

# ONE MORE HAT: COMMUNICATION & MARKETING FOR ARCHIVISTS

## THE PROBLEM

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

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

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

## CURSE OF KNOWLEDGE

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

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

How we communicate matters just as much as **what we communicate.**

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

Strategic communication is:

- Mission-driven
- Audience-focused
- Action oriented

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

## GOALS

Start by setting some goals.

For example, our communication strategy goals:

- establish branding and overall messaging
- raise awareness of our collections and mission
- engage audiences (old and new)
- sustain and increase financial support.

## ASSESS YOUR SITUATION

Next, do some brainstorming.

Identify your key audiences

(For example, ours are the college campus community, genealogists, academic researchers, local learners, & donors)

- Who are they?
- What do we know about them?
- What do we want them to do?

Think about your organization's communication strengths. What types of communication tools are you already using? What has worked well (or not) in the past 5 years?

(For example, our mailings and Facebook posts were working well. Our email list and website needed some help.)

What are your "competitors" doing? What's working well (or not) for them?

Does your organization have a strategic plan? Can communication goals align to that plan?

## THE PLAN

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

Suggested Tools:

Upleaf "Nonprofit Resource Communication Plan Template"  
Knowhow Nonprofit "Developing a Communications Strategy"

Finally, put your plan into action!

## WHAT WE DID:

**Swenson  
Swedish Immigration  
Research  
Center**

## LOGO



SWENSON SWEDISH IMMIGRATION RESEARCH CENTER

SWENSON SWEDISH IMMIGRATION RESEARCH CENTER

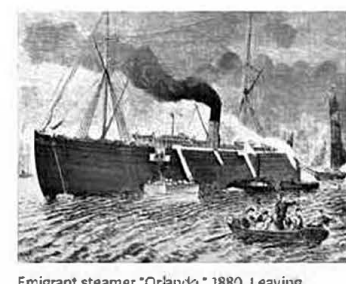
## WEB



The Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center (located at Augustana College in Rock Island, IL) is a national library and archives providing resources for the study of Swedish immigration to North America.

What do we do?  
• promote and initiate **academic research** in the field;  
• collect and preserve Swedish-American library and archival materials;  
• help people research their Swedish-American ancestors.

Preserving & promoting Swedish America since 1987!



Emigrant steamer "Orlando," 1880, leaving Gothenburg, Sweden, for Hull, England, on first leg of Atlantic passage.

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## PRINT



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Please fill out form and email, fax, or mail to the Swenson Center with or prior to your materials for donation. We must have this form in order to accept your donation.

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I/We own the personal property described below and desire to give said personal property to the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center. I do hereby irrevocably and unconditionally give and transfer to the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center all right, title, and interest, including all copyright (excluding that of previously published works), trademark, and related interests, in and to the following described property:  
In making this gift, it is my/our intent that researchers at the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center may have full access to these materials. If any restriction is desired, I must express those desires in writing prior to the signing of this form.

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## ASSESSMENT

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

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

## NEXT STEPS

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

**LISA R. HUNTSHA**  
ARCHIVIST/LIBRARIAN

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