software were presented by Donnelley staffers, who discussed pros and cons of each program and gave examples of what makes a good presentation. A post-event evaluation among the staff determined that the information was good but that the performances and attendance could have been improved with better planning and communication.

Social Media Strategies: Nailing Down Your Web Image was held on Monday, April 16 with 10 attendees, three of whom were students. Professor Andrew Nelson, a Loyola adjunct and freelance writer, led a roundtable discussion, followed by quick presentations on various social media platforms. Feedback from this was generally positive.

At the conclusion of the workshops, attendees were asked to select from a list of possible topics for future workshops. The results were, in order of most popular:
1) Setting up/maintaining websites (5 votes)
2) Effective use of newsletters (3 votes)
3) Effective use of email to promote organization (2 votes)
4) Raising awareness/media relations (2 votes)
5) Fundraising ideas (2 votes)
6) Effective use of brochures and rack cards (1 vote)
7) Steps in the event planning process (1 votes)
8) Presentation skills and software (0 votes)

SILVER SCRIBE

The 36th annual Tom Bell Silver Scribe Competition was renamed in 2012 and expanded to include off-site competitions, on-site competitions, informational sessions and a new category: Strategic Communication, sponsored by the Donnelley Center. To add opportunities for students interested in advertising and public relations, the Donnelley Center planned to provide a brief training session on creating messages for specific target audiences, incorporating effective design with copy and problem solving. Students would then be put into competitive teams to create a small campaign for the Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadia. Unfortunately, none of the Silver Scribe participants registered for the Strategic Communication session; however, the Center received sponsorship credit on the promotional materials and will host the session for the 2013 competition. (See promotional flyer.)

PRESIDENT'S OPEN HOUSE

On Saturday, March 17, staffers from the Donnelley Center joined the SMC in providing information to prospective freshmen at the annual President's Open House. In addition to snacks and the rack cards, staff members provided information and services via new presentation software on a laptop at the Center's station. (See photos.)