Publishing Guidelines

for

Red Wing Arts Association

By Pam Cote

November 10, 2003

Introduction

Recently, a strategic planning cycle was completed by the Red Wing Arts Association (RWAA), and among other initiatives, the organization decided to focus on name recognition, getting credit for sponsored events and contributions to the community, logo recognition, and coverage in the press through timely quality composition. It was generally agreed that consistent, branded media was desirable.

The purpose of this study is to create a set of guidelines that combines current best practices, recommended checklists or templates, and suggested changes to workflow that will support and maintain a high standard of communication with the audience in order to accomplish the strategic initiatives noted above.

The study reviewed all formats of published material related to events sponsored or advertised by RWAA. This consisted of actual archived pieces. No written procedures were available.

The resulting recommendations and guidelines focus on a consistent look and feel, reducing the need to rewrite the same thing for multiple uses while delivering what the audience requires. These guidelines will include templates, suggested workflow, and will ultimately incorporate written procedures and automatic reminders to encourage timely notification of events to newspapers and other calendars.

General Recommendations

Creating guidelines to accomplish this strategic initiative means new procedures need to be created, unwritten procedures need to be documented, a distinctive style needs to be clarified, and easier methods need to be introduced and adopted that support consistency and timesaving.

The detailed recommendations that follow apply to all manner of communication related to events: to update the website; create newsletters, invitations, and press releases; redesign a brochure; design posters and other signage; and all other related media pieces.

Following these recommendations will:
- Reduce time to create by providing basic templates
- Promote consistency among multiple authors by using templates
- Document requirements to support business continuity
- Standardize and improve workflow by using checklists and reminders
- Create a readily recognized "brand" with templates based on style sheets
- Provide the foundation for automation using a database designed from what we learn and document

These guidelines will support business continuity and multiple authors by providing templates for all event related documents. This will be especially useful because the RWAA plans to relocate in the next year, and it will be necessary to support that move with automatic changes to templates.

To add effectiveness, timeliness, and timesavings for the principal author, the guidelines will ultimately include version control, standardized storage, standardized styles, procedures, multiple output generation, and reminders.

The detailed recommendations include:
- Examine, document, and improve workflow
- Write procedures and create checklists and tickler dates
- Create standards for each type of communication that supports reusable content
  - Styles guide
  - Templates with auto-fill
- Technology enhancements
  - Standard storage methods
  - Methods for maintaining versions
- Using existing tools
- Training

Workflow

Workflow documentation is a necessary first step to create support methods for each type of event. Appendix II describes the activities required to produce event related material for specific events, and suggests annual and quarterly activities in order to set up reminder or tickler dates.

For instance a gallery show has requirements that start with determining the dates and theme, calling for artists submissions, jury of submissions, collecting information about the artists and their work, creating press releases, invitations, updating the website, advertising, organizing related symposiums, publicizing the opening reception, notices in the quarterly newsletter, creating release forms for each art piece, presentation tags, and finally ends with thank you notes.

Many of these activities are performed in specific time frames related to the actual dates of the event. We can assume that all gallery shows have the same workflow and can use the same set of reminders adjusted for the beginning date for each. However, because they are serial, several gallery shows will be active but in different states that need to be tracked.

The RWAA publishes event information to the newsletter (paper now, electronic future), web site, and direct mail to the membership. Other audiences are reached via "calls for artists" to assemble the gallery presentations and miscellaneous external shows, posters for general publicity, newspaper and radio press releases and paid advertisement.

Currently, the executive director is the primary author. There are several others who regularly or occasionally write content. A current campaign for volunteer development may mean others can become contributors if proper support and review mechanisms are implemented.

This type of workflow documentation is merely a beginning and should be considered a work in progress as details are filled out and requirements change. Standard schedules produced as part of this discovery can help create timely reminders to keep the staff on track.

Write Procedures

Procedures and checklists for each type of event are useful to keep on track and support multiple authors. The documentation of workflow provides the basis for written procedures and checklists.

Procedures will need to be written that are easy to follow for both the technically aware and the visually aware audience. They must incorporate the templates.

Tickler dates need to be determined and standardized for all types of events so reminders can be added to the calendar when an event is created or comes into focus. These should be incorporated into general checklists for each type of event.

Create Standards

Style guides and templates mean the author doesn't have to make decisions about formatting and who the target audience is for recurring types of events. Creativity can instead be focused on the unique text and art.

It is important to target each piece to the intended audience. That audience includes:
- Creators - artists who may be interested in presenting their work in the event, or viewing the work of contemporaries
- Observers - both members and non members who will visit the presentations
- Support staff and donors
    - Volunteers who help make the events happen, or who see opportunities for developing skills related to involvement
    - Those interested in sponsoring events

Style Guides

In order to maintain a consistent public interface, a typeface should be adopted for standard printed material and incorporated into the templates. Headings and other style decisions need to be made and incorporated into the standard templates.

A current example of a poster for the summer concert series, that was also used for postcard art, Figure 1, shows the organization name, Red Wing Arts Association, in small letters at the bottom of the poster and at the end of a list of other sponsors. The size makes it hard for the audience to identify who gets credit for bringing this popular series to town. The style guide should indicate relative importance of each element.

This particular example also shows what can happen without templates: there is no contact information listed such as phone number or website.

Figure 1

Templates

During the review of materials, tables were created that show what information is used on each type of document related to events. Templates will be created from that information and some have already been detailed in Appendix III.

Samples of prior work were collected and examined to define elements that make up each whole. For instance every event related sample had a beginning date and the same or different ending date. Each sample had an event name, and in most cases had contact information. Some samples had sponsorship information and names of artists.

Various elements can be used to create other media objects for the same event or revised for similar events. For instance examples of postcards of the summer concert series show how the poster is reused as the postcard art in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 2

A series of templates can be created with fill-in-the-blank sections to add the information that makes each event unique, newsworthy, and appealing to the audience.

A template for posters could be developed from the example in Figure 2. It shows the organization name clearly, in a way that makes sure RWAA gets credit, but it needs to be improved by adding contact information.

There are other examples that use the same content for multiple published items such as listing the event in the newsletter and listing it on the website. Press releases should echo the same event name, dates, times and locations as the posters and postcards.

Technology Enhancements

As soon as feasibly possible, I recommend creation or purchase of a data entry and storage method, most likely a spreadsheet or database. As soon as feasibly possible, I recommend purchase or acquisition of a version control method and written procedures for using these tools.

A technology committee should convene and incorporate these recommendations into its plan and investigate means for funding them. Although the budget can't allow investment in expensive software and hardware, in-kind donations of software can be pursued. Microsoft has software acquisition programs for non-profits that should be investigated. Grants may also be available.

A volunteer should to be recruited who can enable the web technologies available. It may be feasible to maintain these recommended databases on the web host with online interfaces.

The current method of content creation means separate production of documents for each media even though the information is similar. And likewise, separate production of documents for each event even though the information requirements are largely the same from year to year and among like events. Cut and paste will continue to be the most effective method of reusing existing information until technical upgrades are implemented.

The existing relevant tools are a single PC running MSME operating system, MS Word, MS Excel, MS Outlook, Outlook Express, Photoshop LT, an HP color printer/copier/fax, an online control panel for uploading to the website, and an HTML authoring program.

There is a website with mySQL and cgi available, automated mailing lists, and email with auto-responders.

Use of Existing Tools

Word is the main authoring tool, and effective templates can be built for each standard document related to events. Mail merge can be used to create artist listings, mailing labels, and event listings from Excel or exports from Outlook. Word also provides for Auto Text.

Outlook is very effective as an online calendar and for reminders. It could be effective as a mailing list. If used consistently, export of event information can be used to create calendar listings for the website. However, easy to use procedures would be required before export features can be used for mail merge and html generation.

Excel is used now for mailing lists and still seems to be the best existing tool. A method needs to be created to make sure any changes are effected in all lists. Mailing lists should be part of the next cycle of analysis and recommendations.

HTML Kit is a free IDE, and can be used for simple editing, interactive uploading, and even interactive changes to existing web pages.

Procedures need to be written to use the templates and perform mail merges so they can be performed in the absence of the primary author. The office volunteers will most likely have basic PC skills, but the procedures should be written with an emphasis on graphics and screen shots owing to the nature of visual artists.

Training

Classes in Word and Excel are recommended. The recent move from an ancient Macintosh to PC means the executive director has been learning new tools. In particular, she needs the ability to use mail merge, spreadsheet forms, and create and use templates. Paid training during regular work hours should be undertaken as soon as possible during the winter months when activity slows. Since the executive director is a part time position from Tuesday to Thursday, arrangements may need to be made for a temporary replacement during training.

Minimal html editing can be done with little training, and simple procedures can be written for uploading changes to the events listing on the website.

Continuing Effort

This document can be the basis of effective guidelines and procedures to create consistent, accurate, and reusable content. However, it details only the beginning of a continuous process to achieve an efficient workflow.

The immediate steps to put the guidelines into action are:
1. Determine style guides
2. Create of templates from template definitions
3. Write, test, and implement procedures noted in this document.

The guidelines and procedures should be reviewed for efficiency and effectiveness on a regular basis, at least annually. In particular, published documents should be examined against the standard templates to assure that the process is being followed and that the templates have not become corrupted. Possibly even more important, the templates should be examined to be sure they are effective in transmitting the right message to the target audience.

The procedures should be updated as technology changes or when there are major shifts in the goals of the organization.

These guidelines will capture some of the considerable existing knowledge and skill of the primary and secondary authors, and augment continuity of the organization.

The technology committee, suggested earlier, should oversee this duty of examination.

Rewards and Future Possibilities

With documented procedures and best practices for publishing to multiple media, the organization can take advantage of time and monetary savings.

In particular:
- Postage can be reduced if members and other interested parties sign up for electronic newsletters and special event notices by email.
- Reminders can keep activities on track and save postage when content is ready in time to use bulk mail.
- Events can be updated on the website more timely.

As the organization's website becomes "the place to go" for arts events in the region, appeals for monetary and in-kind donation, volunteers, and membership may increase due to exposure to a larger audience and it is even more important to publish the same information to all media and retain brand consistency through adoption of a style sheet.

Appendix I - Analysis of Content Audit

The scope of this audit included published items related to all events overseen by the RWAA. Other items reviewed, but not considered at this time are grant applications, membership development activities and other fund raising events with no specific dates, such as the fine arts calendar.

Analysis shows excellent authorship and few errors, but there are multiple cases of missing logos, telephone numbers, website name, and association name. Some documents do not display the information in expected places. And there is no style standard.

Postcard invitations

When the postcards were printed only on one side, the return address stamp was used. This stamp is as follows and includes the logo to the left of the text:

Red Wing Arts Association
315 West Fourth Street
Red Wing, MN 55066

Whenever the cards were printed on both sides, the telephone number in addition to the same information was generally used.

Different typefaces, sizes, and layout styles are used. When there is a poster with the event, the poster was generally used as the postcard design. Unfortunately not all posters are available for comparison. This practice is a good one as long as the poster contains all pertinent information and the logo.

The audience for these postcard mailings and handouts are the membership, friends and family of the artists, and extended mailing list. There should be something that alerts the receiver that it is an event sponsored by the RWAA and formats and styles that are immediately recognizable should be used.

Interviews with the primary author indicate that these mailings are often left to the last minute and therefore require first class postage. The mailing list is large enough to use bulk mail with a savings of up to 50% on postage. Since the information is clearly available in time to use the bulk mail rate, the problem appears to be organizational. Although there are many things to accomplish in a small amount of time, the postcards require only basic information plus a piece of art work. Implementation of these guidelines with reminders according to the standard schedule would help.

Newsletter event listings

The newsletter's format for listing events changed for the Fall 2002 edition and onward. At that point an effort began to list all art related events including those from other organizations as a first step toward being the "place to go for arts events".

The newsletter is normally mailed quarterly to the membership and extended mailing list. It is also made available at all public events and used as a showpiece for the organization. The newsletter event listing now includes events sorted by day with month headings. There is no standard presentation for start and end dates when the event is longer than one day.

Special events are listed that are considered "call for artists" and opportunities for artists.

Some problems observed included two totally separate newsletters dated Winter 2001. This seemed to have occurred because one was created in January of 2001 (should have been published by December at the latest), and the other was published at the expected winter publishing date of December 2001. While this is probably not confusing to the recipients at the time, it created confusion while trying to archive the documents. The summer 2003 publication was skipped because the primary author took vacation, was away for art fairs as a participant, and there weren't any procedures in place for others to take on the task.

Website

The website was started in January 2003 with basic information. At first, the "event listing" was copied from the newsletter using cut and paste or simply retyped. A standard format for presentation of the events on the website could mean more timely posting. A new listing could be prepared at least monthly from the Outlook calendar if that is maintained. The news and events page has been redesigned to use shtml and server side includes. By using a template for a table in MS Word and saving to a consistent document name "events.htm" it can be uploaded to the website for incorporation within the news and events view.

If a good procedure were written, this process would require little or no interaction by the web maintainer.

The website lists major fundraising events with related dates such as the concerts in the park series with the name and description of the musicians. It lists the gallery shows with brief descriptions and month. The gallery shows actually have set dates before the beginning of each calendar year, but that was not passed on to the website maintainer. Related artist symposiums and presentations are also listed whenever possible. These related events are normally not arranged more than a month in advance of the gallery show opening. Perhaps another include file should be created that could be changed by the primary author.

Press Releases

The most recent press release in the sample Figure 3 has good header formatting, but unfortunately, although I know this is current (October/November of 2003), the date says October 9, 2000.

Figure 3 – Press Release with wrong year.

Press Release

For Immediate Release
October 9, 2000

For More Information
Linda Day – 651-388-7569
rwaa@redwing.net

The Red Wing Arts Association features the work of many area seniors in their current show: *Young at   art.*

It is a wonderful coming together of both two-dimensional and three-dimensional work – many of the pieces in the show are being exhibited by members of the Red Wing Woodcarving Group. Woodcarvers participating are Homer Anderson, Duane Berg, Donald Cragoe, Ralph Galchutt, George Grotkin, Phyllis Kenneman, Dennis Koenig, Jim Kulstad, Mart Lind, Dennis L. Schultz, and Gordon Trelstad. The carved wooden pieces range from lifesized renditions of Native Americans, Civil War Soldiers and Frontiersmen to carved wooden shoes, Santas, spoons and dragons.

The walls of the gallery are adorned with the paintings of Doris Gardas, Jerre Grote, Ardee Rosasco, Joyce Stromquist, Larry Veeder, and Verneil Voth. Two pieces of hand-made paper – a bowl and a framed wall construction are by Gloria Hilker of Hager City, Wisconsin. Two of Carol Duff's wall hangings are in the exhibit as well, which are made of wool and found items from nature.

A special feature of the exhibit are four paintings by Oscar Thompson, a local folk artist who died in October of 1999. He did not begin painting until later in life, but became well known throughout the Red Wing area for his paintings of rural life.

The Red Wing Arts Association Gallery is open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 to 4:30 and for special events and openings.

Exhibit Dates: October 7th through November 26th
Artists' Reception: Thursday, October 16th, 5-8pm

The second sample Figure 4 has some good points, but doesn't highlight "who".

Figure 4 – Press Release that needs emphasis on who.

Press Release

What: Deck the Walls (the event formerly known as the Holiday Store)
A Christmas sale of fine art and baked goods at the Red Wing Arts Association, Red Wing, Minnesota

When: Friday, December 6   5pm – 8pm
Saturday, December 7   9pm – 5pm
Sunday, December 8   noon – 5pm

Where: The Red Wing Arts Association
315 West 4th Street (old City Hall)

The Red Wing Arts Association is sponsoring a festive Christmas Sale of fine artwork and incredible baked goods the weekend of December 6-8. Lois Burnes will read "The Night Before Christmas" and other Christmas stories at 2pm and 2:30pm on Saturday.

his work available at the show. **Faith Kelly** is from Cannon Falls, and will be bringing her watercolors, as well as photographs, silk scarves, and wall hangings.

Two jewelers, both based in the Minneapolis area, will have their fine creations there as well. **Jenny Levernier** is a well-known silversmith who works in gold, brass and other metals. Her Christmas pins have been part of the Holiday Store in the past, and are always a beautiful and unusual gift idea. Also taking part this year is **Pam Smith**, who works with oxidized copper in her jewelry. She is also bringing some of her sculpture.

Photographer **Rob Meyer** will be showing some of his photographs, as well as photo-cards. Some of the cards for sale have poetry written by **Michelle Meyer** --- a great idea for holiday giving!

Nancy Murphy is also well-known in Red Wing for her hand-painted silk scarves and these will be available for Christmas shoppers, as well as the artful bowls and cards made from handmade paper by **Carol Monsebroten.**

Three clay artists will also be represented: the wonderful raku pottery of **Angela Foley,** the whimsical animal-themed functional work of **Linda Day,** and the functional porcelain pottery of **Harriet Campe.**

In addition to artful gifts, the event will also offer great baked goods for holiday giving! **Kathy Boos** will be selling her cookies, candies and cakes.

Be sure to stop by for refreshments, stories, and an opportunity to purchase some one-of-a-kind gifts!

Contact: Linda Day
Red Wing Arts Association
315 West 4th Street
Red Wing, MN 55066
651-388-7569

Appendix II - Recommended Workflow for Events

Annual

1. **Create Annual Calendar** – The Gallery committee and other event committees create annual calendars in late fall to early winter for the next calendar year. Standard events include gallery shows, garden tour, concert in the parks series, fall festival of the arts, Anderson Center summer and winter shows, holiday store, and diversity festival. Other special events include Excursion 2004, Red Wing Shoe Company 100th Anniversary. Third Tuesday is a new event for artists to socialize and involvement is yet to be determined. Board meetings are a set schedule, but may be adjusted throughout the year.

2. **Set Tickler Dates** - Determine event related due dates and post to Outlook and wall calendar.

3. **Create List for Website** – create export file from Outlook for web site table using Active Appointments, using tab separated values of Subject, start date, start time, end date, end time, and location. (Some experimentation will be required to create a procedure for turning this into html using Word.)

4. **Upload to Website** – upload the file using the same name as the last upload, or send the export file to the website maintainer to upload.

Monthly/Quarterly

1. **Review** - Review the list of events for changes and updates
2. **Add and Update** - Call other arts organization or review their newsletters for listing information, then add to and update the Outlook calendar
3. **Create List for Newsletter and Website** – create export file from Outlook for web site table using Active Appointments, using tab separated values of Subject, start date, start time, end date, end time, and location. (Some experimentation will be required to create a procedure for turning this into html using Word.)
4. **Upload to Website** – upload the file using the same name as the last upload, or send the export file to the website maintainer to upload.
5. **Create events Layout for Newsletter** – use the same list to paste into the newsletter layout.

Event Specific

1. Call for Artists
    a. Use template for letter
        1. automatic entries from template (RWAA name, address, telephone, hours, email, website)
        2. dates to bring work

      3. start date of show
      4. end date of show
      5. artists reception
      6. special presentation related to show (date, place, and time)
      7. information about each piece
          1. title
          2. medium
          3. size
          4. price
          5. description
   b. Use mailing list of artists (augmented or special mailing list for high school grads, enlarged region, or media specific as needed)

2. Process artist information
   a. Artists responding to call for artists will send biography or ask to use latest biography on hand
   b. Add biography to artist directory or update any existing biography for this artist
   c. Add information about each piece (title, medium, size, price, description) to show information
   d. Create art tags using information from above

3. Posters
   a. create the poster using poster template
      1. automatic information
      2. event specific information
      3. use the completed drawing or printed poster for artwork

5. Postcard Invitations
   a. using poster for one side
      1. use the completed printed poster for artwork
      2. use the complete address, contact information, telephone number, email and web site on the other side (either stamped or printed)

   b. no poster, one sided cards
      1. select art to use
      2. determine color or BW
      3. use the template named gallery-oneside-cards.doc
      4. create folder (within the current year folder) with the name of the event if one does not exist
      5. save the completed document in the event folder as postcard invitation
      6. print the document and take to printer

   c. no poster, two sided cards

1. select art to use
2. determine color or BW
3. use the template named gallery-twoside-cards.doc
4. create folder (within the current year folder) with the name of the event if one does not exist
5. save the completed document in the event folder as postcard invitation
6. print the document and take to printer

6. Press Releases
   a. Use the press release template (may be able to apply template to existing postcard document)
   b. Add event specific information including artist listing as required.

7. Thank you notes
   a. Use thank you template and mail merge for artists in the show

Note: this workflow is focused on steps related to publishing event information for multiple media and doesn't take into account planning and other project management related to the event.

Appendix III - Templates

Postcard invitations

Name of event, exhibit, gallery show
Begin date
End date
Description of exhibit
Associated activities such as artists reception, presentation, symposium (may be multiple) with date, location, time, reservation information
Location
Days and times of operation
Return address info - Name and address of RWAA
Contact info - telephone, email, website
Logo
Sponsorship acknowledgment

Call for Artists

Name of exhibit and description of appropriate art
Begin date
End date
Location
Days and times of operation
Return address info - Name and address of RWAA
Contact info - telephone, email, website
Logo
Sponsorship acknowledgment

Artist Biographies

Name
Media
Contact information (studio, address, telephone, email, website)
Artist statement or biography

Posters

Name of event
Begin date
End date or list of dates such as Wednesdays in July
Time
Location
Return address info - Name and address of RWAA
Contact info – name, telephone, email, website

Logo
Sponsorship acknowledgment

Press Releases

Standard press release by line and dateline
Release date information
Name of event
Begin date
End date or list of dates such as Wednesdays in July
Time
Location
Description of event, artists biographies
Return address info - Name and address of RWAA
Contact info – name, telephone, email, website
Logo
Sponsorship acknowledgment

Newsletter Events List

Month
Begin date
End date
Name of event
Time
Location
Description of event, artists biographies
Contact information (name, telephone, email, website)

Website Events List (same information as Newsletter)

Month
Begin date
End date
Name of event
Time
Location
Description of event, artists biographies
Contact information (name, telephone, email, website)