School of Computer Science
Course 15-391

Spring 2007

Final Consulting Report

Calliope: The Pittsburgh Folk Music Society

Jonathan Ma

Calliope: The Pittsburgh Folk Music Society
Executive Summary

Student Consultant, Jonathan Ma
Community Partner, Donna Isaac

I. Background Information

The client for this consulting partnership is Donna Isaac, Assistant to the Director at Calliope: The Pittsburgh Folk Music Society, which prides itself in being a presenting and educational organization that promotes and preserves folk music in the Greater Pittsburgh Area. It offers a wide range of programs, concerts and also a Calliope School that provides lessons in various folk instruments. Donna is one of two full-time staff there and covers a wide range of responsibilities, including overseeing the technology that Calliope uses such as the website, its databases and lists.

Calliope is an established nonprofit organization with a solid client base that fills up their concert seating and keeps their programs running. However, they are prompted to expand their audience base, not only because increasing awareness is integral to a nonprofit's survivability, but also when they noticed an aging in their clients. The following tasks are devised to address this over the course of the partnership.

II. Consulting Tasks

Our scope of work over the consulting partnership consisted of two main tasks: implementing an event calendar and an online sign-up form for Calliope's email and mailing lists. With regards to the event calendar, we wanted to create a centralized and interactive calendar with color-coded events that includes Calliope-sponsored ones and other folk events happening in the area. The goals was to enable the end-user to be able to glance at the calendar and see what type of folk events, categorized by different colors, are happening around the area at what time. We explored a couple of ways to implement such a calendar: free online calendar services such as Google Calendar and some web calendars that use PHP to extract event information from a database.

With the sign-up form for the mailing lists, we were aiming to provide a much simpler and more straightforward alternative for website visitors, who could be potential members, concert subscribers, students, or even donors, to be able to subscribe to either Calliope's weekly email list or their yearly mailing list or both with a simple form. This is contrasted by their previous methods of signing up, which were either to call Calliope personally or email them directly, both of which is more tedious and requires more initiative to do. Moreover, Donna suggested an optional survey form to go along with the sign up form, since she stressed on the fact that Calliope would like to get a better picture of their audiences and what their interests and intents are, to provide Calliope with useful market data that they could end up using in fine-tuning their programs or concerts.

III. Outcomes Analysis and Recommendations

Over the course of the consulting session, we discovered more and more unexpected constraints regarding the first task: the implementation of an event calendar. To begin with, online calendar tools like Google Calendar proved to be futile since they only offer the bare minimum in terms of

customizability, and a user cannot stray from the default Google color scheme to fit them into their own templates, and they also channel people away from Calliope's webpage to Google when individual events in the calendars are clicked. On the other hand, a PHP calendar was infeasible since Calliope's web host, an organization that offers in-kind web hosting, does not support server-side scripting, and Calliope was not about to change its host for this reason. Moreover, a database was being implemented by a third-party contractor, and was not ready until after the consulting session ended. Overall, Donna and I decided to redesign the page's layout into a fresh and user-friendly manner that has all the local folk events categorized to ensure ease for the end-user. Since the implementation, I have also suggested making use of the Calliope webstats to monitor any progress in terms of readership numbers. I downloaded an FTP client for her, walked through it with her a couple times, and now she is able to access the webstats that their host provides every month to track any increases or decreases in visitor numbers in the new pages.

The mailing list sign-up form was a much smoother task, and it provided its users a much easier way to get involved with the organization. In addition, it eliminates incomplete entries in the database, since users' inputs are now validated to ensure that the required fields are provided, as opposed to the former method of having people write in email requests with scattered and incomplete information. Since its implementation, subscription requests have begun to surface.

In terms of sustainability, both tasks' end results did not prove to be any major threats. However, it is imperative that the new events page be regularly updated to ensure sustainability, otherwise it will end up much like its predecessor, a page with outdated content and low readership.

Looking beyond the consulting partnership, I have recommended Calliope to draft a Technology Plan; because it gives a self-assessment for Calliope with the technology they have at hand, and lay out the needs that are not addressed by them so that they can be achieved in the future. It also opens up a new source for funding. Applying for Technology grants with a solid technology plan in place shows an initiative that provides documented needs, and will prove to be much more effective.

I have also proposed the idea of establishing a MySpace presence for Calliope. First off, social networking tools, if used correctly, can have huge impacts to nonprofits, since it provides them with heightened awareness at minimal costs. With a substantial nonprofits presence, this is a great way for Calliope to get their news to "friends" and organizations with like interests and also to market their programs through a variety of promotional strategies, such as cross-promotion with other similar nonprofits. Secondly, this is the perfect venue to serve as an outlet for all of Calliope's multimedia content, such as sample music from their very own Songwriters' Circle, and videos of some of their lessons and programs, without having to use up Calliope's limited storage with their web hosts. Moreover, multimedia content is also a great way to add color to their MySpace page, which could help in attracting readers.

Community Partner

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I. About the Organization

Organization

Calliope is Pittsburgh's Folk Music Society. The following is their mission as listed on their website:

> *Since 1976, Calliope has been a nonprofit educational and presenting organization that promotes and preserves traditional and contemporary folk music and its allied arts.*

In order to achieve this mission, Calliope offers a wide range of programs that centers around promoting the local folk scene:

- Acoustic Open Stage at the Bloomfield Bridge Tavern (Tuesdays)
- The Calliope Songwriters' Circle
- Bluegrass Jam at the Startlite Lounge
- Folk Song Night
- The Threepenny Opry

In addition to the above programs, which will be discussed in further detail later on, Calliope also has its own School of Folk Music, in which they offer lessons in guitar, fiddle, banjo, and singing.

Like most nonprofits, the search for a larger local audience base is a continual issue for Calliope. As of now, they have a solid client base and could be characterized as one of the more successful local folk music societies in the nation, an assessment that is made after close inspection of other folk organizations' websites and the types of programs they offer. However, they are looking to expand their audience base and also as an organization, because there is an increasingly worrisome trend that is gradually becoming apparent, which is the aging of their audience (median age~ 40 yrs old). However, as mentioned by Donna, there is a regular college-student presence in the lessons hosted by the Calliope School at Chatham College's facilities. Consequently, as drafted in their strategic plan several years ago, they will soon be undergoing a "Capacity Building" phase, which addresses the aforementioned issues by tapping the existing acoustic interest among the younger audiences. To reach this long-term goal, they currently have two things in mind: re-branding Calliope's name and image, and performing better market research on their audiences. A market research consultant has started to survey their audience to address issues like more effective marketing measures to their upcoming programs, and also provide a better picture of their target audiences for various programs through research statistics. She would work closely with the database that would arrive over the summer after the consulting session, as the database design is already completed and data entry will be done shortly. In addition to the new database and the market research plans, Calliope's hosting service, the Center of Arts Management and Technology,

is offering a free CMS service, a choice between Drupal and DotNetNuke, to Calliope over the summer. Needless to say, this is a great opportunity for the organization and could definitely play a large role in the re-branding of Calliope, which includes a possible revamp of the website in the future to address the increasing dependence on the internet nowadays, especially among the young. Moreover, there are plenty of modules that CMS's can offer that could aid Calliope in this long-term goal, such as an event calendar or RSS module.

Overall, through the execution of this long-term plan, this eventually leads into Calliope's vision of becoming *the* local folk music source in the Greater Pittsburgh Area.

Facilities

Calliope's offices are located in the third floor in Pittsburgh's Center for the Arts, which are situated by the corner of Fifth Avenue and Shady Avenue. Each of the five employees has their own computer and office space, and they share a large conference room area with PCA, who also hosts their weaving classes there.

Programs

Calliope Concerts

A series of 7-8 concerts featuring acoustic artists of national or international reputation. This is held in the Carnegie Lecture Hall in Oakland.

Calliope School of Folk Music

Calliope also holds lessons in guitar, fiddle, banjo and dance and crafts. Lessons are usually held at Chatham College, and people of all ages are welcome to sign up.

Acoustic Open Stage at the Bloomfield Bridge Tavern

This is a weekly event on every Tuesday that includes a short performance by a featured artist, and other acoustic musicians are encouraged to participate and share their own songs or performances. Like all other Calliope events, listeners of all ages are welcome.

Calliope's Songwriters' Night

This is a monthly event on every first Tuesday and is, again, hosted at the Bloomfield Bridge Tavern. Similar to the Acoustic Open Stage, all acoustic songwriters are welcome to participate and share their works. The Songwriters' Circle has released two CD's.

Bluegrass Jam at the Starlite Lounge

This is a weekly event on Tuesdays that welcomes bluegrass pickers of all levels. It is emphasized that this is a jam session, not an open stage. Due to its bar setting though, participants under 21 must be accompanied by an adult.

Folk Song Night

Hosted on every third Wednesday of the month, this is an informal gathering of folk enthusiast that wants to sing together and share songs. The Mount Lebanon Public Library is the venue.

The Threepenny Opry

Like the Acoustic Open Stage, this event features an artist performance of folk, country and acoustic blues. Musicians should feel free to bring their instruments and participate in an informal post-show jam or song-swapping at the Starlite Lounge.

Staff

The organization consists of a Board of Directors made up of nineteen volunteers, two full-time staff (Managing Director and Assistant to the Director) and three part-time staff (Office Manager, Bookkeeper, Education Coordinator).

Patricia Tanner, Managing Director

She serves as the liaison between the Calliope's in-office operations and the Board of Directors. She has the final say in any in-house decisions.

Donna Isaac, Assistant to the Director, CP

She is the event organizer and also fills in as the "accidental techie". Donna is in charge of maintaining the website, updating the Excel spreadsheets, and also backing up files on the server.

Emily Pinkerton, Education Coordinator

She is a guitar instructor at the Calliope School of Folk Music, and coordinates most of the school's operations. She also updates and maintains the students-list spreadsheet.

Amber Coppings, Office Manager

She aids Donna in managing Excel spreadsheets, like membership information, donor information, etc.

Emily Rodgers, PR Coordinator

She writes the press releases, newsletters, and helps maintain the website and other PR related tasks.

Judy Lightner, Bookkeeper

She uses QuickBooks to keep track of Calliope's finances, accounting and payroll.

Technical Environment

Software

- Content Management System – DotNetNuke
- Microsoft Access Database

Both to be completed over the summer

- Microsoft Office 2003 (Excel currently used for keeping track of membership, event attendees, students, donors and mailing list subscribers)
- Symantec Antivirus
- Macromedia Studio MX (includes Dreamweaver, Flash, etc.)

Hardware

Each employee has their own computer with the following specifications:

- Dell Dimension C521
    - Intel Pentium IV Processor 2.8 GHz
    - 512 MB Ram
    - 80GB Hard Drive
    - Windows XP Professional

- Dell PowerEdge SC400 Server
  - 2.8 GHz
  - 1GB Ram
  - (2) 80GB HD
  - APC Smart-UPS 750VA for Backup
- Web
  - ISP – Verizon
  - Web-hosting – Center for Arts Management and Technology within the Heinz School
  - Current website designed by JA Interactive several years ago
  - Macromedia Dreamweaver is used to update the Calliope's website: http://www.calliopehouse.org

Technical Management

In terms of operations and maintenance, Donna and Emily Rodgers are in charge of maintaining the website, only when updates are necessary, i.e., concert updates, news updates, etc. Donna is also in charge of data-backup. Data is backed up daily with tape libraries that contains two week's worth of data on the central server. Generally, she is responsible making most technology decisions, generally on an ad hoc basis, and Patricia Tanner, the Managing Director, approves of them depending on the budget situation and Board of Directors' consent. In case of problems, depending on the context, Donna would usually contact Brad or Melody at CAMT for website-related recommendations, or other personal contacts, like the current database designer, or outside contractors.

Technology Planning

Currently, there is no technology plan in place. There is, however, a strategic plan set in motion by the Board of Directors three to four years ago. Most technology planning is done on an ad hoc basis.

Internal and External Communication

All five office computers at Calliope are connected to a file server, and all employees have Calliope email accounts. Phone and email are used interchangeably as the primary means of communication among employees and Board of Directors.

With respect to external communication, they have a presentable website that is regularly maintained with news and concert updates. Also, CAMT manages a listserv for them, which is basically a list of names and email addresses, and that is who Calliope sends their weekly Email newsletters to. However, as mentioned earlier, expanding the current audience base is the primary concern as of now. Technically, this problem could be concurrently improved if external communication was made more effective, and Donna and I have examined our options of improving this and have agreed upon a scope of work that addresses this issue. First off, we have identified the weakness of the existing events page, which has a relatively low hit count (number of times people have visited this page) compared to the total visitors in the main page. These web-statistics will be explored in further depth later on as we discuss the outcomes of the scope of work. Secondly, Donna noted that the mailing lists, both email and mail, are the most regular means of getting

people involved in the organization, along with sign-up sheets in Calliope concerts. Nevertheless, when the consulting session began, the only ways to sign up for the mailing list, other than at concerts, were to call in personally or email Donna directly.

Information Management

As of now, membership, event attendees, students in the Calliope School, donors and mailing list subscribers are all recorded in Microsoft Excel in separate spreadsheets stored in the file server by Donna and Emily. However, as mentioned earlier, a new database is being implemented and it should be completed by May or June.

Business Systems

Judy, the Bookkeeper, works with QuickBooks for accounting and payroll purposes, and there have been no problems.

II. Scope of Work

Task 1. Implementing an Event Calendar

Before the consulting session, the events were organized in a list fashion in table form, and there was also a quite elusive link to the Bluegrass Jams on the side. Since the calendar consisted of not only Calliope-sponsored events, but also other local folk-related events, this could cause some confusion for those who are new to the site. Moreover, the events listed are not categorized and were only listed under the days of the week; it could prove to be a turn-off for a visitor who is only enthusiastic about specific programs, such as Jam Sessions, because they would have to scroll through all the different days of the week to find such events. Also, they could easily overlook relevant events even if they were on there, due to our ever-decreasing attention span when surfing the web. Overall, on the larger scheme of things, this could lead to loss of potential event attendees, members or even concert subscribers, and consequently failing to achieve Calliope's goal of expanding its audience base.

In addition, it is important to note that the calendar was quite outdated, in a way that some events were no longer in session. This has taken a toll on the page's readership, because the calendar page was severely overlooked among the list of popular pages, as it lags behind the main page, the concert page and the school page with 360 monthly visitors out of the 7,975 total visitors that visited the website. My CP and I have decided on implementing a centralized calendar of events, both sponsored and non-sponsored ones, that grouped together all the local events and its information in a Google-Calendar-type layout, displaying different sets of events in a color-coded fashion. We explored the following options: free online calendar services such as Google Calendar or Yahoo! Calendar, and open source PHP calendar alternatives like WebCalendar and PHP Event Calendar. The outcomes of these alternatives will be discussed in section III of the report.

With an updated and user-friendly calendar in place, it makes people more aware of the variety of programs that Calliope actually offers, rather than simply using Calliope for their concerts and lessons. The idea behind this is to enable a visitor to Pittsburgh, or simply a folk enthusiast who plays the fiddle casually on weekends to be able to go to www.CalliopeHouse.org and find relevant folk-related events going on around the area in an easy and user-friendly manner. Eventually this relates back to Calliope's long-term goal of being *the* hub of information for Pittsburgh's folk music scene, as more people become aware of the events that is going on around them.

Task 2. Online Mailing List Subscription and Optional Survey Form

Before the consulting partnership, the process of signing up for the mailing list was done either by calling in or signing up at Calliope events. However, when thinking back to the case of the weekend enthusiast, he might not be proactive enough to call in, let alone participate in a Calliope-sponsored event, or subscribe to the mailing list. Therefore, a great deal of potential audiences could be lost due to the lack of an online sign-up, because chances are that the weekend enthusiast would be more likely to visit Calliope's website before they decided on their participation. So an online HTML sign-up form would likely boost Calliope's membership base, students, donors, and event attendees, by making it simpler for users to sign up, thereby achieving its mission of promoting folk music. This could very well impact the usual number of people who call and write in each month, which was around ten or fifteen. Note that a brief optional survey form would also accompany the sign-up, because having an idea of what their audiences are like would greatly help as it provides

Calliope with market data that could give an idea of who their target audience is, what music they like, what programs they are most interested in, etc. With such data at hand, they could engineer their programs, concerts or lessons in whatever direction that is highly demanded or lacking.

Note that after the user finishes and clicks submit, there must be JavaScript validations for the required fields that prevent users from submitting erroneous inputs. Once the validation is done, the results are emailed to calliope_house_inc@yahoo.com using the Carnegie Mellon Mailto CGI script. We could use this with the consent of Carnegie Mellon because the Calliope homepage actually has a Carnegie-Mellon-issued IP address, since the website is hosted by CAMT, a division of the university's Heinz School of Public Policy. With the compiled data in the Yahoo! inbox, Donna would input them into the database. To prevent flooding or confusion, an email filter is also implemented for Donna to provide ease when processing all these requests, since these automated emails would automatically be stored in a separate folder as opposed to the inbox.

III. Outcomes and Recommendations

Task 1. Implementing an Event Calendar and Re-organizing Display of Events

The final product of this task is a new HTML page with a more user-friendly layout for those who are more agenda-oriented. There are two important outcomes of this project that concerns how the plans for revising the calendar changed as more was learned about the restrictions of the web hosting service and how we hope to bring more readers to this new page.

Outcome 1: Problems Surrounding the Implementation of a Dynamic Web Calendar

Google Calendar, along with other online calendar services such as Yahoo!! Calendars, provides the option of allowing the user to embed their own calendar onto their website. To illustrate this, I have embedded a sample Google calendar onto Calliope's template, and its shortcomings are readily apparent in the illustration in Appendix A. To begin with, the scrollbar adjacent to the calendar stays even when the entire calendar fits into a page's view. For aesthetic reasons, this is not the most visually appealing feature. Secondly, Google Calendar's default colors of blue, gray and white are preset and cannot be changed to more fitting colors that would match Calliope's color scheme better. Thirdly, the heading "Apr 2007" cannot be customized, for example, to bigger fonts or other Date Display formats. Finally, Google Calendar's biggest downfall is that if the user wants to find out more about a certain event by clicking on it, it will take the user away from the Calliope page to a Google window, which is a very undesirable result. The same downfall applies to Microsoft Outlook's Calendar export function, as it only allows the exported calendar to be displayed on a separate HTML page that leaves no room for editing styles.

Other than online calendar services, I also considered implementing a web calendar using PHP calendar applications such as WebCalendar or PHP Event Calendar. However, after meeting with Brad Stephenson, the Director of Project and Sales at Center of Arts Management and Technology, Calliope's website host, he emphasized that the free hosting service that CAMT offers does not support server-side scripting. Since Calliope cannot afford to pay for their web-hosting service, this rules out any options involving PHP. Moreover, even if CAMT offered support for server-side scripting, this still would not be a viable option until after the database has been completed and put into use.

Outcome 2: Implementing a Fresh and Reorganized Calliope Events Page

With the above limitations in mind, Donna and I have disregarded the dynamic calendar as a viable option. However, as the old events page still had outdated advertised events under a disorganized layout, we settled on implementing a revised static events page that would be regularly updated. It has a fresh organizational structure that divides the page into two sections: Calliope-sponsored events and non-Calliope sponsored events, so that the users could see the variety of programs that Calliope has to offer, and at the same time they are able to see all the other local folk events, such as Irish and Scottish dance, listed in seven different categories: Acoustic Open Stages, Bluegrass, Irish Music and Dance, Scottish Music and Dance, Dance, Concerts / Other Events, and Jams / Workshops. With this presentation, potential folk enthusiast are able to browse events by their interests, all without jeopardizing the promotion of Calliope-sponsored programs as they are listed in their own section, thereby consequently achieving their mission of better promoting and

preserving folk music in the Greater Pittsburgh Area. Moreover, the old events page had relatively long descriptions for Calliope events, some reaching 7-8 lines of text. To condense this into a succinct list, I have made several JavaScript pop-up windows to convey the same amount information in a separate window, so that interested users could click on its link and find out more about the programs they like. For an illustration of this, please refer to Appendix B.

For some concrete statistics that would show whether Calliope is succeeding in achieving their mission, one could take a look at their webstats. In the month of November 2006, Calliope records 105,358 total hits and 7,975 total visitors for their website. This is an ample amount that reflects the sizable readership base that Calliope has. Among the list of most popular pages, however, the events page ranks fourth behind index.htm, concert.htm and school.htm with 378 monthly hits and 360 monthly visitors. What we can extrapolate from this piece of data is that there is no doubt that people do log on to Calliopehouse.org, however the events page is severely overlooked as an integral part of Calliope's mission to promote and preserve folk music in the area. These numbers are recorded and would serve as benchmarks to measure any increasing trends in readership in the future, and this would be a capacity that has yet to be reached.

This revised events page has been implemented and uploaded to www.CalliopeHouse.org, and Donna has been and will continue to be maintaining it. Therefore, sustainability is ensured given her existing proficiency of updating the website with Dreamweaver. Moreover, I have documented instructions on how to tackle potential problems in manipulating new elements in this page, such as changing the JavaScript pop-up window size depending on the change in the amount of displayed information within them. In addition, the following site (http://www.blazonry.com/JavaScript/windows.php) also has an entire page dedicated to all the different things one could do with JavaScript pop-ups. However, there is a risk in long-term sustainability regarding this new page. If advertised as a new and updated events page, Emily and Donna need to make sure that this page is regularly updated in order to avoid giving readers false information in the future and lose readers over an outdated and inaccurate page. Finally, as to how we are planning to meet this capacity, I will cover this in the following section.

Taking Advantage of the Upcoming Concert Season

Based on the situation described above, I recommend that we should take advantage of Calliope's current reader base of 7,975 monthly visitors and hopefully with the right promotion channels, at least a handful of readers could be diverted into the new and updated events page. There are several ideas that Donna and I juggled with that could feed into this "promotion channel" idea. First off, Donna mentioned that the upcoming 2007-2008 concert season is coming up in the May, and this is usually the busiest time of the year in terms of web traffic as more people are logging on to find out what artists are lined up in the upcoming season. Therefore, a possible means to promote this events page is to include this piece of information in a succinct and bolded tagline in a few of the weekly email-blasts that Calliope sends out to its subscribers. Moreover, the announcement could be included in index.htm, concert.htm and concert.htm, the three highest viewed Calliope pages, to ensure maximum publicity with hopes of boosting readership. Overall, this could aid Calliope in several ways. For example, for those who only participate in Calliope's concerts, this is a chance that they can see an updated page of Calliope-sponsored and other local events thereby feeding into their mission of promoting folk music.

Outcome 3: CP has Learned to Use FTP to Retrieve Webstats

Prior to this consulting partnership, Donna has never used FTP to extract the monthly webstats that CAMT provides. To ensure that this benchmarking process continues after the consulting session, I have downloaded an FTP client, SmartFTP, for her and taught her how to retrieve files from an FTP server. Sustainability is achieved as she is now competent and comfortable doing so every month during and after the consulting session. This outcome has given Donna the ability to address the "capacity that has yet to be reached", mentioned earlier in outcome 2, as she will be able to continue monitoring the readership statistics and note any trends that could be attributed to our scope of work. Her ability to do so is vital to measure how effective they are achieving their mission by implementing a new page and promoting it appropriately.

Task 2. Online Mailing List Subscription and Optional Sign-up Form

The final product of this task is an online HTML form that processes sign-up requests for both the email and mailing lists. The results are first validated with JavaScript and then sent to Donna via email with the use of Carnegie Mellon's Mailto CGI script, and she would record them in the database. An email filter is also set up so that all the request emails are filtered into a separate folder, so that her inbox would not be scattered with them.

Outcome 1: A Simpler Way for Interested Users to Sign Up

Much like the above task, this form was put in place in hopes of promoting awareness for Calliope, by boosting mailing list subscriber numbers and readership on Calliope's events. This would be a much simpler alternative to the current means of signing up to the mailing list, which is through emailing Calliope directly or calling in, both of which requires a more heightened initiative and interest for the organization. For benchmarking purposes, we could use the current number of mailing list subscribers, which is around four to five hundred, to monitor the progress of an easier sign-up method. However, we do not have any concrete statistics showing any increases in subscribers, since the form has just been implemented. Nevertheless, this leaves room for expanding the capacity of achieving Calliope's mission of expanding folk awareness in the area, as there are after all the 7,975 monthly visitors, a handful of which could potentially be intrigued to sign up for the email and/or mailing list to find out more about the organization and what it has to offer.

In this case, sustainability is not that great of an issue simply because once the form is in place; all Donna has to do is to input the requests into the upcoming database. Even if she would like to alter the form, most of the content could be readily edited with Dreaweaver by inserting or modifying form and table elements. A potential risk, although quite unlikely, is the threat of a flood of sign-up requests, which translates into a lot more mindless, although still important, work for Donna to input these data. Therefore, I have also implemented an email filter that would filter out all of the sign-up requests. This would make things a lot easier for her, simply because her inbox would not be flooded with these automated emails. Grouping them together allows her to have an easier time to quickly see what needs to be entered into the database, rather than scrolling through a list of emails in her inbox to find each and every individual email request.

Outcome 2: No More Incomplete Data in the Mailing List Database

Within the current Excel database of mailing list subscribers, there are numerous incomplete entries resulting from people emailing Calliope directly with their requests, but failed to, either

intentionally or unintentionally, include their full names, let alone further information such as phone number or mailing address. As mentioned by Donna, this sometimes poses problems for Calliope when they are trying to personalize their promotions such as mailing their brochures, or simply having a full name to refer to when emailing the subscriber. Whether or not such omission is intentional, this poses a certain amount of annoyance for Donna and Calliope, which prides itself in being a local grassroots organization that would like to know who they are sending their information to. With the implementation of this new sign-up form, users will be told what information is required and what are optional.   They will have a choice of signing up for the email list, mailing list or both, and only "full name", "email" and/or "mailing address" are required depending on what they choose to sign up for. For an illustration of how this appears on the page, please refer to Appendix C. Furthermore, subscribers are encouraged, although not required, to fill out an optional survey form that would prompt them for further information, which could aid Calliope by providing market data, like the types of Calliope events they would like to be a part of, favorite artists (so Calliope could inform them of upcoming artists that matches their taste) or their desired level of participation with the organization (potential volunteer, student, etc.). Note that even before the implementation of this form; Donna made it clear that she did not want the optional survey form to come across as imposing, which could feed into a risk of deterring those who wish to retain their privacy when divulging their personal information. Therefore, a disclaimer is emphasized on the top of the page saying that *only* name, email and/or mailing address are required, depending on which list the user is signing up for, and that the filling out the survey form would be helpful for Calliope but not mandatory. Finally, the form, just two days after its implementation, already has subscribers signing up for the mailing lists. As hoped, the results were complete and legible.

IV. Additional Recommendations

1) Develop a Technology Plan to Maximize Use of New Tools in the Long Run

Calliope shall have a database and a Content Management System available for their use in the summer after the consulting session, both of which could have profound positive impacts on the organization. On the one hand, the Access database would replace Excel lists as the hub for data. Also, the market research consultant shall work closely with various database functions such as running queries on their audiences at different events that she could potentially extrapolate useful market data for Calliope. On the other hand, DotNetNuke is the CMS that shall be provided by Calliope's web host CAMT. With its user-friendly interface, this could make web administration a lot easier for Donna and Emily. Moreover, a combination of these two tools could also open up a whole new realm of possibilities that has restrained Calliope before. For a quick example, there are a wide range of modules that could supplement DotNetNuke in its implementation, such as an Event Calendar module that reads entries from a database of events, or a possible RSS module that allows users to subscribe to Calliope's latest news from their very own news reader.

What does this all mean for Calliope? Basically both of these capacity-building tools are arriving almost simultaneously, and it could potentially prove to be too much to handle at once, because as mentioned above, there are just so many possibilities and benefits that these tools could provide. What they need, from here on, is a plan that addresses the issue of how to make full and effective use of the resources they have at hand to tackle the problems mentioned earlier, like the aging of their audience. It is imperative to *know* and *understand* what these new tools are capable of doing to

contribute to their long term goals. An effective way to achieve this is to document their resources, their potentials, define their needs and how to optimize their tools to achieve them. To implement this, here is a list of steps that could get things started for Calliope with this recommendation:

1. Assemble a team that would oversee the implementation of the plan and establish managerial support

    - It is important that everyone is on board with this recommendation, since a technology plan is a work of an entire organization rather than that of a single staff member. In Calliope's case, it would be helpful for Donna to propose this to Patricia, the Executive Director, who could make a strong case for this to the Board of Directors to attain managerial support.

2. Assess the technology at hand and define any needs that are not fulfilled

    - For this step, it is imperative for the team to do some research on DotNetNuke and Access databases, what functions they offer, and how they can supplement each other in future web development. For instance, an event calendar module could read events and their descriptions from a database.

    - This is also a good place to look into what CMS modules they should look into purchasing at a low cost, while keeping in mind their goal of expanding their audience, especially the young. For a quick example, given the increasing prevalence of online RSS news readers, Calliope could really consider an RSS module to supplement their existing CMS functionality.

3. Research potential solutions

    - Keeping the needs in mind, this would be the best time to look at what could be done to address them. In step four of this TechSoup article http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/page4760.cfm?cg=searchterms&sg=technology%20plan, there are guides to help users in each of the following technology areas: Network, Hardware, Software, Internet Connection, Web Building, Database and Staff Training.

4. Write the plan

    - This is the place to identify the scope of work and document them into solid projects, while addressing needs and solutions.

5. Attain funding and implement the plan

    - Now that the plan is in place, funding will also be easier to attain, since funders will be able to see that the organization has a solid technological agenda, and this will also open up a lot of technology grants that were previously unavailable to Calliope.

    - With appropriate funding, carry out scopes of work as drafted in the plan.

Further resources that could be of great help are sites like www.techsoup.org, which provides a lot of help and advice on implementing technology plans in other similar nonprofits. For starters, here are a couple of TechSoup articles that outlines why a technology plan is necessary (http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/page5090.cfm), and how to implement them correctly (http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/page4760.cfm?cg=searchterms&sg=technology%20plan).

2) Create a Calliope MySpace

Given Calliope's limited resources as a nonprofit, Calliope could address its goal of expanding its audience base by pushing forth a MySpace presence, which is the quintessential social networking tool of this generation with an appeal that is centered on, but by no means limited to, the young nowadays. Social networking tools are perfect for organizations like Calliope because the idea behind them is to connect individuals or organizations with similar interests and/or agendas, and they could serve as a low-cost, yet effective, promotional channel. As a matter of fact, it is not uncommon for nonprofits to create their own MySpace profiles. For instance, the Nonprofit Organization MySpace profile (http://www.myspace.com/nonprofitorganizations), designed as a hub for all nonprofits in MySpace, has 12230 friends, including other larger arts nonprofits like the Metropolitan Opera, Americans for the Arts, or ones in the local scale such as Minnesota Citizens for the Arts.

In terms of design, since Calliope's homepage is, on the whole, quite static, MySpace could also serve as their multimedia outlet. For starters, they could post music published by their very own Songwriters' Circle, and also post embedded YouTube clips of their lessons or jam sessions. All of those ideas could help achieve and expand upon Calliope's mission of promoting and preserving folk music to an audience that is not bound by geographical locations, by giving them a multimedia view of Calliope's activities. With respect to content, they could publicize their events on that page along with their mission statement as blogposts or bulletins. They could advertise this new MySpace page with their existing mailing list subscribers, and perhaps through other more effective channels. Meanwhile, it would still be beneficial to claim a presence that could potentially bring a lot of good to Calliope's long term goals. Registration to MySpace is very easy and straight forward. Nevertheless, here are several things to keep in mind when implementing this recommendation:

1. Always keep sustainability in mind. After creating the page, it is imperative that the page be updated at least once or twice a week to keep "friends" interested.

2. Look out for possible channels of cross-promotion. Ask friends to link to Calliope's site or post a link to the Calliope's mailing list subscription form.

3. Post regular blog entries and circulate them in the bulletin board, invite friends to comment on them and post relevant comments on other friends' pages

4. Add the MySpace URL to email signatures, email newsletters, or even business cards to maximize people's awareness of such a page.

5. Take the initiative and write about how Calliope is using MySpace to further their mission and causes.
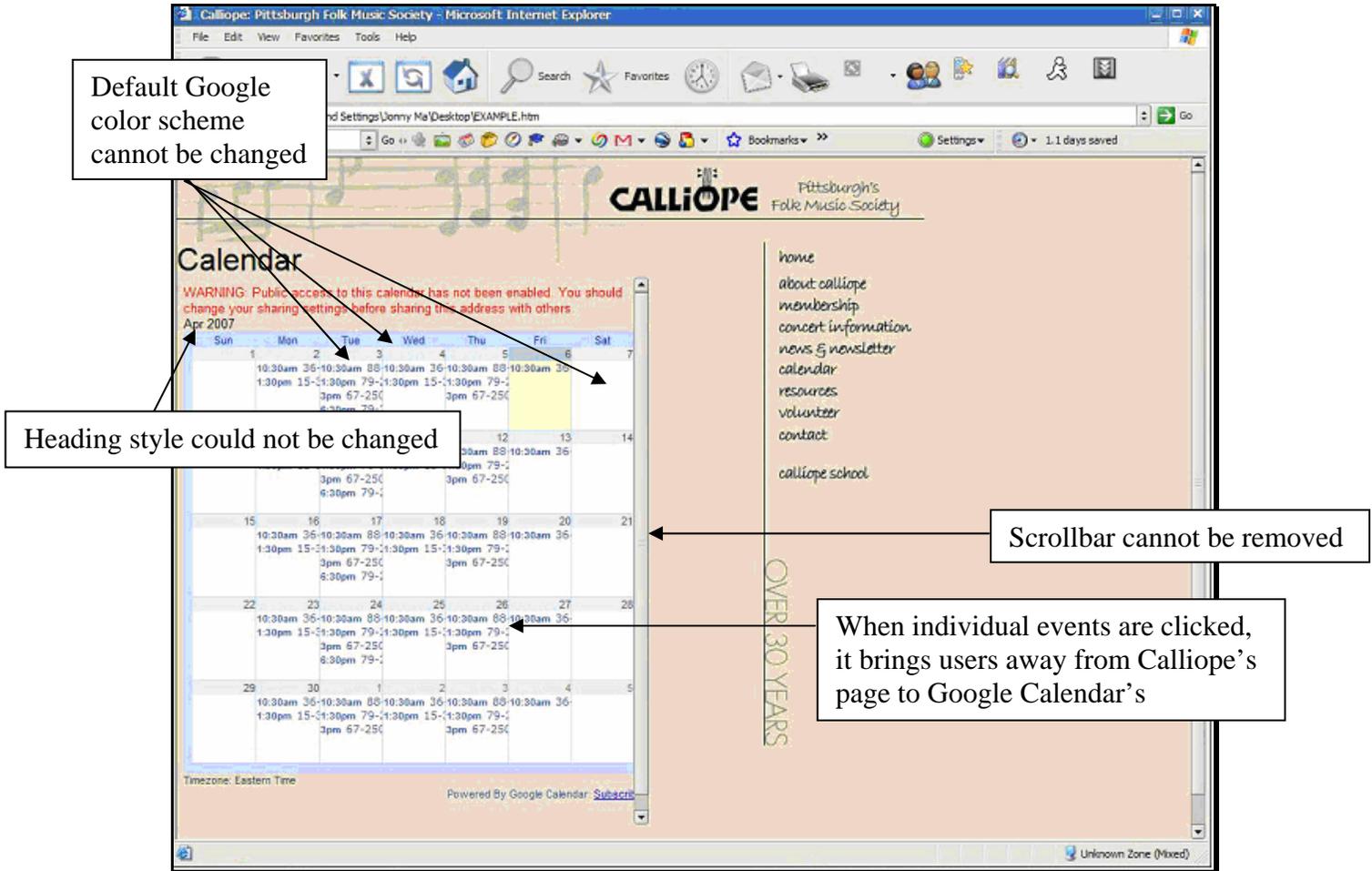
For this recommendation to work out, it is vital for the staff to realize that these social networking tools do require commitment, and if done correctly, it could have profoundly positive impacts to organizations like Calliope while keeping costs minimal.

About the Consultant

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Appendix A

This is an example and illustration of how Google Calendar's embeddable option lack customizability.

Default Google color scheme cannot be changed

Heading style could not be changed

Scrollbar cannot be removed

When individual events are clicked, it brings users away from Calliope's page to Google Calendar's

Appendix B

The following is an illustration of the new layout of the events page. Note the separation of Calliope events and local folk events, which are listed in categories, and the popup windows that show more information about the event, such as upcoming artists:

Calliope Sponsored Events listed on top of page

Categorized local folk events

Appendix C

Below is an illustration of how the form is laid out. Note that the form is divided into two sections: Required Information and Additional Information. Also, the required fields change depending on what the user chooses to sign up for, as displayed in the three smaller illustrations.

Past Community Partners

4 Kids Early Learning Centers
Addison Behavioral Care, Inc.
Alafia Cultural Services
Alcoa Collaborative
Allegheny County Housing Authority
Allegheny General Hospital Pastoral Staff
American Association of University Women
Animal Friends, Inc.
Animal Rescue League
ASSET, Inc.
ASTEP-Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church
Auberle
Bedford Hope Center
Bedford Initiatives
Bethany House Ministry
Bethlehem Haven
Bishop Boyle Center
Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation
Borough of Crafton
Boys & Girls Club of Duquesne-West Mifflin
Boys & Girls of Wilkinsburg
Braddock Carnegie Library & Community Center
Braddock Redux
Brashear Association, Inc.
Breachmenders
BTC Center
Calliope: The Folk Music Society
Career and Workforce Development Center East
Carnegie Library of Homestead
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
Carnegie Science Center
Center Avenue YMCA
Center for Creative Play
Center for Hearing and Deaf Services, Inc.
Center of Life
Central Academy
Central New Development Corporation
Child Watch of Pittsburgh
Children Youth Ministry
Children's Museum
Christian Life Skills
Citizens to Abolish Domestic Apartheid
Community Day School
Community House
Community Human Services Corporation
Community Technical Assistance Center
Competitive Employment Opportunities
Conflict Resolution Center International
Consumer Action Response Team
CONTACT Pittsburgh
Creative Nonfiction Foundation
Dance Alloy
East End Cooperative Ministries
East End Neighborhood Employment Center
East End Neighborhood Forum
East Liberty Development
East Liberty Presbyterian Church
East Side Community Collaborative
Eastminster Child Care Center
Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center
Education Center

Every Child, Inc.
Fair Housing Partnership
Faison Development & Opportunities Center
FAME
Family Services of Western PA
Family Tyes
First Charities/First United Methodist Church
Friendship Development Association
Garfield Jubilee Association, Inc.
Gateway to the Arts
Girl Scouts - Trillium Council
Glen Hazel Family Reading Center
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank
Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council
Greenfield Senior Center
Guide Runners
Gwen's Girls
Hazelwood Senior Center
Hazelwood YMCA
Heritage Health Foundation
Hill House Association
Hill/Oakland Workforce Collaborative
Himalayan Institute of Pittsburgh
Hope Academy of Music and the Arts
Hosanna House
Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania
HUB Downtown Street Outreach Center
Hunger Services Network
Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers
Jane Holmes Residence
Jewish Family & Children's Service
Jewish Residential Services
Joy-Full-Gospel Fellowship After School Program
Just Harvest
KidsVoice
Kingsley Association
Lawrenceville Development Corporation
League of Young Voters
Light of Life Family Assistance Program
Madison Elementary School
Manchester Academic Charter School
McKees Rocks Terrace
McKeesport Collaborative
McKelvy Elementary School
Mental Health Association of Allegheny County
Message Carriers
Methodist Union of Social Agencies
Miller Elementary School, Principal's Office
Mon Valley Initiative
Mon Valley Providers Council
Mon Valley Resources Unlimited
Mon Valley Unemployment Committee
Mon Yough Community Services
Mount Ararat Community Activities Center
NAACP National Voter Fund
National Alliance of the Mentally Ill
National Association of Minority Contractors /
   Black Contractors Association
Negro Educational Emergency Drive
New Beginnings Learning Center
New Penley Place

Past Community Partners (continued)

Northside Coalition for Fair Housing
Northside Institutional Children Youth Ministry
Northside Leadership Conference
OASIS Senior Center
Opera Theater of Pittsburgh
Operation Better Block
Orr Compassionate Care Center
Outreach Teen & Family Services
Parental Stress Center
Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership
Pennsylvania Low Income Housing Coalition
Peoples Oakland
Phase 4 Learning Centers, Inc.
Pittsburgh Action Against Rape
Pittsburgh Citizens' Police Review Board
Pittsburgh Foundation
Pittsburgh Health Corps
Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network
Pittsburgh Mediation Center
Pittsburgh Social Venture Partners
Pittsburgh Toy Lending Library
Pittsburgh Vision Services
Pittsburgh Voyager
Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra
POISE Foundation
Program for Health Care to Underserved
   Populations
Project Educate
Providence Family Support Center
Radio Information Service
Reading Is Fundamental Pittsburgh
Regional Coalition of Community Builders
River Valley School
Rodef Shalom
Rodman Street Missionary Baptist Church
Ronald McDonald House Charities of Pittsburgh
Rosedale Block Cluster
Sacred Heart Elementary School

Rx Council of Western PA
Salvation Army Family Crisis Center
Sarah Heinz House
Schenley Heights Community Development
   Center
Second East Hills Social Services Center
Sharry Everett Scholarship Fund
Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church
Southwest Pennsylvania Area Health
St. James School
St. Stephen Elementary School
Sustainable Pittsburgh
Thomas Merton Center
Three Rivers Center for Independent Living
Three Rivers Youth
TLC-USA
Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments
Tzu Chi Wen Chinese School
Union Project
United Cerebral Palsy
Univ. of Pittsburgh - Division of Applied Research
   and Evaluation
Urban League of Pittsburgh
Urban Youth Action
Ursuline Services
Vintage Senior Center
Weed & Seed Program, Mayor's Office
Wesley Center
West Pittsburgh Partnership
Wireless Neighborhoods
Women's Enterprise Center
Working Order
YMCA McKeesport
YMCA Senior AIDE Center
Youth Fair Chance
YouthBuild
YWCA Bridge Housing
YWCA of McKeesport

Community Partner Information FAQ
(continued from back cover)

7. What does it cost to be a Community Partner?

The cost for participating in this experience is your time and your commitment to follow through as agreed. As leaders of community organizations, we know your time is of premium value. Those who have made this investment of time have reaped returns many times over.

8. What does the Community Partner have to offer Carnegie Mellon students?

- Students learn to structure unstructured problems. Community organizations are complex environments with complex problems. Your organization provides excellent environments in which to practice the art of structuring problems.
- Students come from different cultural backgrounds and most have never been in a nonprofit organization. They are practicing how to communicate across cultural differences and across technical knowledge differences. They need to be able to make mistakes and learn from them. Community partners provide a supportive relationship in which students can take risks and learn about how to communicate, how to relate, and how to maintain professionalism.
- Students get the opportunity to practice process consulting. They are learning that expertise is only as valuable as the ability to help others solve authentic problems. You provide a context in which students can practice these skills.
- We've found that Community Partners are very appreciative for the students' assistance. There is nothing more rewarding than to experience your efforts as valuable and rewarding for others. You provide that experience for students.
- Finally, you offer a glimpse into career opportunities in the nonprofit arena. Students learn to appreciate those who work in the nonprofit sector, and they grow to appreciate the role and function of community organizations. We hope this appreciation not only informs the choices they make in life, but also encourages them to care and give back to the community throughout their professional careers.

9. How do I become a Community Partner

Contact an instructor, Joe Mertz or Scott McElfresh. Send your contact information: name, title, name of organization, address, phone, fax, location of organization and your interest in being a Community Partner. You will have a telephone conversation and possibly an on-site visit. All organizations are considered, though preference is given to organizations providing services to a low-income community or a community at risk for falling into the "digital divide."

**Send email to
instructors@tcinc.org
(email preferred)**

**Or call
Joe Mertz: 412.268.2540
Scott McElfresh: 412.268.4859**

10. Caveats

- We do our best to ensure that students who sign-up for the class are committed to completing the class, however, occasionally, a student ends up withdrawing from the class during the semester. Typically, this happens when a student has under estimated the time they need for this class. We do our best to advise students so this does not happen. When it does happen, there is nothing we can do except to invite the Community Partner to participate in the following semester.
- The semester is short and the student has to do a lot of work in a short amount of time. For this reason, it is critical that you keep your scheduled appointments, do the work you agree to do, and maintain communication with the student. The student will need your feedback on reports quickly, often the next day. When we get to the final consulting reports, we will need fast turnaround time from Community Partners because we also need to get the reports published in time for the Community Technology Forum.
- If there is any chance that you think you will not be able to follow through with the requirements of this partnership, please wait until such time as when you are able to do it. Since the Community Partner is the focus for the student's learning, it is essential that the partnership be sustained for the semester.

Community Partner Information FAQ

1. What is the goal of the partnership in this course?

The goal of this class is to expand the capacity of the Community Partner to use, plan for, and manage technology, administratively and programmatically. The student is learning process consulting, project management, communication, relationship management, problem identification, and analysis.

2. As a Community Partner, what can I expect to happen?

Once you match with a student consultant, you will set a meeting schedule that you and the student will keep for the remainder of the semester. The student comes to your location for 3 hours a week. During this time you and the student work together. This is not an internship in which the student merely works on site. Rather, it is a consulting partnership in which you must work together to achieve your technology goals. The student facilitates a process that moves from assessment, to analysis of problems and opportunities, to defining a scope of work, to developing a work plan, to analyzing outcomes and finally presenting that analysis. As the Community Partner, you are the consulting client. You provide information and discuss that information with the student. But you are more than a client; you are also a learner. In process consulting the client "owns the problem" as well as its solution. The consultant facilitates the client in achieving that solution. The consultant doesn't "do for" the client. Rather, the consultant works with the client.

3. What types of activities are typically included in a scope of work?

Each scope of work is unique and depends solely upon the specific needs and opportunities of the individual Community Partner. Partnerships have focused on a wide range of activities, including: personal information management (how to use Windows, organize files, backup files, use various software packages, use time managers, use Palm Pilots and other personal information management tools, e-mail, etc.), developing a plan for how to train staff and how to incorporate knowledge and skill into job description, designing a local area network, implementing Internet connectivity, designing and developing a web site, determining effective data storage methods, analyzing the needs for an information database, designing and implementing a database, solving technical problems, designing a public community technology access center, determining the specifications for computers, developing disaster recovery plans, and more.

4. Who can be a Community Partner?

This course target individuals playing an administrative or programmatic leadership role within a community organization. Typically Community Partners are Executive Directors, Directors, Assistant/Associate Directors, Coordinators, and Managers. But, we make the selection based on the organization and the role that the individual plays within that organization, regardless of title.

5. Why do you focus on organizational leaders?

For an organization to use information technology effectively, its leaders must have a vision for how it can support the organization's mission, they must be comfortable enough to integrate technology into their personal work practices, and they must know enough to budget, staff, and subcontract appropriately. By partnering one-on-one with a student consultant, the leader has a unique opportunity to build that vision, comfort, and knowledge, no matter where they are starting from.

6. What are the requirements for being a Community Partner?

- Hold a leadership role within your organization.
- Have a computer in your office or one you could or do use in your job.
- Reliably meet with the student consultant 3 hours per week, every week, for about the 13 weeks.
- Come to an on-campus gathering 2 times during the semester. Once at the beginning and once at the end.
- Share information about your organization with the student consultant.
- Read project reports prepared by the student and give the student immediate feedback.
- Complete a brief response form after reading each report and return to the instructor.
- Keep a log of consulting sessions and send to instructors twice during the semester.
- Read the final consulting report. Give feedback to the student immediately.
- Make a brief presentation at the end of the semester (with the student) at the Community Technology Forum. (This is the 2nd on-campus gathering you are required to attend.)

(continued inside back cover)