

Museum on Main Street  
2008 National Planning Conferences  
Sharing Best Practices

*Best Practices Model: Marketing & Public Relations: Web-based Communications*

Patricia Zahn, Missouri Humanities Council

*MoMS Tour(s) That You've Coordinated (exhibition and year):* 1998 *Barn Again*; 2001 *Yesterday's Tomorrows*; 2003 *Produce for Victory*; 2005/06 *Key Ingredients*; 2006/07 *Between Fences*

*Description:* *Missouri Passages* monthly electronic newsletter has helped MHC increase the number of applications for the MOMS exhibitions because we are doing a better job at getting the word out initially and have regular follow-up reminders. It has also provided a means for regular interaction with our participating communities, leading up to and during the MOMS participation, and maybe more importantly, after the project ends. The blog is another tool for regular communication.

The WIKI site that we first implemented for *Between Fences* gave us a shared space for posting information about community activities and event photos as it related to the project. The idea was for a place for event posting that did not have to be done by MHC staff alone, but could be done by community reps. (We particularly liked the *KI* tour that had these posting supported by the Smithsonian site! The new MOMS Road Report is an excellent site for shared info with podcast, etc.)

Many of Missouri's MOMS host sites are run by staff and volunteers that have little to no experience using internet tools. MHC is trying to provide some of this experience and support in a non-threatening and hopefully easy to access way, with the goal of improved communication, and improved museums.

*How did extra effort(s) in this area come about? Needs identified in the state; among the local hosts, etc.*

Needed a better, more efficient way to connect with and network constituency.

*What council resources/expertise were you able to utilize? What partner resources/expertise?*

Staff expertise included interesting and polished writing skills as well as interest and ability in digital technology.

*What were the steps involved in implementation?*

Postal mailing to full list of MHC contacts to garner email addresses. Notice in print publication that MHC was moving to digital. Development of post card to gather info at MHC events. Requirement of email accessibility for MOMS participant sites. Creation of template for monthly electronic newsletter. Creation of sites for WIKI, blog, etc. Subscriptions to track analytics. Commitment to training internal and external.

*What were the results?*

More targeted outreach, better use of funds; ability to interact and share information in less time; ability to track open and participation rates.

*What adjustments (if any) did you make along the way?*

Move to iContact for email distribution last summer to address some spam issues that were keeping our correspondence from reaching designated audience.

*What's been the short and long term benefit to the local hosts?*

Publicity; tool for networking and learning about best practices of others with easy access to resource links.

*What's been the short and long term benefit to the state council?*

"Dabbling" in this area has helped us rethink how we are connecting and communicating with people, leading to revised web sites and a commitment to support small museums as they learn new ways to record and tell their stories to the broader community using digital technology. These efforts are leading MHC to putting together a tighter communications plan and strategies.

Commitment to staff development has also been a benefit, recognizing that our Council has greater opportunities to enhance our work through mixed media. Therefore, we need to make sure staff has the ability to succeed in this area.

*What advice would you have for other state tour coordinators trying to make a similar impact in this area?*

There are many good tools and information available online and through collegial networks. Take advantage of the experiences of others in helping you make decisions. Don't try too many things at one time, and find someone who can speak about technology in non-techie terms for Council staff and constituents.

Also, offer permissions for use to encourage sharing of articles and information. MHC Passages and Wiki space, etc. are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution.

*Do you have any files, forms, documents or digital images illustrating this component of your MoMS tour(s) that we could post on-line to share with others?*

Archived links to our Missouri Passages newsletters at [www.missouripassages.com/](http://www.missouripassages.com/) (see particularly January 2008 edition for good example)  
WIKI space at [www.missourihumanities.org](http://www.missourihumanities.org)  
MHC Blog at <http://mohumanities.blogspot.com/>

Other resources:

Google for Nonprofits at <http://www.google.com/nonprofits/index.html>

Flickr at <http://www.flickr.com/>

Creative Commons license attribution at <http://creativecommons.org/>

*Would you be willing to serve as a mentor to other state coordinators, advising them on this topic? If so, please indicate the best way for them to contact you.*

patricia@mohumanities.org